"When did you realize you had feelings for me?"
"When you saved me from the cabby. When did you realize it was okay to have feelings for me?"
"When you pulled me out of the Thames and saved my life."

A twist on the 30 Day OTP challenge.

I started this fic back in January and wasn't sure where to go with it. I always quite liked it, though, and decided to resurrect it as a 30 Day OTP/Porn Challenge. There prompts I like in each so I thought combining them would be an interesting way to tell the story.
Breathe.

Don’t move.

Concentrate on the gun.

The three commands played on repeat in his mind as he trained his eyes on the criminal in front of him. Sherlock held his breath as he carefully raised his hands. It took all his remaining energy to remain perfectly still.

“He is Mr. Holmes,” the criminal breathed. He let out a round of raspy coughs. Smoker. Two-no, three-packs a day. “Where are all your police friends? Or have they all forgotten about you?”

Ignoring the taunts, Sherlock focused on the barrel that was just inches from his face. The dock beneath him creaked as he shifted his weight from one foot to another. An icy breeze from the depth of the Thames swept around him. His eyes darted around, grasping for a sign—any sign—that Lestrade listened to his warnings.

There wasn’t a peep, save for the gentle crashing of the waves and the heaving breaths of his criminal.

“You enjoy swimming, Mr. Holmes?”

He closed his eyes as a flashback of the night at the pool hit him. Moriarty’s laugh echoed across the waters around him. Sherlock could still hear the click of the consulting criminal’s shoes.

His eyes shot open.

No, what he was hearing came from a much closer distance. Slowly, his eyes trailed to the shadows of the dock, where a few private boats were tethered. A shadow darted in and out of the boats until it began approaching, growing wider and wider until…

“John.”

His heart swelled with relief when John held his finger to his lips, warning him to keep quiet. The old revolver was steady in his hands as he stepped forward, one foot in front of the next, in silence. But Sherlock’s wondering eyes must have caught the criminal’s attention, because in a moment the gun was suddenly trained on John instead.

And Sherlock was given his chance.

He reached out, grasping the man’s arm and spinning him around. What he didn’t take into account was the man’s weight, three times that of his own. He was sent spiraling backwards, as easily as a rubber band being flicked across the room. Sherlock bit down on his lip, hard, as he landed against the deck.

Suddenly something beneath him ripped, and he continued to bite down on his lip to muffle his cry as fiery shots of pain rippled through him. His arm lay beneath him, limp and numb. He shifted his
weight and tested his fingers.

Hurt, badly.

But not broken.

“Sherlock!”

John’s sudden cry drew his attention forward, and he darted into action when he saw the struggle his friend was pitted against. The criminal’s hands were wrapped around John’s neck; his pupils were wide with desperation. The revolver lay forgotten on the ground, kicked away close enough to Sherlock so that he could just reach for it. He winched at the weight that was put on his arm; his stomach churned at the black-blue wrist that now made up his skin.

Nevertheless the fingers of his good hand found the revolver, and the barrel of the gun soon found the criminal’s back. The man froze, and John’s eyes fell to his. Sherlock nodded, and John shoved the man away. Desperate gasps for air met his ears, along with the deep, careful, breaths of their criminal.

“What?” Sherlock smirked. “You’re not afraid of the deep end, are you?”

But before he could blink he was shoved backward once more; the gun flew out of his hand as the criminal pushed both him and John away at the same time.

“Sherlock!”

John’s horrific screams, mixed with his own frantic breaths, sent a new wave of adrenaline rushing through him. The sound of splashing water made his heart stop.

His eyes darted around the river.

Please.

No sign of John anywhere.

He was only vaguely aware that he was clutching his injured wrist and only vaguely aware that the criminal’s footsteps echoed in the distance as he got away.

All he focused on was the ripples trailing to and fro beneath the dock.

Without thinking, without considering any consequences, he dove into the depths of the Thames.

The water was much deeper than he realized. And colder. So cold. When he came up for air his lips were already blue. His clothes clung to him as he shivered, taking in as much air as he could before holding his breath and going back under.

He couldn’t see anything. Darkness was everywhere. His hands desperately grasped at the water, searching for any sign. He tried to remain mindful of the distance between him and the dock.

How could John have already drifted so far away?

His legs kicked wildly as he began to lose all control of his senses. Too cold. His eyes burned so badly that he was fighting to keep them open just as much as he was fighting to not drift away himself. The current tugged at him, inching him further and further away from the dock.

Then, finally, he saw a mop of sandy-brown hair, followed by the face of who he once considered
to be his best, and only, friend. John looked so stiff, his skin deathly pale. His lips were stained blue from the cold. Blood trickled around them, and Sherlock followed the trail to a wound engraved into John’s forehead. The criminal must have hit him before he fell.

John’s eyes were sealed tight. Unconscious.

Sherlock looked behind him, and his heart began to beat again, frantically, as he realized how far he drifted from the dock. He pushed himself towards John and scooped him up his arms, awkwardly throwing his arms around his neck as he kicked his way back to the surface.

A string of violent coughs escaped him as he broke surface. Dizziness overwhelmed him as looked around, trying to regain his bearings. John clung to him limply. Sherlock brushed the hair from his friend’s face to reveal the bleeding wound. His skin was frozen, like ice.

He took a few deep breaths before kicking his way toward the dock, careful not to drift beneath the current again. He lifted John onto dry land first. Sherlock gasped painfully as he put too much weight on his bad hand- he had almost forgotten about his own injury. As he pushed himself up to the dock it felt like his bones were ripping apart. If his hand wasn’t shredded to pieces before, it was now.

Collapsing beside the still figure of his friend, Sherlock spat out the water that tried to escape into his lungs. He immediately fell to John’s side to take his pulse.

Silent. Still. No trace of life.

“No,” he whispered.

Forcing himself to his knees, he lowered himself down and began performing CPR. His eyes burned from too much exposure to water and the tears threatening to release.

“John!” He gasped through a hoarse cough. Shaky fingers embraced John’s wrist, only to find his pulse as still as ever. He tried CPR again. And again. And again. “John! Please.”

At last a series of violent coughs escaped John. Sherlock couldn’t help it. He lost all strength and collapsed onto his chest, holding his friend’s shoulders to let him know all was well. John’s eyes fluttered open, the whites of his eyes red-rimmed from the sting of the water. John looked around, confused, as though wondering how he could be alive.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock assured, sitting up. He placed a hand on John’s wrist to monitor his pulse, which was slowly turning to normal. “You’re alright.”

“Christ,” John mumbled.

He tried to lift his head, but the effort appeared to not be worth it. He collapsed back to the ground as another series of coughs escaped him. Water trickled from his mouth to his jumper. His lips slowly regained color, though his face remained pale and frozen with shock.

Sherlock reached out, carefully touching the bleeding cut on John’s forehead. John flinched, grabbing his injured wrist on instinct. He jerked his arm away without realizing what he was doing.

“You’re hurt,” John announced, his voice raw.

“No,” he said, shaking his head, “I’m fine.”

They both sat back and fell silent for a moment, focusing on catching their breath. Sherlock held
his injured hand in his lap and tried to ignore the burning pain still shooting through him.

“Now they’ll really talk,” John said; he broke into a fit of coughs before he could continue. “You, giving me mouth to mouth.”

Sherlock snorted.

“Yeah, we’ll I’d rather risk a bad press photo than your life.”

A small laugh escaped John, but when he looked over to him Sherlock could tell he was still shaken.

“Are you alright?” He asked, softly.

John nodded but closed his eyes, still obviously overwhelmed with pain and shock.

“Just a bit cold,” John admitted.

He glanced away, and Sherlock had the feeling John was uncomfortable with how close they were. Sherlock could still feel John’s lips on his; he’d never forget that moment, fighting to bring life back to his only friend. His eyes were glued to John was he breathed in deeply, trying to keep himself from shaking. Only friend.

“John,” he trembled.

All at once everything began to affect him: the cold, his drenched clothes, injured arm, the shock of it all.

“Don’t, Sherlock,” John warned. He closed his eyes, wincing slightly as he shifted. “Just please, give me a minute.”

But he couldn’t. The horror of I almost lost you pounded in his head on repeat, over and over and over until he leaned forward and pressed his lips against John’s. John stiffened immediately, his eyes opened wide in shock as Sherlock’s fluttered closed.

“Sherlock-“ John whispered when they broke apart.

He wouldn’t let him protest. The clock was ticking, and he knew any moment from now this would be over and John would be angry at him. Possibly angry enough to change everything, end everything. He deepened the kiss, slipping his tongue into John’s mouth when he tried to come up for breath. A trembling hand found John’s shoulder, and soon John was clinging to him, his own fists shaking against his wet clothes.

In the distances sirens wailed and they jumped apart, breathing hard. John brought a hand to his mouth, stunned.

“John,” he pleaded.

John looked up to him, his eyes completely dilated. Both of their hearts were pounding. Sherlock was shaking all over. They could only stare at each other, unsure of what the next step was, until they were suddenly surrounded by ambulances and police cars. A car door slammed, and he could see Lestrade running toward them. John looked away, his eyes glued to the ground. Shame, Sherlock worried, regret, fear, disgust. He wanted nothing more than for John to say something—anything— but he knew the conversation would be on hold until they were safely away from the wondering eyes of the police.
“Are you two alright?” Lestrade said.

The DI hovered over them as they tried to get to their feet. Sherlock reached for John when he stumbled forward, but John jerked away, glaring at him. He swallowed nervously as a sickening feeling filled his stomach.

“John almost drowned,” Sherlock announced.

“Sherlock hurt his hand.”

It almost sounded like they were teasing each other. Lestrade drew in a deep breath as he glanced between the two, summing up exactly how serious the situation was.

“What I just heard is that you two are both taking a trip to the A&E,” Lestrade said. They both glared at him. “And no protests! The other option is taking you two into interrogation so I can find out just why you would do something so bloody stupid!”

Lestrade’s hands clenched into fists as he turned away, but he only got a few feet before he turned back, his face suddenly sunken with empathy.

“I’m glad you two are alright,” he admitted.

They both nodded, remaining silent.

It wasn’t until nearly three hours later that they were able to get back to Baker Street. They were hardly able to keep themselves upright as they stumbled into the flat. It was far too late for even Mrs. Hudson to be up worrying about them; he knew they would answer to her shouting in the morning.

His wrist supported a new splint. John was given some medication for the shock and treatment for potential hypothermia. His arms were wrapped around his chest; he was still shivering.

“John-“ he attempted again.

John didn’t even look at him this time as he replied:

“Sherlock, please…I just want to go to bed.”

He tried to get away, but Sherlock wouldn’t let him. Instead he grabbed John by the shoulders, swirling him around so that his back hit the wall. A little harder than he meant.

“What the fuck, Sherlock?!” John exclaimed.

They were both breathing hard again, and Sherlock had to take a minute to figure out what to say. His eyes found John’s, then his lips, and he realized all he wanted to do was kiss him again. Pinning him against the wall, their lips smashed together once more.

“Sherlock!” John protested, trying to break away. Sherlock’s lips managed to brush across the corner of his mouth before John pushed him away. “Would you stop snogging me for a minute and talk?”

Sherlock’s eyes were wide as they glared at each other. His heart pounded in shock, not sure what to make of this new emotion. His limbs were trembling with anxiety. He could feel everything running through him, from the blood pounding in his ears to his cock, stirring against the strain of his trousers.
“I almost lost you,” Sherlock whispered.

“I thought you weren’t gay!”

“I thought you weren’t!”

For a moment the only sounds were their heavy breaths. Sherlock swallowed, desperate to find his voice again. He didn’t want this to end. To prove his point he stepped closer to John so that their hips grinded against each other; their erections were pinned together.

“Sherlock, that’s just biology,” John said, his voice quiet and cheeks flushed, “a monkey could kiss me and I would feel-“

Sherlock grabbed his arms and kissed him again. He immediately deepened the kiss this time, his tongue exploring every corner of John’s mouth he could reach. John still vaguely tasted of the curry they ate for dinner hours ago. He was shaking in Sherlock’s hands so he gripped John tighter, deepening the kiss even more. John let out a soft moan, and Sherlock took the opportunity to change up the pace. His lips found John’s neck, sending a trail of kisses from his neck back up to his chin.

Then he suddenly broke apart, leaving John panting, flushed, wide-eyed. His lips were swollen from kissing.

“Was that biology?” Sherlock whispered. “Come on, John. I’m the one who sits at the counter and examines pig ears. Don’t talk to me about biology.”

Their lips pressed together again. This time John guided the kiss. He hesitated at first, his tongue hovering just at Sherlock’s mouth before crashing inside. He was practically down his throat before he suddenly broke apart.

“Wait, pigs ears?” He shot.

Sherlock only grinned. He reached for John’s jumper, and he was pleasantly surprised when he allowed him to continue. He peeled off John’s t-shirt next; all of his clothes were still damp from the Thames. John seemed to have no reservations about allowing the wet clothes to fall to the ground. He even reached up, getting to work on Sherlock’s buttons. A soft moan escaped his own lips when John’s knuckles brushed against his chest. He repaid him by placing a finger against one of John’s nipples, slightly applying pressure at a spot that made John grunt.

John’s trousers were next. He even helped Sherlock with the belt and buttons until they were both shoving his trousers to the floor. Sherlock’s shirt was left open, momentarily forgotten, as he began palming John’s erection through his pants.

“Sherlock,” John whispered.

He could only reply in a series of soft pants and moans as he continued working on John’s hardening erection. John’s lips were on his neck, suckling lightly at the skin.

He was no longer thinking clearly. Thoughts jumbled together in his mind, from oh god what are we doing to oh god, John! Later he would blame that lack of clarity to explain why he dropped to his knees. He would blame it on why John let him slip a hand inside his pants, feeling the skin of his cock for the first time.

“Yeah,” John moaned softly.
John didn’t protest when he pulled his pants down around his ankles. He was aware they were still awkwardly wearing socks and trainers, but he didn’t care. His mouth was around John’s cock before either of them could find an excuse to stop him. John cried out in surprise but didn’t tell him to stop as he took him in deeper. A hand found his hair, roaming around the dark curls and guiding him in closer.

“Yeah,” John moaned again.

He broke apart to stroke his shaft play with his balls long enough to send John tensing up and crying out in ecstasy. John held his cock toward him, in a silent plea for him to continue. Sherlock’s tongue dashed out, gratefully taking the second chance to take him in deep. He groaned around the cock when it hit the back of his throat. John grunted, grasping his hair even harder.

“Sherlock!” John gasped. “Sherlock, I—”

He came before he could finish his warning. Sherlock broke away just in time. He seemed to come back to his senses as cum trickled down his own neck. He was grateful he stopped; he wasn’t confidence enough in his skills to swallow him down.

Hands reached down for him, pulling him back to his feet. John went to work again on his neck, biting and suckling at every inch of skin he could find.

“You’re wearing far too many clothes,” John whispered into his ear.

John’s tongue suddenly dashed inside his earlobe, then around the rim, and Sherlock shuddered so violently John grinned. His trousers were suddenly yanked from his waist. He groaned loudly as John cupped his erection, palming it lightly at first, then pumping it roughly enough to send his hips thrusting forward.

“John!” He gasped. “John.”

He wanted to find a way to tell John that he didn’t want their first time together to be entirely against the wall of their foyer. He wanted to take him to bed, to wake up next to him and relish in the simple fact that John was alive.

John seemed to have other ideas.

“Oh god!” His hips thrust erratically against John, sending John bouncing lightly against the wall. He held onto John’s shoulders as though it were a matter of life and death.


His hands joined John’s on his cock, and it was only a few more strokes before he was grunting and crying out. His hips continued to thrust out through his climax.

“John!” He nearly screamed as his body convulsed into shakes. “John, John…”

At last he stilled, limp in John’s hands.

“Fuck,” he whispered, and John laughed.

Their eyes carefully lifted up to meet each other, coming into contact for the first time since kissing.

“Biology?” Sherlock rasped, laughing a little. “Really?”
A sloppy grin danced across John’s face. His face was completely flushed now, his lips swollen and eyes blown wide. Cum covered their hands and legs, but they were still shaking with anticipation. John leaned in, offering him a final kiss. When they broke apart, John whispered in his ear:

“Can I take you to bed?”

Sherlock stared at him, eyes wide with surprise and want. He nodded. John held out his hand, and their fingers locked together. Neither said a word as they disappeared into John’s bedroom, hearts beating with the knowledge of what was to come.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!! Thoughts?
“Are you mad at me?”

He whispered the question into John’s ear as he held him close in his flatmate’s own bed.

“Why would I be mad at you?” John replied softly.

John shivered slightly as Sherlock’s fingertips brushed across the bruising on John’s neck and face. Hours of sex couldn’t hide the aftermath of their night on the Thames. John’s skin was still cold to the touch as his hands roamed around him, getting used to the feeling of them. The very beginnings of dawn peeked through the curtains as they lay wide awake from the shock of what they did.

Sherlock didn’t reply. He was afraid to admit he was still worried that John regretted everything. Even as John’s fingers traced the new cast on Sherlock’s arm he couldn’t help but to fear that once morning came his flatmate would be disgusted.

“I’m just in a little bit of shock, that’s all,” John said. A faint smile appeared on his face. “I nearly drowned and realized I was gay all in the same night. It takes some getting used to, you know?”

His own face scrunched up a little as the full meaning of John’s words hit him. He just realized he was gay. Christ, no wonder he was nearly stunned into silence.

“So you meant it, when you told me you weren’t gay?” Sherlock asked.

“I did then,” John admitted. “Obviously you didn’t mean it.”

“Obviously?” Sherlock teased.

“Oh come off it!” John grinned. “No one learns how to give blow jobs like that from watching porn!”

Sherlock grinned himself as he rested his head on John’s shoulder.

“So all this talk about you being a virgin- it was all lies?” John asked.

“Do you really think Donovan, Moriarty, or even Mycroft would know about how many blokes I’ve shagged?”

John’s cheeks reddened a bit; he gripped the fingers sticking out of the splint on his wrist.

“How many blokes have you shagged then?” John inquired.

He knew the number off the top of his head, but he didn’t want to seem that pathetic.

“Only one that mattered,” he admitted. “Or at least, I thought so. I went to university with him.”

John stayed silent for a moment, and Sherlock was embarrassed to think the thought of him being in a relationship was that shocking. He held John a bit closer, hoping to distract him.

“Is Mycroft gay?”

The question caught him so off guard that Sherlock nearly choked.
“What?!” He shot in horror.

“Just curious!” John said. “He just seems so…certain…of your sexuality.”

“I assure you, Mycroft knows nothing of my sexuality.”

If John turned around at that moment he would have seen Sherlock’s face redder than it had ever been before. His ears burned with embarrassment; it was almost painful.

“As I know nothing of his,” he continued. “But Mycroft did have a girlfriend once, when he was twenty-one. He paraded her around like she was queen. That lasted about five months before she disappeared. He never mentioned her again. Her name was Amy.”

“Disappeared?” John said. His throat sounded a bit too tight. “Sherlock, you don’t really think-?”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide when he realized what John thought he meant.

“No!” He exclaimed. “I’m certain of it. At least…I think.”

They paused for a minute before bursting out laughing.

“Can we please stop talking about my brother’s sex life?” Sherlock pleaded.

“Sure.” John flipped suddenly so they were facing each other. Sherlock swallowed nervously as John’s eyes roamed his and eventually trailed down to examine every inch of his face. “When did you realize you had feelings for me?”

Sherlock stared at him for a moment, stunned by the question. His throat went dry. He had to swallow a few times before he could finally admit:

“When you saved me from the cabby.” John seemed shocked by the answer. His eyes dilated slightly, followed by his hand tracing up to Sherlock’s cheek. “When did you realize it was okay to have feelings for me?”

John studied him. Sherlock fought the urge to reach out and check John’s pulse. He knew just from wrapping a hand around his wrist that it was beating out of control. While he knew his own answer off the top of his head it seemed like John was realizing for the very first time the truth about his feelings for Sherlock.

“When you pulled me out of the Thames and saved my life.”

Their eyes met, and for a moment Sherlock stopped breathing. Then he suddenly went in for a kiss, his lips crashing into John’s at a maddening speed. Their hands roamed each other’s bodies, finding every inch of skin they could. It was John who finally broke apart, breathing hard.

“It’s nearly morning. Do you really think you can go again?” John asked.

Sherlock glanced up, first meeting John’s eye and then looking to the daylight seeping into the bedroom. They had been up all night and the entire previous day. Although he wouldn’t admit to it, Sherlock hadn’t slept since starting the case over forty-eight hours ago. He wanted nothing more than to drink in as much of John as possible. Part of him was still afraid that once they woke up again reality would really hit.

“It’s fine,” John whispered, as though reading his mind. A hand reached up to brush the hair out of his eyes, and Sherlock shivered. “Let’s get some rest.”
John’s hand roamed through his hair for a moment, coaxing him to sleep. They shared one final kiss before Sherlock closed his eyes, and with John’s arm around his shoulder he slept better than he had in weeks.
Awkward Sex

Chapter Notes

I decided to throw John's point of view in there as well. I also turned the "awkward sex" porn challenge prompt into an all-around just plain awkward prompt. With sex too, of course.

When John stirred awake his first thought was that he felt better than he could remembering feeling in ages. His mind seemed clearer and the world didn’t feel as heavy. Letting out a deep sigh, he shifted positions in his bed and immediately changed his mind.

A gasp of pain woke up every injury in his body. His arms and legs felt like jelly, his neck and face felt a bit numb, and his arse burned as he rolled over again to his back. As he reached out and felt the sticky, sweaty, sheets, the entire night rushed back to him.

“Oh god,” he mumbled.

Next to him the bed was empty. One glance around the room told him Sherlock found his clothes and left. His door was even shut, leaving his room silent. What was most confusing was that he remembered falling asleep to daybreak and outside it was now pitch black. He turned to the clock and swore again.

“Shit!” He exclaimed, jumping up in bed.

He immediately went to work searching for pyjama pants to wear. He felt gross and longed for a shower, but he was more concerned with rounding on Sherlock.

“Sherlock!” He cried as he threw open his door and stormed down to the quiet flat.

Surely Sherlock wouldn’t leave him. Sherlock just couldn’t be that type. He was timid and concerned and…absolutely petrified of emotions. Groaning, he ran his fingers over his head. He stopped in the hall, right where they first-

“In here.”

He looked up, letting out a sigh of relief and the soft reply. He followed the voice to the kitchen, where Sherlock was already glued to a new experiment. Surrounded by textbooks, Sherlock’s eyes were focused on some unknown specimen underneath his microscope. The entire place smelled of rotten eggs.

Swallowing nervously, John tried to not lose it right then and there. Sherlock just looked so odd sitting there. So out of place and alone.

John had to look away as Sherlock reached into a kitchen bowl and pulled out a new specimen for examination. It was just so weird! These were things he could hardly tolerate as flatmates, but was he supposed to immediately be charmed by them as a lover? What if he couldn’t accept that side of Sherlock? From the looks of it, his flatmate at least didn’t seem too bothered that he was standing there, gawking at him.
The worst part was that strange specimens aside, the more he studied Sherlock the more he thought he looked, well, hot. Sherlock looked younger than his age in a casual shirt button to his elbows and tight, dark tinted denim trousers. He took an experimental step closer to Sherlock and froze when his cock only stirred in even more interest. Sherlock glanced up at him, and John’s eyes went wide in horror when he was caught staring.

*God this is awkward.*

“There’s still some toast if you want it,” Sherlock offered. “Sorry, it’s really all we have.”

“It’s after five!” John rounded on him as he took up the offer and went in search of bread. “I’ve been asleep for over twelve hours!”

“You needed it,” Sherlock shot. “If I were hurt that badly you would have made me do the same.”

Sherlock’s eyes flashed to him over the microscope, and John stopped. He was right, exactly right, and he couldn’t help but to let out a sigh of frustration. He tried to not meet Sherlock’s eyes again, but he kept finding himself attracted to the sincere concern etched in them.

“How do you feel?” Sherlock asked quietly.


A cheeky grin crossed Sherlock’s face, and he felt like he might be sick.

“I went to see Lestrade,” Sherlock announced.

“Shit!” John hissed. “Why didn’t you wake me!!”

“It’s fine. You were unconscious through most of the ordeal. He said you can drop by tomorrow. He agreed you needed rest.”

“Great,” John moaned. “That’s all I need.”


“Yeah, until he’s behind closed doors giggling with the rest of the yard about how you had to perform CPR on me.”

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock replied:

“He’s happy you’re alive.” John was shocked at how honest and, frankly, *nice* Sherlock was being. Letting him sleep in, putting up with Lestrade for him, saving food for him. It almost had him worried that Sherlock wanted to move too fast. “I didn’t make the me giving you mouth to mouth part seem like that big of a deal. I also left out the part where we shagged against the wall of our flat afterwards.”

Their eyes finally met again, and John’s whole body went completely stiff. At that moment his toast and tea were ready and he grabbed both, grateful for the distraction. Sherlock’s eyes stayed on him as he sat at the table next to him. He tried eating, but the food tasted too bothersome to his system to digest. The toast collapsed at his plate, and his eyes flashed to Sherlock. Without thinking about it, his fingers inched closer to Sherlock’s hand, which was still wrapped in the splint.

“What are we doing, Sherlock?” John asked quietly.

He hoped for no jokes, no sarcasm, but he wasn’t sure Sherlock was capable of being serious. Hell,
he wasn’t sure Sherlock had any clue himself what was going on. John was still shocked by the fact that Sherlock wasn’t a virgin and knew what a blow job was.

“I’m sorry if I moved too fast for you,” Sherlock admitted.

He turned back to the experiment, as though desperate for a distraction, but John grabbed his arm to stop him. Sherlock froze. His face went pale.

“Do you honestly like me?” John demanded. “Or was this just one of your tests? Just some crazy rush of adrenaline? Just a result of-”

All of a sudden Sherlock’s lips smashed against his, and he was silenced. Sherlock tried his best to deepen the kiss; his hand was already roaming to the obvious bulge in his trousers. John reached out just in time to stop him.

“Sherlock!” He gasped. “What are we doing?”

They were only inches apart now. He could see every white scar on Sherlock’s face, each band of sweat trickling down his forehead, and could smell his mint shampoo and soap. And fuck, it was entirely too intoxicating.

“I want this, John,” Sherlock whispered. His hand lingered in a fist on John’s thigh. It sounded like it was a great struggle for him to not tremble. “Do you have any idea how terrifying it is for me to admit that?”

John’s eyes widened; that was so much more personal of a confession than he expected.

Maybe Sherlock did know what he was doing. Maybe he was the crazy one here.

“I don’t just want to shag you,” Sherlock breathed. “I want…I think we could be…you know, good together.”

He swallowed hard, and John had to admire him for being able to get the words out. Any words of his own were trapped in his throat, too stunned with fear to dare to be spoken.

“What do you want?” Sherlock sounded so crestfallen when he spoke again. From the anxious look in his eyes, the disappointed faintly painted on his face, Sherlock had anticipated all of this wouldn’t go over well with him. Which only made John feel worse.

_I want to fuck you_, was what was on the tip of his tongue, but he knew they needed to work out something deeper than that. He just couldn’t believe Sherlock was the one who had everything figured out.

Before he could decide on what to say Sherlock’s lips and hands were on him again. He shuddered as cold hands roamed his bare chest and then found his pants again, palming at him gently.

“It’s okay if this is what you want,” Sherlock said quietly. John gasped slightly when he grasped his already hardening erection. “It takes some getting used to. Are you even comfortable in your own skin?”

John panted as Sherlock’s lips dancing around his neck. Blood rushed to his head and his heart pounded with a desperate wanting. None of this sounded like Sherlock, but maybe it was the only way Sherlock knew how to be romantic.

And perhaps Sherlock was right. Maybe he needed to get used to the feeling of another man’s lips
on his, of another man undressing him, before he could decide if this is what he truly wanted.

He breathed Sherlock in deeper, taking in the taste of burnt toast and coffee in his mouth. An animalistic groan escaped him when he felt his pants being pushed down past his bum. God they were going to do this again. In the kitchen.

His eyes opened just in time to see Sherlock’s fingers wondering toward his cock, and John stopped him again.

“Sherlock,” he rasped. “Aren’t you afraid we’re moving too fast?”

Sherlock stared into his eyes, and John could practically feel him deducing every thought running through his mind. In his eyes John saw one of the only people who ever truly understood him; one of the only people who ever bothered to. Here he was with a gorgeous, brilliant, bloke practically sitting on his lap, ready to devour him, and he was having relationship anxiety. With his hands wrapped out Sherlock’s neck and eyes glued together, John suddenly realized his own answer.

He would be stupid do deny either of them this.

“I want you,” he whispered, ignoring his previous statement. “Fuck, Sherlock, I think I want this.”

The purest of small smiles crossed Sherlock’s face, and their lips were on each other once again. He would never quite get over the anxiety that came with Sherlock jumping him. From the way he was trembling one would assume he’d never done this before with anyone. But as Sherlock shifted from his seat to John’s lap he relaxed completely, and when their eyes met again it was like he was looking into a whole new world of possibilities.

A new life.

Which was exactly what he needed.

Sherlock kissed him again, grinding their hips together at the same time. They both moaned at the contact. John nearly whimpered at the feeling of Sherlock's fabric on his bare skin.

"You realize you're trying to fuck me with your trousers on?" John grinned.

The movement stopped as Sherlock stared at him, embarrassed.

"It's fine," John said, offering another kiss. He murmured against his lips: "I kind of like it."

Sherlock's heart skipped a beat at the compliment, and he grinded against him even harder. Hands were suddenly grasping at his cock, stroking him until he was a panting, moaning, mess. His arms clung around Sherlock's neck as he planted his feet against the legs of the table for support.

"Oh god," John whispered.

A damp spot was already appearing in Sherlock's trousers, and suddenly he had the urge to palm him there. Without unzipping him he began stroking Sherlock's erection, sending Sherlock's eyes rolling to the back of his head in ecstasy.

"God this is weird," he couldn't help but to mutter.

Sherlock moaned as John suddenly thrust up, and a heat rose in his body that sent him over the edge. No, not weird. Okay. Very okay.

"John," Sherlock moaned as he kept stroking against his trousers.
His other hand wondered down Sherlock's arse, finding that tight space between his cheeks. Sherlock moaned again, burrying his head in John's shoulder as he very carefully stuck a finger in, just enough to set him off. A load groan erupted above him when he pulled out again, and Sherlock's thrusts became more erratic against his hips.

John came without warning with a loud gasp. His eyes were blown wide as he watched Sherlock ride out his own climax on top of him, grunting and panting as he came into his own pants.

Their eyes met as they caught their breath. Pupils wide, they gazed at each other in shock, unsure if they were more turned on than ever or embarrassed.

"Sorry if that was completely awkard," Sherlock muttered.

He shifted in John's lap, and he shuddered at as the damp stains brushed against his own bare legs. John only grinned and kissed him again.

"No regrets," he promised when they broke apart.

At last Sherlock slipped off his lap and back into his seat, where he unzipped his trousers for the first time. He breathed a sighed of relief, but when his eyes rolled toward John they both burst out laughing.

"I was worried I would scare you off," Sherlock admitted.

John reached for his pyjama pants, suddenly feeling awkward being the only one naked.

"No," John replied, shaking his head. "Like you said- just takes some getting comfortable with your own skin."

A hand reached up brushed gently against his arm. His eyes fluttered to a close- even just a simple touch was already dragging him back to the edge. He still wanted him, god help him. Sherlock grinned.

"If I do say so myself, Dr. Watson, we're already making good progress."
On A Date

Chapter Notes

First date fun!

Sherlock kept tugging at the ends of his shirt sleeves as he anxiously waited for John by the front door. Five minutes ago they were supposed to leave for dinner, but here he was standing alone. His eyes kept darting up the steps, only to still meet John’s closed bedroom door.

When he wasn’t tugging at the shirt he was running his hands through his hair. He was paranoid about everything- how he smelled, his teeth, his shoes. The anxiety was unfamiliar and nauseating. If he thought dating John would be easier because they were flatmates then he wasn’t as clever as he gave himself credit for. The past week had been a constant struggle of am I smothering him and are we not doing enough? When John suggested they go out on a proper date a knot formed in his stomach that hadn’t healed since.

At the sound of the bedroom door opening and closing Sherlock jumped. He quickly checked himself, making sure everything was in place before his eyes flashed to the staircase as John appeared. His flatmate- lover?- was sharply dressed in grey dress slacks he’d never seen and a light blue collared shirt. Sherlock swallowed nervously; his body was already going stiff. He could smell the hair product from where he stood, and honestly he wasn’t sure why John bothered with as short as his hair was cut, but it looked…nice. Noticeable.

John’s eyes roamed over him as well, and he wanted nothing more to disappear in thin air. He must look ridiculous compared to John.


His voice was calm, but then again, John was used to this, wasn’t he? He was able to remain cool and calm on dates with complete strangers, let alone someone he was around nearly twenty four hours a day. Sherlock struggled just to find his voice enough to reply:

“Good.”

He felt sick. He couldn’t go through with this. He wasn’t cut out for this. He couldn’t even think of anything else to say.

Give him a compliment, recommended a voice in his head that sounded oddly like Mrs. Hudson.

“I like the blue,” he admitted. “It really…brings out your eyes.”

John looked like he was holding back a laugh, and Sherlock was grateful when he was able to hold it together.

“You smell nice.”

The simple comment did wonders for his confidence. He bit his tongue before a sigh of relief escaped him. Instead an awkward silence settled between them, and it was only the fear of Mrs. Hudson barding in on them that made him ask:
“So…Angelo’s?”

John shrugged.

“Sure.”

Deep down he knew neither of them wanted to go there. They ate there so often the food didn’t even have any taste and the other customers knew their names. But they would be comfortable there, and maybe- just maybe- it would feel like any other dinner.

And besides, Angelo already thought they were a couple.

So they went to Angelo’s, ordered in usual, and it took a record three minutes before they started talking about cases.

“Lestrade thinks they have a lead.” As soon as he spoke up, Sherlock felt like an idiot. John stopped eating and stared at him, and he realized that sitting in silence the entire dinner was probably better than talking about work. “Jeremy Vaughn. He matches the description and was spotted on camera near the scene. “Jeremy Vaughn. He matches the description and was spotted on camera near the scene. He told me to keep an eye out.”

This time even Sherlock froze. John’s eyes widened in a look that read are you seriously telling me to watch my back on a date? Sherlock nearly wept with gratitude when John simply nodded and replied:

“Good. That’s good. The bastard deserves every minute of jail time he gets.”

Sherlock just nodded in silent agreement. His ears burned with embarrassment; it felt like his face might explode. They quickly looked away and went back to eating for a few painfully awkward moments.

“Do you want to catch a movie later?”

He was so relieved for a break in the silence that he immediately spat:

“Sure.”

Without thinking. At all. John stared at him, shocked, as though he didn’t expect him to actually answer. His voice was uncharacteristically high pitched, and he knew John suspected he was just saying whatever would please him.

“I just thought it would be a good escape for a while,” John admitted.

Sherlock didn’t do movies. He couldn’t stand the crap on telly, let alone being trapped in a dark room full of strangers who groaned at you if you had to stand up to take a break after just sitting there for hours. Movies were an excuse to not talk, and movies were a good way to eat up time on dates. That’s what John must be looking for then: an excuse, any excuse, to get out of this horrible awkwardness.

“You don’t actually like movies, do you?” John asked. Sherlock froze, taken completely off-guard. “Come on, Sherlock. I know you, remember? I’ve never seen you watch a movie the whole time we’ve lived together. It was ages before I could even get you to watch telly, and god was that a mistake. What do you like?”

Sherlock’s heart pounded as he tried to unfreeze his mind. Dozens of words popped into his head: cases, research, experiments, science, reading, composing, music-
“I’ve got us symphony tickets,” John announced, proudly presenting two tickets. “Starts in an hour and a half. The group is supposed to be one of the best orchestras in the world. They traveled from Berlin, I think.”

John stumbled over the last bit, and Sherlock knew this was something he Googled at the very last minute. But the whole thing was so shocking and thoughtful that he couldn’t think of anything to say.

Then he remembered John’s original point, and he felt horrible.

“You hate classical music,” he pointed out.

“I hate classical music when it’s playing downstairs at three in the morning,” John smirked.

“Believe it or not, I actually like classical music. I even tried out the cello in primary school.”

A smile broke out across his own face.

“How did that turn out?” He teased.

“You don’t see me playing cello now, do you?”

They both laughed, and for the first time the air in the room seemed to thin out. Sherlock tugged on his shirt collar, thankful to be able to breathe again.

That’s when he realized:

“Brahms. I was playing something of his a couple of nights ago.”

John shrugged.

“So I’m observant,” he grinned. “You use methods of deduction and observation to solve murders, I use them to impress dates.”

“Yes, but using them while crime solving wouldn’t kill you though, would it?”

They laughed again. Their eyes met, and John’s seemed to twinkle- or maybe that was just the candlelight. When he finally looked away he stole a glance around the room, just out of curiosity. He was stunned to see that nothing was out of ordinary. Angelo was chatting up customers as usual, other couples were eating and laughing, and no one seemed to notice there were two men dining alone at a candlelit table by the window.

Suddenly John’s fingers inched towards his, and for a brief moment he grasped the fingers sticking out of Sherlock’s cast. His fingers were warm, comforting, accepting. Familiar.

They were gone as soon as he noticed sensation.

“Do you even like what you’re eating?” John asked.

Sherlock glanced down at his plate of semi-warm spaghetti.

“No,” he admitted.

“Then come on. Let’s find some ice cream before the show.”

“We don’t have to sit through this if you don’t want to,” Sherlock offered.
Part of him was worried John was still just pretending for his sake. When John rolled his eyes a great weight lifted off his shoulder.

“Do you honestly think I’d spend the money on those tickets if I didn’t want to go?” John said. “I could have just taken you to the movies and tortured you with *Scary Movie V.*”

Sherlock simply stared at him, puzzled. John blinked.

“You’ve never-?” He drew in a deep breath. “Forget symphonies. Next date is going to be getting you acquainted with pop culture from *this* century.”

He grinned as he threw down the money for both of their meals. Sherlock wanted to say something about him paying for the whole amount, but John was already heading for the door before he could argue. A smile crossed his own face as John’s words played on repeat in his mind. The idea of being forced to watch a series of any kind of movie seemed agonizing, but it was the ‘next date’ part that sent his heart fluttering with excitement for the rest of the evening.
Chapter Notes

What happens when John does talk Sherlock into watching a movie?

“Sherlock…Sherlock, wake up!”

Sherlock grunted, willing for John’s voice to leave him alone and let him nap. He was trapped in a world of spaceships and bright blinking lights.

“Sherlock, I swear if you don’t wake up right now-“

There was a light tapping on his cheek, and his eyes flew open. John glared daggers at him as he straddled his chest.

“Did I fall asleep?” Sherlock wondered innocently.

He ran a hand threw his head and yawned dramatically as he sat up. John scurried off his lap, falling to a heap on the other side of the sofa. On the screen in front of them credits rolled. The clock displayed it was nearly two in the morning.

“Yes, Sherlock.” John groaned. “You fell asleep. During *Star Wars.*”

“We must have watched a dozen of those movies!”

“We watched one! The first one! We were going to watch the entire series.”

The disappointment on John’s face was almost child-like, but as guilty as he felt he wished John could see how ridiculous he was being.

“Please tell me we aren’t,” he pleaded.

Crossing his arms, John sank into the sofa as he sighed:

“No. Not now. Now I’m going to go to sleep and pretend that you didn’t fall asleep twenty minutes into a film and left me to watch the rest by myself while you snored.”

“I don’t snore!” Sherlock snapped. “And you’re not sleeping. Come on, I’m awake now.”

“Lost your chance.”

John’s eyes fluttered shut and head fell sideways as he feigned sleep.

“John…” no movement. “John, I don’t snore. And you can’t blame me for sleeping when you force me to watch hours of a movie about a chimpanzee and a robot in space.”

He knew that would get to John. He fought the urge to grin as John shot up and waved an accusing finger at him.

“That’s not what it’s about, and you know it!” John shot. “One movie, Sherlock. One movie was all
I asked!

“It’s not my fault if you picked a stupid one.”

He stifled a yawn; maybe sleep wasn’t such a bad idea after all.

“It’s not stupid. It’s *Star Wars*, Sherlock. It’s legendary!”

John sat up so that they were practically face-to-face. Suddenly the blood rushed to his head, his heart began to beat faster, and every inch of his body was now wide awake.

“Most forty year old men aren’t obsessed with children’s movies,” he shot.

His partner’s eyes went wide, and the hurt returned to his face.

“Yeah, well I’m dating a younger man…that gives me some credit, right?”

It clearly wasn’t a well thought out retort, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin.

“Not if that means I’m dating an old man,” he teased.

They were only an inch apart now. He could feel John’s hot breath on his face. Heat radiated from his body, sending tiny shocks up and down his limbs.

“You’re crossing a serious line,” John warned.

“Want me to make it up to you?”

Their lips were on each other before John could respond. Sherlock’s hands found his shoulders, his arm, his chest, and soon he was lowering John back down to the cushions and shrugging off his shirt. John helped him, already breathing heavily as they deepened the kiss. He broke apart briefly so that he could sit back and admire the man beneath him. John may be five years older, but he didn’t look at it. His skin already glowed with anticipation, his pupils were blown wide, and his hand was as gentle as ever as he pulled Sherlock back down on top of him.
Anxiety burned in his stomach as they stepped further and further inside the building. Against Lestrade's wishes, Sherlock and John were going after the very criminal who threatened their lives less than a week ago. Knowing how dangerous the man was only made Sherlock feel that much more worried about taking John out the scene, but there was nothing he could say to convince John to stay at home.

He wasn’t sure if investigating as partners would be any different than investigating as friends, but the very moment they stepped into the abandoned warehouse he: it was worse. So much worse. The worry, the anxiety, the fear was so much worse.

With a tight throat and sweat that painted his forehead Sherlock found it more and more difficult to keep it together as they entered the lowest level of the warehouse. John looked relived to see the huge open room was empty, but to Sherlock everything spelled hazard. There were crates and boxes stacked amongst lines of shelving, allowing plenty of places for a criminal to hide. He tried his best to concentrate on finding any signs of their suspect, but instead all he could focus on was John’s uneven breathing.

“Sherlock,” John whispered.

Sherlock hated to, but he held a finger to his lips to signal that they needed absolute silence. John looked like he might be sick to his stomach at the denial. He continued to creep forward, but he noticed John lingering behind him. Fingers collapsed around his wrist, pulling him to a stop. He turned abruptly, gazing at John in surprise.

John followed his orders and stayed silent. Instead of speaking, John simply pulled him into a soft kiss. Their lips brushed together once, twice before John’s hands found his arms to hold him closer. It was only the distant sound of footsteps that drew his attention away.

“Sherlock!” John said again, far more urgent- frightened.

His eyes were scanning the room so frantically to pinpoint the footsteps he didn’t notice John grab his hand. If he did he would have warned him about letting criminals see how much they cared for each other…because the first thing the suspect did when he stepped out of the shadows was smirk at them.

The second thing he did was raise his gun.
WARNING: Guns and blood

Their hands slowly fell apart as the gun was raised to meet them. John held his breath; otherwise the criminal (Abrams, he remembered) would hear his frantic breathing. He glanced to Sherlock and was relieved to see that he seemed perfectly calm.

“It’s over, Abrams,” Sherlock announced. “We know you killed her. We have video evidence. The police are surrounding the area as we speak.”

John tried not to make a sound, but he wanted to slap Sherlock for that lie. The only reason Lestrade even knew they were headed this way was because John had a moment of doubt and sent the D.I. a quick text telling him Sherlock’s suspicions.

Sherlock didn’t even know.

“It sounds like I should be getting out of here,” Abrams rasped. “But you two are standing in my way.”

The safety went off on the gun, and John tensed. His shoulder began to ache, and though he knew it was a subconscious reaction the pain quickly became so much that he tried shifting positions to get his mind off it. Abrams fingers tightened around the finger, but John waited until the gun hovered toward Sherlock before he acted.

In one swift movement his own weapon was pointed at Abrams.

Sherlock glanced toward him, impressed, but didn’t say anything.

“You’re surrounded,” John breathed. “It’s over, there’s no need to make this any harder on yourself.”

A gunshot went off, piercing their ears and echoing madly across the walls as they dove out of the way. John was covering Sherlock as he reached over, finger on the trigger before Abrams could shoot again. The shot hit Abrams in the chest, just centimeters beneath his heart. Sherlock and John watched, his arm still shielding Sherlock from the line of fire, as Abrams eyes went wide and he stumbled back until falling on the ground.

“Shit,” John whispered.

His heart sputtered back into action, pounding so violently it hurt. Sherlock chased after him as he ran toward their criminal and fell to the ground next to him.

“What are you doing?” Sherlock demanded.

Instead of getting next to him Sherlock awkwardly stood above him. John’s eyes danced around the room. He listened closely for any signs the police were on their way.
“I didn’t mean to kill him!” John spat, his voice higher than normal. “He was involved in a whole string of crimes. He had connections that could put others in jail.”

And I didn’t mean to kill him.

Sherlock stayed silent, observing him and not the bleeding criminal on the ground. Abrams turned a ghostly grey. Blood was everywhere: covering Abrams, covering his own hands. John tried applying pressure, but nothing seemed to help.

“Sherlock, get on the phone and get Lestrade.”

He didn’t move.

“Sherlock!”

With a groan, Sherlock took out his mobile and began talking with Lestrade. There was yelling on the other line but John ignored it as he desperately tried to slow the bleeding. Abrams eyes were still open, gazing at him. It was like he was half pleading with him and half furious.

“Thames,” Abrams whispered suddenly.

Sherlock and John looked at each other. Lestrade continued to yell on the other line as the room remained silent until Abrams explained:

“Body is in the Thames. That’s why I was there. I did it…I did it for Brown.”

John’s eyebrows furrowed as he pressed down even harder on Abrams’ chest. He became aware the criminal was gripping John’s own arm, soaking it in blood.


There was a beep, and John realized he must have put Lestrade on speaker.

“Samuel Brown…Manchester.”

It was all they were able to get out of him before Abrams’ eyes fell shut. His heart suddenly stilled and head rolled to the side. John was frozen beside him, hand still lingering on the criminal’s chest.

“John—“ Sherlock whispered.

He was having trouble breathing. The world slowed to a stop around him as a sickening bile settled in his throat.

I’m going to be sick.

“John—“ Sherlock tried again, a little louder. He reached out to him, but John shoved him away as he stood.

Arm raised to his mouth, John stumbled away. For a moment he just concentrated on not being sick. Not here in front of Sherlock with police sirens in the distance. He was aware he was shaking, so much so it was hard to stay upright.

He just couldn’t understand why he was reacting this way. He didn’t with the cabby. He didn’t any other time a case ended badly. But as he stole a glance to Sherlock and saw him watching him, confused, he nearly threw up right then and there.
The thought of Abrams’ raised gun, the bullet rushing toward them, pushing Sherlock to the ground just in time made him collapse on spot.

“John!” Sherlock exclaimed.

Sherlock was by his side in seconds. Somehow John managed to not faint but simply crumble to his knees. He was shaking like mad, and he was secretly grateful when Sherlock shrugged off his coat and draped it over his shoulders.

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” Sherlock said quietly.

A hand was on his shoulder, and slowly he was able to calm down. He shifted back so that he was leaning against Sherlock. His knees were drawn to his chest as he settled into the warmth of Sherlock’s coat. He let the nausea pass, and he forced himself not to look at Abrams.

“It was self-defense, it was-“

“A really good shot,” he whispered.

He was embarrassed to realize tears stung his eyes as he turned to Sherlock for the first time. Sherlock simply stared at him, unsure how to react.

“I haven’t even shot a gun since…since the cabby. I didn’t want to kill him, Sherlock. Do you know how much information he probably had on the people he ran with? We knew he wasn’t the only one behind these murders. I ruined Lestrade’s best chance at finally putting an end to all of this.”

“He gave us a name,” Sherlock pointed out. “His dying words were a name, from Manchester. It could be the key to everything. Do you really think Lestrade would have gotten that out of him through interrogation?”

A dry laugh escaped him as he realized what Sherlock was implying. He could never understand how Sherlock’s brain was wired that way. He didn’t understand how Sherlock could think this was okay because otherwise they may have been out of luck. He was a soldier, and he still couldn’t understand it.

With his eyes squeezed shut he breathed in and out slowly. He shouldn’t be freaking out like this, he just shouldn’t.

“Lestrade won’t be angry,” Sherlock offered. “Besides, he likes you. Of anything he’ll be pissed at me.”

John looked at him, surprised.

“Seriously?” He asked.

Sherlock offered a small smile before placing a hand around his shoulder. Outside the sirens got louder. The warehouse was so quiet they could hear people shouting as everyone got into position.

“It’s over,” Sherlock whispered. “Come on.”

He allowed Sherlock to help him stand up. His legs were still wobbly, but with Sherlock’s help he managed to stand up straight. From the corner of his eye he caught sight of Abrams’ body, and at the very sight of him he could hear the sound of the bullet crashing through the room.
“What’s wrong?” Sherlock asked.

He looked at him but didn’t explain. A hand raised to his face, and he had to grip Sherlock’s arm for support. Drawing in a deep breath, he admitted:

“I just—“

But before he could explain Lestrade’s men rushed into the room with Lestrade taking the lead. They broke apart quickly. Blood rushed to his ears, and he could only hope the team was too focused on the body to notice them standing so closely together.

They were apart just in time as Lestrade appeared next to them.

“Are you two alright?”

The D.I.’s eyes roamed over them, taking in the blood. John took another deep breath, trying to stop himself from shaking as he nodded.

“Samuel Brown,” Sherlock said to him. “He said he was working for a Samuel Brown, from Manchester.”

Lestrade nodded, taking this in. His eyes were still locked on the blood staining John’s shirt and arms.

“Take him home, get cleaned up,” Lestrade said to Sherlock. “We can talk about it in the morning. Good work, you two.”

His eyes met Lestrade just before he walked away, and the D.I. offered him a nod and a grim, grateful smile. He knew Lestrade was thankful he sent him the text.

“Let’s go,” Sherlock said quietly.

Sherlock place a hand gently on his back to help steady him as they found their way out of the warehouse.

An hour later he was still scrubbing the blood from his skin in their bathroom. He kept catching his own eyes in the mirror and forced himself to look away. As time passed he was able to accept that it was an act of self-defense, but he could only think of Sherlock on the ground beneath him as he shielded him from the bullet.

“John.”

He jumped at Sherlock’s voice and let out a shaky breath as he stepped into the room.

“I thought you were asleep,” he admitted.

“Can’t sleep,” Sherlock replied. Silence fell between them for a moment before Sherlock whispered: “Thank you.”

John turned to him in shock. His heart pounded a bit too fast, and he realized he was standing there in nothing but his pants. Sherlock’s coat was sprawled over the edge of the bathtub, stained with blood.

“I ruined your coat,” John said quietly.

Instead of saying anything, Sherlock rushed forward, throwing his arms around him. John nearly
stumbled back in surprise and had to hold onto the sink to steady them.

“He shot at you,” John began. He was shaking again. “I saw it, he had the gun pointed at you when he shot.”

“I felt the bullet rush past me,” Sherlock admitted. His voice was muffled as he spoke into John’s shoulder. “You pushed me down just in time.”

Sherlock’s arms wrapped around him tighter, almost so tight it was hard to breathe. He couldn’t move, and he didn’t want to.

“You’re brilliant,” Sherlock whispered.

“I just can’t stop thinking about it,” he admitted. They broke apart for a moment, and tears were freely dripping from his eyes by now. “It was too close. I almost lost you before…before…”

Before I even realized what I had.

Sherlock seemed to understand. Stepping closer, he leaned in and pressed their lips together. For a moment only the sound of their uneven breaths filled the room as they kissed once, twice.

He was trembling too badly to continue.

They broke apart, foreheads rested together. Sherlock licked his lips as his hands settled on John’s shoulders.

“You should get some sleep. We have to talk to Lestrade tomorrow.”

“I’m tired of talking to Lestrade,” John said with a small smile.

“Do you want me to-“

“I’m fine,” he said. “I just…I just need to calm down.”

As much as he wanted to hold onto Sherlock and never let him go, he felt like he needed time to himself to process everything. This must have been what Sherlock felt when he pulled him from the Thames.

His eyes fell again on the blood stained coat on the tub, and his heart sank.

“Sorry about the coat,” he muttered.

“I’d rather be alive than have the bloody coat,” Sherlock offered.

Sherlock gripped his shoulder one final time, and John was grateful when he stepped away because he was going completely stiff. He knew he didn’t need it, not tonight. Tonight he just needed silence and sometime to himself. He just needed to understand it all. They had only been together a week and his heart had nearly been ripped from his chest at the thought of Sherlock in danger.

“Will you be alright?” Sherlock asked. They both knew it was a useless question, but John nodded anyway. “I’ll be on the sofa if you need me.”

He knew it was an invite. After all, Sherlock must have realized it was much less intimidating to invite him to the sofa than to bed. He let Sherlock leave first before he stepped into the shower for the second time that night. Getting the blood off was becoming a sickening, painful, task, but he wanted it gone before he attempted sleep.
After the third shower he was finally back to normal—physically, at least. His hair was a wet mess as he stepped out, towel wrapped around his waist. He grabbed the clothes scattered about the floor for washing later and shuffled to his bedroom.

It felt surreal to step inside his room by himself. He had hardly been in there alone since their first night together. It felt oddly wrong, but he knew Sherlock was probably fast asleep by now. The case was over, and Sherlock would be heading for his post-case crash.

He collapsed on his bed, burying his face into the pillow.

The very moment he closed his eyes the sound of the bullet ripped through him. He could even feel the air from it rushing past him, and his heart went wild. He shot straight up, breathing hard. As he glanced around the room (he kept the light on, for comfort), he suddenly felt too alone.

He jumped up, desperately pushing the covers away.

This just wasn’t going to work.

Chapter End Notes

I am SO sorry I missed the update yesterday! I feel absolutely terrible, especially after signing on and seeing all the lovely comments everyone left. Thank you SO much for the support! To make up for it, at least you'll get two chapters tonight!

And don't worry, this fic won't always be this dark. They just need to get past this first case and first week together!
The first thing Sherlock realized when he woke up on the sofa was that it was far too early to be awake. One glance at the clock told him it was just past three in the morning.

The second thing Sherlock realized was that he was not alone.

John was curled up in the armchair, sleeping with his head in the palm of his hand. A half-smile spread across Sherlock’s tired face. Somehow John managed to look completely at peace despite what had to be an extremely uncomfortable position. His skin glowed a bit thanks to a lamp he accidently left on, and all Sherlock could think was *told you so*.

Rolling off the couch, Sherlock crept toward John. He knelt down carefully beside the armchair. As he studied John he debated on waking him. Dark circles formed under his eyes, and he wondered why John hadn’t told him he was having trouble sleeping. But as peaceful as John looked, a night spent in an armchair wouldn’t do him any favors in the morning.

“John,” he whispered softly. Even as he placed a hand on John’s arm, he showed no signs of movement. “John, wake up.”

He shook him slightly, and John stirred awake, almost child-like.

“Sherlock?” John asked, confused.

His eyes wondered around the room, and it seemed to take him a minute to realize he wasn’t in his own bed.

“Sorry, was the light bothering you?” John asked. “Must have left it on by mistake.”

Yet he made no move to turn it off. Sherlock stood up to give John room. He crossed his arms as he studying him, taking in the disheveled hair, the blanket shimmying off his shoulders, and the fact that he was refusing to meet Sherlock’s eyes.

“You could have just taken the sofa, you know.”

“Yeah, well, you were on it.”

John sounded more than a bit uncomfortable, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk.

“Not what I meant,” Sherlock replied.

John didn’t answer, but he realized John understood perfectly.

“I was having trouble falling asleep, that’s all. Thought a change might help.”
Sherlock hesitated before saying anything. He didn’t want to upset John, especially after the day they had, but he wanted to know what was going on.

“Have you been having trouble sleeping?” Sherlock asked, trying to be gentle. “Other than tonight, I mean?”

John shifted in the chair, as though trying to get comfortable enough to fall asleep again. Taking a deep breath, he admitted:

“A bit, but insomnia’s really not that unusual for me.”

He wasn’t surprised to hear that. John never knew, but there were many nights that he had heard John wake up from his nightmares, gasping for breath or even shouting. He never asked him about it because he didn’t feel close enough to him to talk about something that personal, but maybe now was an appropriate time.

“Come on,” he said, reaching a hand out to him. “At least take the sofa.”

John hesitated again, but then sighed as he took his hand and allowed Sherlock to help him up. He led John to the sofa and sat down first, pulling John down on top of him. It was a bit awkward, and the closeness made his breathing suddenly quicken, but it felt good. Just as he settled into the position, John shifted so that he pinned Sherlock deep into the cushions. He turned so that they were somewhat face to face.

“This is what I meant,” John said with an amused grin.

“Fine,” Sherlock shot playfully. He lifted John up so that he was easily able to shove him to the other side of the couch and flip him onto his back. The move took John by surprise, and his eyes lit up with curiosity as Sherlock straddled him, planting his hands against the cushions on either side of John. “This better?”

John didn’t reply quickly enough so he swooped down, catching his lips in a kiss. Below him, John breathed in quick, desperate breaths, and Sherlock had a feeling he was quite used to being kissed by him yet.

“Are you alright?” Sherlock asked softly as he closed in the gap between them.

This only made the situation worse, as John squirmed for breathing room and turned his head to the next kiss. He looked up at Sherlock, guilt-ridden.

“Sorry,” John blurted out. “It’s a bit late for this, isn’t it?”

John may have been panicking, but Sherlock could feel the heat radiating from his body. His face was already flushed and glowing, but his eyes danced with nerves. He realized it wasn’t the late hour that was bothering John: he was the cause of his anxiety. Sherlock sat back, feeling awful.

“Sorry,” he muttered quickly, scrambling back so that he was off of John completely.

They stared at each other a moment, confused and hurt for very different reasons.

“Sherlock, I…” John stopped, swallowing nervously. “I didn’t expect you to be so romantic and confident.”

Sherlock snorted. He couldn’t help it. He was certain it was the only time in his life he had ever been called anything closed to romantic.
“I’m just not used to this,” John went on. “Christ, besides the other night I haven’t even been on a proper date in ages, let alone doing anything physical.”

He almost laughed at the term “physical”. He was a bit put off by John’s anxiety, but he tried to put himself in John’s shoes. He remembered all too well how awkward those first few weeks with Victor were. Victor was far more experienced than he was, and he had been grateful that he was patient enough to wait for Sherlock to catch up.

“I want this, I do,” John promised. “I just…need you to be gentle.”

He was shocked when the confession ended with John grabbing his hand and pulling him close again. John was breathing fast again, and Sherlock could feel him getting hard underneath his pyjama pants.

“Bear with me, yeah?” John pleaded.

A grin plastered across Sherlock’s face.

“I’m not exactly sure what you mean by that,” he teased, playing with the dual meaning of the word.

John rolled his eyes and laughed. His hands rested on Sherlock’s forearms, and soon they were kissing again. The tip of his tongue rutted against John’s lips, persuading him to open up. As he did, Sherlock rested a hand against John’s erection, cupping him through the pants. John gasped, arching off the couch ever so slightly, but at last eased in to the new pace.

“Are you still tired?” Sherlock whispered between kisses.

John’s tongue traced the roof of his mouth before moaning:

“No.”

Sherlock moaned as well at the sensation, and soon he was lightly stroking the fabric over John’s cock without even realizing what he was doing. Light moans escaped John as Sherlock pushed his tongue down his throat. In the back of his mind a voice told him this was the exact opposite of walking him through it and taking it slow, but John didn’t seem to mind. Just to be sure, Sherlock sat up, breaking the kiss.

John looked heartbroken at the loss of contact.

“I know we haven’t…” he couldn’t think of a delicate way to say it. There had been plenty of sucking, rutting, frottage- anything that didn’t involve actual penetration because he could tell John was apprehensive about it. He knew now was possibly the worst time to suggest taking that next step, but his own cock was throbbing painfully, absolutely begging for it. “But you can trust me. I want you to feel like you can trust me.”

Nodding, John looked a bit sick, and Sherlock regretted ever bringing it up.

“No,” John interrupted. “We will eventually, right? Why not now?”

Sherlock nodded. As excited he was a minute ago his heart was pounding now. Blood raced through his veins at top speed, anxious already for the orgasmic haze that would soon take over him.
Could he lead John through this?

His hands shook ever so slightly as he reached up and began to pull John’s pyjama pants down. John whimpered a bit as the fabric brushed against his hard cock, and Sherlock calmed him by placing a gentle kiss there.

“Keep that up, and this won’t last,” John warned.

Sherlock grinned and worked on kicking off his own pyjamas. Soon it was skin against skin, and his own skin burned as he pulled his pants down enough to reveal his own cock. He gave it a nice tug, just a tease to offer him a moment of relief.

“How do you want me?” John asked.

He asked him so casually that Sherlock was taken aback. His eyes roamed John, taking in the bulge against his white boxers and the red flush of his skin.

“This is fine,” Sherlock. “Here…”

Carefully, he lifted both of John’s legs so they came to rest on his shoulders.

“I am so not flexible enough for this,” John rasped. His face was already contorting into pain, and fear flashed through him as he worried he was already pushing John too far.

“I have an idea,” he suddenly announced.

He sat John’s legs back down flat and crawled on top of them, positioning himself so that he could eventually impale himself on John’s cock. John’s eyes went wide when he realized what was happening, but Sherlock rubbed his hands over John’s arms, hoping to calm him down.

“How many times have you done this?” John asked, voice shaking a bit.

“I don’t know, how many times have you slept with a woman?”

John’s breath hitched when Sherlock touched the cloth-covered erection again and gently pulled the pants from John’s hips completely. Both of their cocks sprung free, both hard and desperate.

“Oh!” John gasped in surprise. He pushed back a bit on the sofa, burying his head into the armrest
at an awkward angle.

“Is this alright?” Sherlock asked.

He returned to licking and sucking at his skin. John nodded quickly. Tensing up, he grabbed a handful of Sherlock’s hair as he planted a kiss just above John’s cock.


Sherlock studied for a moment, trying to determine if he was serious or just saying that to please him. His own cock certainly jumped up at the pleading, but he wanted to do this right.

“Alright,” Sherlock nodded.

He leaned over, fishing around the side table for a condom and lube.

“You keep that there?!” John exclaimed.

John threw his head back, as though thinking typical.

Sherlock simply smirked.

“Considering our first couple of times started in the hall and kitchen I figured it was only a matter of time before we did it on the sofa.”

John groaned, and not just from the pressure of Sherlock’s fingers on his inner-thighs. For the next few moments they stayed quiet. John watched, fascinated and with a hand rested behind his head to hold him up as Sherlock carefully fingered him. As his fingertips neared his hole John began letting out soft, barely audible, moans- like he was embarrassed for Sherlock to hear him. Sherlock had to swallow as he tensed a bit; it was becoming harder and harder to keep control.

At last he slid a finger in, and John finally let out a loud groan as he arched off the sofa.

“God, Sherlock!”

“How does that feel?” He asked, keeping his finger still while John wiggled a bit, testing out the position.

His reply was a long, low moan and Sherlock grinned, taking that as a good sign. Ever so slowly he pulled back out and pushed in again, letting John get used to the sensation. Low, raspy breaths escaped his lover, and it was almost like his own body was attracted to the sounds instead of the physical touch. He had to reach out and give himself a few strokes before continuing, with two fingers this time.

His efforts were met with an even louder groan from John, who twisted and withered beneath him. A series of painful-sounding whimpers escaped John, and Sherlock withdrew quickly, worried he was hurting him.

“We don’t have to-“ Sherlock breathed quietly. “We can wait.”

John frantically shook his head and grabbed Sherlock’s hand.

“I’m forty years old. I’ve waited long enough!”

Sherlock smirked again and continued, pushing three fingers in him this time. John bit his lip to
keep from crying out and instead grunted silently as he carefully worked in and out of him. He was shaking himself, anxious to get on with it.

Withdrawing, he drew in a deep breath and lined himself up. John closed his eyes in anticipation, but when Sherlock placed a comforting hand on his shoulder his eyes batted open, locking in with his.

And he pushed in.

They both grunted and moaned as he pushed in and out for a moment.

“Sherlock,” John whispered. He tried to say something, but could only continue to moan: “Sherlock.”

He pulled all the way out and John let out a soft cry at the loss, but when he quickly pushed back in the cry turned into a scream of ecstasy. John’s hand grasped Sherlock’s forearm for support, pulling them even closer together. His knees finally curled up a bit, and Sherlock was able to scoot even closer. He was aware John’s back and head were stuck to the armrest at an awkward angle, but John didn’t seem to mind and he wasn’t about to move them now.

With slow thrust he pushed further and further into John, waiting for…

“FUCK!” John cried.

Sherlock grinned. That.

He messaged John’s prostate with his cock moving against it quickly. His own hands gripped John’s hips, his arms, the back of the sofa, anything for support. The small space was quickly becoming an inconvenience, but he closed his eyes tightly, focusing instead on the groans and pants spilling out of the man beneath him.

As he pushed in further he began moaning himself. He couldn’t help but to lean down and plant open mouth kisses down John’s neck and torso. John grabbed at his back madly, clawing him there, and Sherlock knew they would both wear marks in the morning. Their skin was flushed and red. John felt hot and fantastic.

“Sherlock!” John moaned as he quickened his pace, bouncing against John’s cock even harder.

“John,” he moaned. He could feel himself getting close. All the muscles in his body seemed to tighten up. Being inside John felt so tight, so wonderful that it set off a whole new wave of emotion and energy within him. Desperate pants escaped him. They were grabbing each other’s arms with painful grips, but he was numb to the feeling.

“Sherlock, please.”

He opened his eyes again. John’s eyes were wide, pleading, and even wet with desperation. His lover glanced down, and Sherlock realized what he was asking. Reaching down, he clasped his hands around John’s cock, and John nearly leaped off the couch. They scooted closer together so that John was nearly sitting up, and Sherlock began pumping his cock and thrusting into him at the same, maddening, pace as his thrusts.

His climax was rushing through him, taking over every cell of energy, every gasp of breath.

Sherlock wanted to warn him, but he came too soon.

“Goddamn!” John exclaimed, low and desperate as Sherlock came inside him. “Oh god, Sherlock!”

John rutted against him frantically, and it was all Sherlock could do to remember to keep stroking him. The room was filled with their pants, their moans, and the cries of “fuck!” and “Sherlock!” until spurts of cum suddenly leaked onto his hand. John’s eyes widened in shock at what was happening between them, but Sherlock only pumped his cock harder as they road through their climax. He didn’t stop until they were both coated with sweat and cum. A long sigh of relief escaped him as he froze and then pulled out.

Throwing his head back, John sighed as well.

“Oh my god,” John whispered. He leaned up, smashing his lips into Sherlock’s. “That was amazing.”

Sherlock collapsed beside him, and for a moment they just stared at each other, catching their breath. A hand reached up and brushed the sweaty bangs out of his face. They ignored the fact that they were covered in mess and exposed to the world on their sofa. Right now it was only he and John, gazing into each other’s eyes. It felt more intimate than anything they had done before- even the sex. Even the crime fighting, the saving each other’s lives.

John nuzzled against him, and Sherlock ran a hand through his hair as he settled into place.

“We should really get into a bed,” John said quietly. Their hands were tracing hands, their feet entangled together. “In a few hours Mrs. Hudson will be coming up to water the plants.”

“Damn the plants,” Sherlock murmured. “Stupid, useless beings.”

John looked up at him.

“I like the plants.”

Sherlock placed a kiss on his head and continued to play with his hair.

“I’m still trying to figure out how you know all of this,” John admitted. “I’m not going to come across you in a porno one day, am I?”

Smirking, Sherlock replied proudly:

“I have my demons.”

“And these demons involved really hot sex?”

He shrugged but didn’t answer. He was too ashamed to tell John the truth. Instead Sherlock snaked an arm around John’s shoulders. John went from red-hot to shuddering and cold to the touch.

“Let’s go to my room,” Sherlock offered. “Or should we assume Mrs. Hudson will wonder why we’re in the same bed?”

John stared at their locked fingertips as he wondered out loud:

“Maybe we should just tell her. She already thinks this is what we’re doing anyway.”

His eyes trailed from John’s face, still dripping with sweat, to his flush skin marked with light red bruising and swollen from kisses, to his cock, completely spent. A grin spread across his face.
“Something tells me this isn’t what she’s thinking of.”

Chapter End Notes

I can't thank you guys enough for the comments and nice words!!!!
Shopping

John leaned against a support beam as he watched Sherlock shuffle through racks of coats. He wanted to waste no time replacing his blood-ruined one, and somehow John found himself fighting to stay awake inside a shop at only ten in the morning.

“Do you think I should get one to match the deerstalker?” Sherlock wondered out loud.

It was a full moment before John snapped his eyes open and realized the sheer ridiculous of what Sherlock was suggesting.

“What?” He stammered.

Sherlock smirked as he picked out a knee-length dark blue coat. After taking one look at it, Sherlock placed the coat back on the rack. John had to admit, he was grateful.

“Not your colour,” he muttered.

“Thank you!” Sherlock shot. “Finally, some insight! That’s why I brought you here.”

Eyebrows raised and arms crossed in curiosity, John stared at him as he sank further against the beam. Other shoppers were eyeing them, but John found himself unconcerned. He was more concerned with the fact that he wasn’t awake enough to stand up straight and that his neck was so sore he could hardly move it.

“What, does my collection of decade-old jumpers inspire you?”

This actually earned him a laugh.

“I’m rubbish at this,” Sherlock admitted.

He picked out a dark gray coat next, and John immediately shook his head.

“Can’t you just pick out the same thing you had before?” He pointed out.

“I bought that coat nearly five years ago. They don’t make it like that anymore. Pity, it was perfect.”

John rolled his eyes and stifled a yawn.

“My apologies for almost drowning to death.”

Sherlock shot a glance up at him over the racks that read “you don’t really mean that?”, and John reminded himself Sherlock’s level of sarcasm was like everyone else’s.

“How about this one?” John suggested.

Reaching over, he picked out a dark brown coat sprinkled with tiny blue and red threads. Sherlock studied it for a moment, but just when John thought he might get some props for this he shot:

“Childish.”

With a groan John placed the coat back and ran his hands over his face. He stole a glance at himself in the mirror, and he was horrified to see how terrible he looked. The night before was so
groundbreaking, so much, that he could still feel the energy from it stirring in every bone in his body. They stayed up so late that the two decided sleeping in separate beds would be best, as Mrs. Hudson did tend to sneak around in the mornings.

But John couldn’t sleep.

Instead he lay awake, terrified to move. Every bit of him burned with the feeling of Sherlock. He was awake until daybreak with the memory of Sherlock straddled above him, panting heavily. Sherlock, sucking at the skin on his neck and chest. Sherlock, spreading him open carefully-

A violent shudder ripped through him, and he forced himself to think of anything, anything, but that in fear of being turned on right in the middle of the store. Nearby, Sherlock didn’t notice anything was off, but whenever John’s eyes roamed his body he felt himself growing more and more stiff.

“Do we have to do this now?” John whined. He rubbed the back of his neck. “My neck’s killing me, and my head’s pounding. We can look at every coat in the city this afternoon, I promise. Just please…let me go sleep.”

“You had all morning to sleep,” Sherlock said.

John swallowed, embarrassed.

“I was a bit distracted by being sore,” he admitted. “My neck’s so sore I can hardly move it. And my back…you practically plowed me into that armrest, you know.”

A wicked grin spread across Sherlock’s face, and an excitement stirred inside him. The grin clearly read: and I would do it again. Right now, if you’d let me.

“You weren’t complaining,” Sherlock growled, in a low voice that sent his heart racing.

He had to get out of here, and soon. While his mind was still heavy with exhaustion his insides were hot and alive with emotion and want. Suddenly Sherlock seemed to glow in a mindless haze that had John’s eyes locked on him. He watched, breathing a bit too uneven, as Sherlock continued to poke through the racks, unimpressed.

“Fine,” Sherlock mumbled. “This store’s pathetic, anyway.”

“This afternoon,” John promised.

Nodding, Sherlock gazed at him for a moment. His eyebrows furrowed.


“Fine.”

God, he nearly squeaked.

He didn’t understand what was happening to him. He could still hardly move- his back burned, his neck stayed stiff and stationery, and his arse…it was a whole different kind of sore.

Yet somehow, he wanted to do it all over again.

And judging by the growing bulge in his trousers, it needed to happen soon.

“Yeah,” he agreed. “Let’s go.”
“Are you always this strange after sex?” Sherlock murmured as they left the store. “Should I take notes?”

Groaning, John closed his eyes tightly.

“No,” he pleaded. “Please don’t.”
Bodily Fluids

Chapter Notes

Bodily fluids...with a twist. (you may not want to read if you're eating and have a weak stomach!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Sherlock,” John breathed as their bodies rutted together.

They were in Sherlock’s bed this time and already shirtless. John’s hands caressed his neck while his fingers trailed up and down John’s chest. Breathing was becoming a bit difficult, and though John seemed turned on and devoured his mouth even more, for Sherlock it was more than a little uncomfortable.

“Sherlock,” John moaned again, placing a trail of kisses up his neck.

Sherlock swallowed, trying to regain moisture in his mouth. He was afraid to admit it to John, but his lungs were burning, his chest was tight, and his head pounded. It wasn’t just the sex- his entire body felt like it was slightly off balance. He kept rutting against John, wanting this to continue. He could feel John getting hard inside his trousers, and Sherlock didn’t want to be the one to disappoint him.

But when John’s tongue dove back into his mouth and he reached for Sherlock’s zipper at the same time, he nearly choked. A wave of nausea hit him from nowhere, and he was nearly ill right there in the bed.

“John-“ he attempted. When John only held him closer Sherlock realized he must have thought he was turned on. “No, John…”

He realized he had to stop or he really would be sick. Without being fully conscious of what he was doing, Sherlock shoved John onto his back and scrambled out from under the sheets. John stared at him, fighting to catch his breath. His skin was already tinted red and face flushed as he watched Sherlock run from the room in confusion.

“Are you alright?” John asked as he chased after him.

Sherlock couldn’t remember feeling this sick in a long time. It started with a headache early that morning and progressed into fatigue and nausea that sent him collapsing against the toilet more than once...though nothing ever happened.

Until now, of course.

Right in the middle of sex.

He managed to reach the bathroom just in time to empty what little he had in his stomach into the toilet. John stood above him, watching him in concern. But for Sherlock, he was imagining his lover looking on with nothing but disgust.

With a heavy groan he finally scooted away from the bowl and collapsed against the wall. He
brought a hand to his mouth, wiping away the sick. John knelt in front of him, immediately placing his cold hand on his forehead. Sherlock winced. His eyes shut instantly at the light touch.

“Jesus, Sherlock, you’re burning up!” John exclaimed. “Why didn’t you tell me you felt sick?”

His only answer was another moan as he tilted his head back against the wall. The headache quickly progressed to the equivalent of someone drilling a hole into his brain, and the next wave of nausea was enough to make him sick again. John quickly stepped out of the way as Sherlock threw up once again, but soon a comforting hand was on his bare back, and he was surprised to realize it was John’s hand roaming over his spine. The sensation was soothing after the heart-pounding failure to attempt to sleep with him. It was a mistake he was learning to regret…why hadn’t he said something?

“When did you start feeling sick?” John asked.

“This morning,” Sherlock admitted.

He rested against the rim of the toilet for a moment, head buried into his arm and his eyes cautiously dancing toward John.

“Sorry,” Sherlock mumbled. “I promise I wasn’t so turned-off by you that I got sick.”

A faint grin crossed John’s face, but he seemed too concerned with his health to bother with jokes. John was already examining his eyes, feeling his pulse, and looking inside his throat. Feeling his fingertips glide over his skin threatened to arouse him again, but he felt so terrible he didn’t even have the energy to act on the feeling.

“What else is wrong?” John asked.

“Head,” Sherlock said. “One of the worst headaches ever. Bright spots…” He squeezed his eyes shut as a few bright spots danced before him, as they had throughout the day. “Throat feels raw. Sore everywhere.”

Suddenly he erupted into shivers, and John’s eyes went wide.

“Have you been shivering like that all day?” He demanded.

Sherlock nodded weakly. Bringing his knees to his chest, he hugged himself tightly to try to keep steady.

“Christ, I think you might have the flu,” John said. He reached down to grab one of Sherlock’s arm. “Come on, you’re going back to bed. And I’m finding you a shirt.”

A few minutes later he was tucked in bed, wrapped in thick pyjamas and a half a dozen different blankets. He wanted to tell John he was over-reacting, but he would only admit to himself that the efforts were actually helping. Soon a cup of tea and glass of water appeared at his side, along with extra pillows as well.

John stood at the side of the bed, crossing his arms and studying him as though trying to figure out what he missed.

“No moving,” John ordered. “Get some rest, and we’ll see how you feel later on. Is there anything else I should know about? Any congestion anywhere?”

With a nervous swallow, he admitted:
“Chest is a bit tight.”

John sat on the side of the bed and reached over, carefully dipping his hand beneath the covers to examine Sherlock’s chest. He pressed lightly, and Sherlock winced, eyes closed in pain.

“I’ll try to find something to help with that,” John said softly. He placed a light open-mouthed kiss to his chest, and Sherlock tensed up a bit at the cold, wet sensation against his hot skin. “I’ll go sort through the meds we have on hand. Try to sleep, but call if you need anything, alright?”

Sherlock nodded weakly. He felt so child-like it was pathetic, but he also felt more grateful than ever to have John by his side. John offered him a small smile before leaving the room.

He couldn’t help but to note John didn’t complain at all about the fact he was being exposed to the illness too. The way John burst into action at the first sign of trouble or danger never seized to amaze him, and he found himself wishing he knew John back in his army days. He couldn’t imagine what John was truly capable of.

The thought was what he drifted off to sleep to, and it relaxed him enough to forget how horrible he would feel when he woke up again.

Chapter End Notes

I realize now that in ten short chapters John has nearly drowned, Sherlock hurt his arm, and now he has the flu. Oh, and my apologies if the ending was too cheesy. I didn't have as much time to work on this one, and I had to end it somewhere. It will get better again!
Medical Play

Chapter Notes

Everyone has these kinds of dreams at some point, right? Well, Sherlock hasn't. Until now. And it freaks him out...just a bit!

The next time John stepped back into the room he was pulling on latex gloves. Sherlock could just picture him wearing a white doctor’s coat and scrubs, but he closed his eyes hard to force the image away. There was the real John, right in front of him, still dressed in his usual clothes.

“How do you feel?” John asked casually.

Sherlock had to swallow a few times to find enough of a voice to reply:

“Just…the same.”

His throat and chest were too tight to form complete sentences, and as John reached up to touch the back of his hand to his forehead he realized that wasn’t just because of the sickness.

A stethoscope seemed to appear out of nowhere, and John kneeled on the bed a bit for a good angle.

“This will probably feel cold,” John warned. Sherlock flinched when the cold stethoscope was placed carefully on his red-hot skin. “Just breathe in and out, slowly.”

Sherlock obeyed, but taking long, steady, breaths proved to be more and more difficult. It didn’t help that John inched closer to him and wrapped an arm around his back. His lips graced Sherlock’s neck, and he went stiff.

“What-“

“Just relax,” John whispered.

Setting the stethoscope aside, he lowered Sherlock back down to the bed. He was surprised to realize he felt a bit better at the touch.

“John?” Sherlock murmured, unsure of what was going on.

He was ignored as kisses trailed down his neck. John’s hands roamed his back, scrunching his shirt up just enough to touch bare skin. Sherlock moaned and whimpered as John grinded against him even harder, pinning him against the mattress. Then his face rest in the crook of Sherlock’s neck, allowing them to breathe for a moment, before he sat up, looked directly at him, and ordered:

“Clothes off. All of them. Now.”

Sherlock quickly tugged off his shirt and pulled his pyjama pants down to his ankles and kicked them out of the way. He breathed steadily for a moment, waiting for further instructions.
“I said all,” John shot. But instead of letting him finish, he reached down, mouthing his already hard cock through his pants. Sherlock gasped, arching off the bed as John sucked there until he could pull his pants off his hips. John paused and placed a hand on his forehead. He bent down to kiss it, making a point of rubbing their cocks together. “You’re so warm. So hot. But you know what? I don’t think you’re really sick. I think you like the attention. I think you want me to help you, heal you. And I’m more than happy to do that. Now turned around. Hands and knees.”

Sherlock shifted into position, panting as his wrists trembled, struggling to hold him up. He really did feel sick, but at the moment he wanted nothing more than for John to heal him. He realized John was still wearing the latex gloves when something soft hit his lower back, just above the crack of his arse.

“Your symptoms are rather serious, love,” John said, planting an open-mouth kiss to his spine. Sherlock shuddered and had to re-adjust his weight to keep from collapsing. “I need to check down here to make sure it’s nothing critical.”

He nodded, though he wasn’t sure why. He was aware that he was a panting, sweaty, mess, but this only seemed to excite John more. Suddenly something smooth and plastic-y was shoved between his cheeks, and Sherlock let out a rough, shaky, breath.

“That’s it,” John whispered. A hand rubbed against his spine, forcing his back to curve up slightly. He tried to breathe through the pain- god it had been too long since he had this himself- but John only kept pushing further and further, making the pain tighter. Hotter. “God you’re tight. No wonder you felt so ill. I need to loosen you up...let you breathe.”

It wasn’t a good idea. He didn’t want to agree, but still he nodded. His arse rutted on instinct against John’s fingers, and John growled at the sensation.

“Yeah,” John whispered, “fuck yourself on my fingers. I want to see that.” So he did again, grunting as he thrust back. “Yeah.”

John pulled out without warning, leaving Sherlock breathless. From the sounds he could tell John was pleasing himself as he awkwardly waited, grasping the sheets in his hands.


“Ahhhh,” he groaned as the fingers were practically shoved to the back of his throat.

For a moment just the sounds of him sucking on the fingers filled the room. It was disgusting. He felt dirtier than ever- and at the same time, more desperate than ever.

Suddenly the fingers were withdrawn from his mouth and pressed back inside him. John began sisscoring him open roughly, leaving him again rutting back toward him on instinct. Then a third finger pressed into him, and he knew he didn’t have long.

“Yes,” John whispered. “I bet you thought I wasn’t ready for this. What do you think? How does that feel?”

John’s knuckles suddenly brushed against his prostate, and Sherlock let out a tight gasp. His cheeks unwillingly clenched around John’s fingers, extracting a low groan from John that nearly sent his own body into shock.

“Oh god yes!” John gasped.

He did it again, and again, desperate to keep hearing those sounds. The new sounds drew him out
of reality for a moment...until he realized he was so desperate, so hard, that it hurt.

“John!” He pleaded.

Lips pressed against his ear roughly, and Sherlock let out another gasp as John whispered:

“Do it.”

He began stroking himself in earnest, meeting the pace of their thrusts. It only took one, two, three times before he was coming all over his own hand, spilling over onto his own sheets. He gasped, groaned, and grunted when he realized what he had done, but John only kept pushing into him, encouraging him.

“John,” he whispered, exhausted, spent, but still pushing himself forward.

“Yes,” was all John kept groaning until, “Sherlock!”

“Sherlock?”

Sherlock nearly leapt out of bed at the sound of his door creaking open and John stepping in. He fought to catch his breath as he buried himself deeper into the covers, hoping that John would think he was still asleep. A few spare tears leaked through his eyelids when he closed them tightly, wishing he could take it all back. He didn’t know where the dream came from, but it left his chest heaving up and down madly. His entire body felt inflamed, and there was a damp spot beneath where he was laying.

He pulled the covers further over his head.

“Come on, Sherlock, stop,” John said, slapping at the blanket cover his head. Sherlock shuddered at the feeling, thinking only of how he felt inside him in the dream. “I want to check your temperature.”

Swallowing, Sherlock slowly lowered the covers and rolled over to look up at John.

“Christ,” John whispered when their eyes met.

Sherlock tensed and found it hard to relax again even when a comforting hand rested on his forehead.

“You’re even worse,” John said quietly. He reached for the thermometer and placed it under Sherlock’s tongue. His throat felt painfully tight around the instrument. His face was white and covered in sweat. His skin felt hot yet he was shivering and clinging to the blankets for warmth. When the thermometer beeped, John removed it to check the reading. His eyes narrowed darkly, and Sherlock knew something’s wrong. “Your temperature really spiked. You don’t look like you got much sleep at all. Were you having strange dreams?”

Of course. Everything connected now. Being unconscious and thinking of John, as his doctor, while suffering a high temperature. Anyone could have had a dream that vivid and...filthy.

He tried to breathe normally to calm himself down.

I’m over-reacting, he told himself, this is perfectly normal.

Sherlock’s knees curled toward his chest so that he was practically hugging himself as he nodded. His voice was only a whisper when he admitted:
“Yeah. You can say that.”

John nodded, and Sherlock could see all the medical knowledge and possibilities spinning in John’s eyes.

“Well, it’s definitely the flu,” John said. His crossed arms made him look professional, more like the doctor side of him than the man he knew. Which didn’t help the tightness Sherlock still felt in his chest. “Just stay in bed, alright? Try to get some rest. Take these.”

He offered Sherlock a couple of pills, which Sherlock swallowed without question. Normally he would protest to medicine, but John was one doctor he actually trusted, and this flu was already miserable. The thought that he felt this horrible less than twenty-four hours into it made his stomach churn even worse.

“Are you going to be sick again?” John asked when he saw his face.

Sherlock shook his head quickly and then flipped around to his other side. John sighed, and he must have taken that as a sign he wanted to sleep again because he slipped back out of the room without another word. A series of shivers took over him before he was able to relax enough to consider going back to sleep. His sheets felt too disgusting to allow him to get too comfortable, but at last he closed his eyes, carefully, hoping for more soothing dreams.

Well, part of him was hoping.
Eating Ice Cream

Sherlock slept for almost three days straight after he was first sick. After getting over the initial reaction of *oh my god Sherlock threw up during sex*, the familiar worry that always seemed just out of reach when it came to Sherlock returned.

John was surprised that he actually found himself bored during those three days. It was some of the most agonizing boredom he’d ever felt. He was trying to avoid coming down with the flu himself so he left Sherlock bundled under blankets while he camped out in the sofa.

The first night he could admitted he enjoyed having the flat to himself. It was a rare feat, not having Sherlock around, but after the first day John realized just how accustomed he had grown to being around him. Even after just under two weeks of being…intimate…with Sherlock, he felt like he was practically *attached* to him. It was like he was beginning to see their relationship like everyone else thought it was- and it was nice.

When Sherlock wondered around the flat after the third night, John couldn’t help but to perk up a bit. He immediately jumped to his feet, set his novel aside, and rushed to Sherlock. Their eyes met, and he was surprised to see that Sherlock still looked so weak. Wrapped in a blanket and wearing the same pair of pyjamas, Sherlock was shivering slightly and still appeared paler than normal. Somehow he expected Sherlock to be able to recover quickly. He was strong in that way and didn’t put up with boring things like diseases.

“How do you feel?” John asked.

John reached up and was pleased to find Sherlock’s forehead wasn’t anywhere near as warm as it was that morning.

“Better,” Sherlock admitted. His throat was still a bit too raw, and he glanced around like he was ashamed to admit he still wasn’t at one hundred percent. “I felt like I could eat something, so I thought I’d see what we have.”

Guilt sunk in as he remembered they didn’t actually have food. He managed to force Sherlock to eat some soup, but other than that John himself had been living off take-away.

“Umm…yeah,” he nodded. “Come on.”

He led Sherlock into the kitchen and opened the fridge. There was nothing but a few sandwich bags full of some unknown substance from one of Sherlock’s experiments. Opening the freezer, he found only a half-empty box of strawberry ice cream.

“Feel like ice cream?” John asked. Sherlock shrugged. “Just a bit, yeah? I’ll go out and find something with actual nutrition in the morning.”

Sherlock didn’t reply as he settled into a seat at the table and allowed John to dish them out two bowls.

“Thanks,” Sherlock mumbled, but it was awhile before he attempted to eat.

When he did his face contorted into something that made him look like the ice cream was way too sour instead of sweet. John cracked a smile.

“It will take a while for your stomach to adjust,” John explained. “Have you thrown up again?”
Sherlock glared at him over his spoon, and replied:

“No.”

“Good,” John said, without thinking. He quickly turned to his own ice cream just to keep busy. “I’m glad you’re up. I’ve been bored. Not shooting bullets into the wall bored but…I’ve missed you.”

Admitting that lifted a weight in his chest he didn’t even realize was there. They both exchanged small smiles before quickly looking away.

Why did this always have to be so awkward? It was never this awkward with women. He could go on dates with women he met only hours before and be perfectly fine the entire night. With Sherlock it was like he was always treading around something fragile, something that might crack and burst if he made the smallest mistake.

“Thanks for taking care of me,” Sherlock said, voice so low and raw that John was certain he was hearing things.

He blinked, and quickly replied:

“Of course. It’s nothing. I’ve taken care of loads of patients with the flu.”

Sherlock nodded, but he looked empty, and John felt terrible. He realized what John meant- he was grateful John cared for him, and not like a patient.

“I’m glad you’re feeling better,” he said again.

“Have you felt sick at all?” Sherlock asked.

John shook his head.

“Good,” Sherlock muttered.

John grew more anxious. He didn’t know what else he was supposed to say. He tried to remind himself that Sherlock was sick- legitimately, seriously ill- and just sitting up and eating was probably draining all of his energy.

“By tomorrow you should start feeling more like yourself,” John said. “One more good night of sleep will work wonders.”

Sherlock nodded again silently and ate another bite of the ice cream.

“Sorry,” Sherlock said suddenly. “I just don’t feel like myself, I suppose.”

“You don’t have to apologize for having the flu,” he said.

Nevertheless, Sherlock looked completely crestfallen. His ice cream was nearly melted by now, and John finished his.

“I think I’ll just get a shower,” Sherlock announced. “Thanks, for the ice cream.”

“Sure,” John said. “Get some rest.”

Nodding, Sherlock quietly drifted away to the bathroom. Once he was gone John let out a sigh of relief. That conversation was way too awkward to continue.
He was distracted by the buzzing of his mobile, and when John took it from his pocket he wasn’t surprised to see a text from Mycroft:

*How is he?*

*Better. Temp. is down. Eating a bit. - JW*

*Good. – MH*

There was a pause before the final text:

*Thank you. – MH*

John smiled a little at his modesty. The sound of the shower starting up burst through the pipes and walls, and John settled back into the sofa, picking up his book once again.
Sherlock didn’t fight John’s orders to get a good night’s rest. His body hadn’t broken down this quickly since the drugs, and he was beginning to think that’s precisely why the flu frightened him so much. It hurt to move, it hurt to breathe, and his throat was too raw to talk. At this rate, he would wager he slept more during the past three days than in the past three months.

But John was right. After his third full day and night of sleep he woke up feeling at least slightly less like the walking dead. His body felt more numb than in pain, and though his throat still burned at first it settled into a dull, raw, feeling after drinking some water.

The time was well after noon, and he assumed John would be out doing…whatever it was John did when they weren’t together. He had to get out of bed. The sheets were drenched with his sweat and the mattress seemed permanently molded into the form of his sleeping body. For the first time in days he stood up straight, stumbled over to his violin, and began to tune it.

A sigh of relief left him as he began to play one of his favorites from Bach. Finally, a sense of familiarity. Normalcy settled in almost immediately as the music filled the room and echoed through the halls of the flat.

Being alone was always how he coped best. Through his childhood, his mother’s death, his father, and the drugs he learned to live without the support system everyone else seemed to thrive on. Having John there to care for him to offer him food while he was sick and to make sure he slept was surreal. He wasn’t sure what to make of it, but he was afraid of becoming too attached. Good things never stayed good for long. He was relieved to be back on his feet and capable of looking after himself again.

“Sherlock?”

He jumped and his heart skipped a beat at John’s voice. Swirling around, he was surprised to see John leaning against his doorway, stifling a yawn- clearly not as busy as Sherlock assumed he would be.

An amused grin was plastered across John’s face.

“I didn’t know you actually had clothes like that,” John teased. “Did you go to Oxford?”

Sherlock glanced down at his tracksuit bottoms and Oxford hoodie. The clothes were old, but he fished them out of his wardrobe when he remembered they were the most comfortable clothes he owned.

He nearly stumbled back when John leaned in and sniffed him.

“You smell like moth balls.”

John grinned when he saw how uncomfortable he was.
“I’m only teasing, Sherlock, lighten up!” John said. “I’m just happy to see you out of bed and playing music again. Yes, I actually said that last part. Are you feeling better?”

Before he could answer, John reached for the thermometer and placed it under his tongue. Sherlock waited a few moments for it to beep before replying:

“Yeah. Loads better, actually.”

“Temperature’s gone,” John announced. Sherlock tensed when John’s hands were suddenly on his neck, checking his glands. “Glands are back to normal. Are you still having trouble breathing?”

He shook his head, and John grinned again.

“Good,” John replied. “Then it’s probably safe for me to do this.”

John’s lips were on his before Sherlock realized what was happening. The violin awkwardly dangled from his hand as John’s fingers caressed his face, pulling him closer. As the shock of the kiss wore off Sherlock eased into it. Piece by piece, his body seemed to recognize what was happening and his brain reminded him that yes, this is good.

Yet John stepped back before he could attempt to deepen the kiss.

“I don’t want you to over-do it,” John said. He actually winked at him. His eyes roamed over Sherlock, and he stiffened a bit as he was examined. He didn’t have a clue what John was looking for. “I kind of like the look. It’s like the relaxed, easy going Sherlock look.”

“I should be more easy going?” Sherlock wondered out loud.

John’s eyes widened, and he wished desperately he hadn’t said that.

“I didn’t mean-“

“I’m joking,” Sherlock lied.

The awkward pause that followed indicated he wasn’t, but John moved on anyway.

“How about some food?” John offered. “Your stomach should be feeling a bit normal again, you could try some toast.”

At the mention of food his stomach rumbled. He still didn’t have an appetite, but the thought of eating at least sounded appealing again.

“Toast sounds good,” he admitted.

John smiled again, and held his hand out. Sherlock swallowed nervously, unsure of what John was asking for. He offered John his hand anyway and was met with a comforting squeeze. They quickly let go.

“You never got sick,” Sherlock pointed out as they made their way to the kitchen. “You were practically devouring my mouth when I first became ill, and you never got sick.”

John shrugged.

“I got a flu shot,” he explained. “I tried to tell you to, but no, Sherlock Holmes doesn’t do flu shots.”
His cheeks reddened a bit, and he didn’t argue as John smirked at him. At least it was better than “I told you so”. Sherlock took a seat as John dug around for bread.

“Can I tell you something?” John said quietly. He didn’t look at Sherlock as he admitted, without waiting for permission: “I missed you while you were sick. I know you were just in the other room, but I missed this…us doing things together. But Sherlock, we’ve become experts at saving each other’s lives and yet when we just try to talk it’s like-“

“We’re walking on glass,” Sherlock whispered.

John looked up, and their eyes met. Sherlock knew they were thinking the exact same thing.

“I’m not used to this,” Sherlock admitted. “I’m sure it’s not hard to imagine…but I’m not used to having someone care about me. The closest I’ve had is Mycroft yelling at me whenever I was in trouble.”

“Do you feel like even though we haven’t known each other for very long it’s like there’s something pushing us together?” John asked. He was too embarrassed to admit it, but he did. “I know that sounds cheesy, but these past two weeks have been so intense. It scares the shit out of me, and yet I’ve never been more excited in my life.”

Sherlock nodded, but he couldn’t find his words as easily as John.

“I wish I could understand it,” John admitted quietly. “But at the same time I don’t want to. I’ve had so much bad luck when it comes to relationships that I’m terrified of fucking up again and…Jesus, I should not be saying all of this to you.”

Sherlock wondered what it was about relationships that scared John so much. He’d witnessed his partner fall in and out of relationships and go on more dates than he could ever count, but he always assumed that was for…well, the romance equivalent of experimenting. To him, dating always seemed like an experiment- a social experiment to find who was most compatible. It always seemed useless because no one ever seemed too happy and someone always got hurt in the end. He’d seen John come slam his bedroom door, on the verge of tears, too many times to even consider finding a date for himself. Until now he had too many distractions in life to be concerned with partners or sex or love, but John- John seemed to live for this.

The closer the two became, the more he was forced to get used to John’s caring and compassion and body, the more he was beginning to understand. John was afraid of being alone. And shouldn’t he be afraid of that too?

“Are you alright?” John asked suddenly. “I’ve said too much, haven’t I?”

“No,” Sherlock said, a little too quickly. Their eyes met, and he realized John was pleading with him to understand this. “I just…you know, don’t have the experience. I don’t know what I’m supposed to feel or what’s a mistake and what’s not. You’ll have to forgive me for that.”

Relief melted into John’s face, and he offered Sherlock a small smile.

“It’s a bit refreshing, actually,” he admitted. “It gets old, dating just because you’re desperate not to be alone. But this isn’t like that. I just want you to know that.”

Sherlock nodded. He stuffed his hands deep into the pockets of the Oxford sweatshirt. He didn’t understand any of this, and it frustrated him.

But at the same time he tried to remind himself that none of this ever mattered to him before. John
was clearly attached to the idea of being with him so he wasn’t sure why he felt like he was fighting to keep his support. He tried to tell himself that he was panicking and over-thinking things…and maybe later he could research about relationships online and figure out exactly where John was coming from.

Meanwhile, he realized his stomach was rumbling again.

“John?” He asked.

He seemed to snap John away from his own thoughts.

“Yeah?”

“I was promised toast.”
John leaned over the pot Sherlock was stirring and breathed in deeply.

“It’s actually starting to smell good!” John admitted.

Sherlock’s eyes flashed toward him as he continued stirring the pasta.

“Of course it smells good!” Sherlock shot. “I’m making it. Cooking is basically chemistry…except you get to eat it.”

“I don’t know, I’ve seen you eat some of your experiments.”

“Taste, John. I taste some of my experiments. There’s a difference.”

John chuckled as he turned back to his own part of the meal, the pasta sauce. By the looks of it the spaghetti was nearly ready, and the sauce wasn’t too far behind. He scooped a small portion out and held it to Sherlock’s lips. Sherlock licked at the spoon without asking for permission.

“What does it need?” John asked when Sherlock’s face contorted into utter disgust.

“A miracle.”

A grin broke out across Sherlock’s face as John slapped him in the shoulder.

“It’s not that bad!” John exclaimed. “At least I didn’t go for the crap canned stuff you wanted.”

“The crap canned stuff has gotten me through most of adulthood,” Sherlock protested. “I don’t understand this ‘make from scratch’ business. It’s a scam. It’s food, it all goes down the same… and comes out the same.”

“Tell me you didn’t just say that,” John groaned. “We could both do with eating better. All that frozen stuff and take-away is full of sodium.”

“You just didn’t want to go to Angelo’s,” Sherlock teased.

Sherlock turned down the stove as he completed the spaghetti. He moved onto adding a bit of seasoning to John’s pasta- again without asking permission.

“Hey!” John snapped, slapping the back of his wrist. “And don’t pretend like you’re a big fan of Angelo’s. You just like him because he gives you half off.”

“Is that really so wrong?”

John hesitated. On their budget, that actually wasn’t a bad argument. But going to Angelo’s was starting to make him feel uncomfortable, and he knew it was because every time they walked in he thought back to their first night there. Could it be that even then there was something deep inside of him that just knew he and Sherlock belonged together?

He realized Sherlock was staring.

“He looks at us funny!” John pointed out.

It was true. Especially lately, John frequently caught Angelo smirking at them over whatever dish
he was making behind the counter.

“That’s because he thinks I take you home and fuck your brains out afterwards.”

They stared at each other. John was completely stunned as Sherlock’s eyes lit up with delight. It was just such an un-Sherlock thing to say. Then again, he’d been witnessing a lot of it lately. It was very strange, this new Sherlock their relationship was unveiling. He wasn’t quite sure what to make of him.

*That’s a lie,* a voice in the back of his head teased. *You know exactly what to make of him.*

“Right,” John replied quietly. He swallowed, nervously. Suddenly he felt very stiff, and his heart pounded a little faster. Suddenly, he didn’t have much of an appetite at all. He glanced back to the stove and was relieved to see the sauce was ready. “Looks like the food’s ready. Shall we?”

Instead of replying, Sherlock leaned in and planted a soft, swift, kiss on his lips. A shiver shimmied down his spine, but before he could fully react Sherlock stepped back and reached for their plates. John was left staring as Sherlock announced:

“If you give me food poison from this so-called pasta sauce I’m phoning Lestrade.”
Oral Sex

Chapter Notes

I could have SWORN 'nipple' play was one of the porn challenge prompts! But apparently I'm imagining things, so I turned what I wrote for that prompt into this instead. It's like a bonus chapter of two prompts...which works because they're a bit deprived...and I've been incredibly behind in updating this! I'm still trying to catch up, but for now here you go!

“I can’t believe it’s been four days.”

Sherlock let out an ungodly loud moan as John sucked at a spot on his neck. They were already down to their boxers, and beneath him Sherlock was shaking like he might break if John didn’t touch him.

“You’re the one who was all ‘no sex during the flu’!” Sherlock shot.

Their lips met and they lingered there in silence for a moment. His hands roamed Sherlock’s chest, playing for a moment with his nipples and enjoying the desperate whimpering escaping his lover’s throat. The kiss broke apart, and John took to running his lips gently over one of Sherlock’s nipples.

“God, Christ,” Sherlock moaned. “Can’t we just do this? There’s time for all this…foreplay later!”

Just for that John pinched the nipple, hard, and he about died himself when Sherlock arched off the bed. John forced him back down roughly, and returned to devouring his neck. His kisses trailed closer and closer to Sherlock’s ear before he paused and whispered:

“There’s a reason they call it foreplay.”

He grasped Sherlock’s cock through his pants and licked at his ear at the same time. The sounds he was met with were unlike any he had heard from any of his partners. Shivers went down his spine, inspiring a new wave of excitement in him. Their faces glowed, though Sherlock’s was contorted into the most beautiful mixture of pleasure and pain. His mouth fell into a perfect ‘O’ shape as John rolled a hand over his left nipple while leaning down to run his tongue over the right. All while forcing his pants below his hips and tugging at his cock.

“Oh god,” Sherlock whispered.

He sounded so wrecked that John nearly broke himself. His own cock pulsed desperately within the restraints of his boxers, and he too was shaking violently as he reached down to jerk them off. John continued to run his tongue over Sherlock’s nipples, sucking at them and licking them each in turn as he took both their cocks in hand and stroked them. Somehow he managed to stay perfectly silent as Sherlock withered and moaned beneath him. Each twitch of Sherlock body, each whimper, and each turn of his head, shot straight to his cock. He pumped them harder, faster, until his entire body tensed up.
Sherlock let out a low, agonizing moan as he came. It was absolutely perfect. He came in soft spurts into John’s hand, and John closely followed. His climax ricocheted through him with a hot, fiery, force but he forced himself to stay quiet. The only sounds he wanted to hear were Sherlock’s quick, soft, breaths as he came down from his orgasm. His own cum soon coated his fingers, and his entire body erupted into explosions of pleasure. As he rode through his own orgasm he kept his eyes locked on Sherlock’s still, gorgeous, body.

Gently, he lowered himself beside Sherlock in the bed. They both gazed at the ceiling as they caught their breath, their hands still lingering near their cocks.

“Never again,” John finally rasped. “Am I making a rule like that.”

“It was probably for the best,” Sherlock admitted. “Might as well not get you sick too.”

They turned to each other, gazing into one another with so much passion and desperation that John was shivering again. Already that feeling of want and need was creeping through him, and he could tell the same was true for Sherlock.

“Do you think you can go again?” He asked.

Sherlock looked like he might burst, and all he managed was one nod before their lips were together again.

Then he had an idea.

“John?” Sherlock asked nervously.

He was breaking away to place a trail of kisses from Sherlock’s neck, down his torso, and finally to his cock. God help him, Sherlock was already getting hard again. His lover grasped the headboard behind him for support as he arched up slightly.

John said up, needing to catch his breath for a moment. His eyes were wild as he stared at Sherlock’s cock. It was still slightly spent from his recent orgasm, but he knew it wouldn’t be long until they were both ready again. He became aware that Sherlock was gazing at him with concern.

“Come on, John, you know you don’t have-”

His voice sounded so bloody sympathetic that he just took a breath and went for it.

“Fuck!” Sherlock cried as John took him in deep.

It was a little too deep. His eyes went wide the moment the cock was between his lips. Right away John realized it was too much to take in at once, and he had to pull out. He resisted the urge to cough as he instead let the cock bob against his lips for a moment before he licked at it. His eyes closed as the salty taste of the shaft. It was a bit more bitter than he expected- but then again he had no idea what to expect.

Deciding he was comfortable with just the licking, he let his tongue run up and down Sherlock’s shaft as he enjoyed the new series of groans and moans erupting above him. A hand found its way into his hair and the cock was guided further into his mouth. Soon John was taking him in again, breathing in carefully through his nose as Sherlock’s cock hit the back of his throat.

As vocal as Sherlock was through the nipple play he took the blow job entirely differently. He seemed so absorbed into it that he couldn’t form words at all. John settled instead for listening to his soft, sharp, intakes of breath. The way Sherlock struggled beneath him, thrusting a bit to force
himself in deeper, sent all kinds of new feelings pulsing through him. He could never remember feeling so on edge, so alive and in tune with his own body. It was like he was aware of what every inch of him was feeling, and it was amazing to be able to connect with himself that way. John’s hand trailed down to his cock and he began pumping himself with one hand while the other steadied the cock in his mouth.

Sherlock gasped a little as John withdrew him from his throat so that he could come up for air. Fingers massaged his head, and the very feeling of the musician’s perfect movements on his head was enough for him to reach his tongue out again. He licked a bit at the head before taking Sherlock in completely again.

He was starting to feel Sherlock tense up, and he knew they wouldn’t have long. Sherlock’s breathing sped up into a maddening, electrifying pace that seemed to automatically speed up his strokes on his own cock.

Something wet and salty hit the back of his throat, and John’s eyes went wide. He pulled out a little too quickly, sending Sherlock arching off the bed. A string of Sherlock’s cum lingered on his chin, and he had to close his eyes and beg himself not to panic as Sherlock kept coming and coming. Sherlock reached up to him with a hand, squeezing his arm to let him know it was alright. His partner’s eyes went from closed tightly to blown wide to close again.

At the same time his cock was begging for relief.


It was a full moment before John was able to bring himself back into reality. His hands flew back to his own cock to finish out his own orgasm.

“God!” He whimpered as he came.

His eyes fluttered closed. They stayed silent for a few moments to catch their breath, and he nearly melted when Sherlock finally said:

“It’s alright. I should have warned you.”

Yeah, you should have, he thought bitterly.

He told himself he was being ridiculous, that surely not everyone was as suspiciously perfect at this as Sherlock was.

“That was brilliant,” Sherlock grinned. He threw his head back against the pillows. His eyes gazed up at the ceiling, in a daze. “I might never recover.”

A grin spread across his own face at that. Sherlock might only be saying that to make him feel better…but it worked. He decided it was mainly the shock of oh god did I just do that to Sherlock Holmes? that had him panicking.

John settled back into his arms as he breathed deeply.

“So it was good?” John asked.

“Yeah. Honest!”

Sherlock beamed as he leaned into to kiss him. They broke apart, and Sherlock leaned into his ear and whispered:
“But I wouldn’t say no to some practicing.”
Arguing

Chapter Notes

Time to work through some of those insecurities John has been going through...

The slamming of the door boomed through the flat as John stormed inside. Sherlock shot up from the couch as soon as he entered the living room, throwing his book aside as he stared at John with interest. John wanted to say something. He wanted to yell, scream, throw something. But he couldn’t lose control. He was above that— as he had been saying time and time again that night.

He opened his mouth to speak, but it was all too much. He couldn’t form actual words yet. A fist pressed against his mouth as he tried to get it together. John turned away from Sherlock to take a moment to just breathe and calm down enough so that when he could finally speak he wasn’t screaming.

“Harry was arrested,” he announced. “Harry was arrested.”

Sherlock’s eyebrows furrowed, as though he just couldn’t comprehend what he meant. John knew the feeling.

“Drunk and disorderly!” He exclaimed. “My grown sister was arrested for being drunk on the tube. God I hope the press doesn’t get ahold of this.”

Sherlock frowned.

“Why would the press care that Harry was drunk?”

John threw his hands up. That was it. He couldn’t do this anymore. He couldn’t keep trying to reason with this or make it seem okay.

“I don’t know!” He groaned. Hands roamed over his tired face; he felt like he hadn’t slept in days even though he slept just fine the night before. His eyes were bursting with the need to cry, but he refused to. He wouldn’t shed tears over this, not out of simple frustration. “I just…I can’t do this, Sherlock. I can’t keep taking care of her. She treats me like shit, and then she gets in trouble and she calls me in tears because I’m the only one who will pick up. God…why am I always the only one who picks up?”

Instead of answering him, Sherlock stared off in the distance, as though he just couldn’t understand why this was important.

“Can you even be arrested for drunk and disorderly?” Sherlock wondered out loud. “Don’t they just call you a cab and tell you to go sleep it off?”

He drew in a deep breath.

I will not lose control.

Will not.
“You can be arrested if you’re on the tube shouting senseless things and waving your arms at people and making old women think you’re trying to hit them,” John said, all in one breath. Sherlock snorted. “It’s not funny, Sherlock, it’s embarrassing!”

“Come on, John,” Sherlock teased as he jumped off the couch. He immediately reached for his violin and bow, signaling the end of his interest in the conversation. “Mycroft’s bailed me out loads of times on stupid charges like that. They mean nothing at the end of the day.”

“What?”

Sherlock’s response was the beginnings of some classical musical piece. His mind was reeling with the thought of Sherlock being arrested, his sister’s drunken screams, her tears, and it was just all too much. The music was far too loud, like the notes were trying to pierce his mind and he finally just closed his eyes and yelled.

The room fell silent.

His heavy breathing soon broke the long pause. Slowly he opened his eyes again, and it wasn’t until then that he realized he chunked a dictionary across the room. It lay on the floor beside Sherlock, who was looking from the book to John.

“Did you just try to murder me with a dictionary?” Sherlock demanded. “Why do we even have a dictionary? Do people still use those? Do you not know how to Google?”

John shouted again, his screams echoing through the flat and surely waking up the neighbours. Sherlock flinched - waiting to be attacked again.

“Whatever,” John finally mumbled when he stopped. He began storming out of the room and made a point to brush past Sherlock as he added: “I didn’t expect you to care anyway.”

He was forced to a halt as long fingers grabbed his arms. His eyes trailed to Sherlock, and they stood there for a moment, just glaring at each other. John was waiting for Sherlock to speak first.

“What happened?” Sherlock breathed.

John let out a long sigh and backed off, giving them some space. Wrapping his arms around his chest he looked away; he knew Sherlock was deducing him. He didn’t need to see it.

“Harry got into a huge fight with my mum and dad,” he admitted. He collapsed on the couch, lying back against the cushions as he continued: “It was about this new girlfriend of hers, Caitlin. Apparently they think she’s a bad influence, which isn’t too far-fetched considering her criminal record and drug habits.”

Sherlock noticeably tensed, and he realized how offensive that must have sounded to someone who had a criminal record and drug habits. Not that it made it right. Nevertheless, he sighed again.

“I don’t think that was all it was though,” he said, his voice falling to a near whisper. “It’s the fact that she’s dating again. My parents have never been comfortable with my sister’s…choices. From Harry’s mumbling it sounded like she and dad had a major row. They’ve been fighting on and off for years, but apparently this one was…really bad. Harry said she was really upset so she met this new girlfriend for a drink. They were going to hook up, but Harry got to go to the loo and came back and Caitlin was gone. So after all that, they lasted about two weeks. Harry caught the tube to go back to her flat and just lost it. She must have stayed at the pub hours after she was dumped. I
just can’t believe she was drinking again!”

“Of course you can,” Sherlock shrugged.

John looked up at him. His flatmate—his *lover*—was standing there so casually, wrapped in his dressing gown with his arms around his chest. It was one of those moments when John looked at Sherlock and wondered how this could ever work.

“No, I can’t!” John shot. “How could you even say that? I thought she was doing well, I thought—“

“That’s not what this is about.”

“What?”

“John,” Sherlock said softly, as though trying not to frighten him. “Did you hear what you said? Your parents aren’t comfortable with your sister’s choices.”

“Yeah,” John nodded. “Her drinking, her choice in partners—“

“Her *partners*,” Sherlock pointed out. “The women. Are you honestly going to sit here and pretend like this isn’t about you being worried about your parents finding out you’re gay?”

John jumped up from the couch. He immediately had to clench his fist in order to keep from hitting Sherlock. Sherlock gazed at him, begging for him to understand but he just couldn’t see how he could be that insensitive. They were both breathing deeply, fighting to remain calm.


“No!” John shouted, throwing an accusing finger in Sherlock’s face. “You shut up. Shut the fuck up right now.”

“You know it’s true.”

His hand smacked across Sherlock’s cheek before he realized what he was doing. Sherlock raised a hand slowly to his cheek, a bit dazed. John closed his eyes, pleading for there to be a way to take that back. When he opened them and laid eyes on the red mark on Sherlock’s cheek his chest turned to knots.

Before he had a chance to apologize, Sherlock shoved him back.

“Admit it, John, you haven’t come to terms with it yet,” Sherlock shot, “and you’re killing yourself over it. It’s suffocating you. I can see it in your eyes, in the way you tense up every time I’m near you.”

Suddenly Sherlock was *right there*, and sure enough John’s whole body grew tense and his breathing shallow.

*Oh god he’s right.*

John knew he was. It wasn’t that he was homophobic or afraid of the intimacy. God, it wasn’t that at all. It was his parents, and the way they constantly scoffed at anyone different from him and taught him to do the same all through childhood. It was the way their eyes narrowed when Harry walked by, like they couldn’t quite understand her. The entire time Harry was blabbering about what happened he could only hear *my parents hate me, they’re disappointed because I’m gay.*
He was thinking about himself, and that’s why he felt guilty.

God, Sherlock was right.

Of course, he couldn’t let him know that.

So he pushed Sherlock back, a little too hard. He was shocked when Sherlock retaliated by throwing an arm toward him. John caught his fist with his hand and struggled with him to the floor. They rolled over a few times so that Sherlock was suddenly pinned directly above him. John blinked, and Sherlock just breathed, taking it all in.

“I’ve gone mad,” John whispered.

Closing his eyes, he tipped his head back so that it hit the floor. Sherlock leaned in and kissed him gently. John never opened his eyes.

“That doesn’t make you uncomfortable,” Sherlock said quietly. “It doesn’t, as long as we’re inside, with the curtains closed.”

At last he looked up, glaring into Sherlock’s eyes.

“Well it’s not like you want to waltz down the street holding hands either.”

Sherlock’s face melted a bit, and a pang of guilt hit him. Maybe Sherlock did want that. He never even considered…

John sat up and scooted so that his back was against the bottom of the sofa, and Sherlock joined him.

“Your parents have always been upset about Harry,” Sherlock said. “They’re Catholics, conservative. They expect grandchildren and nice, big weddings for their kids. They want to brag to their friends and co-workers, but they don’t even talk about you and Harry, do they?”

He swallowed and shook his head.

“It’s like we don’t exist,” he whispered. “I suppose they were proud, when I was in Afghanistan. It was like the highlight of my life until I got shot. I could tell they were disappointed—”

“That wasn’t your fault.”

“I know.” Their eyes connected, and his breath hitched when he saw the deep sympathy embedded in Sherlock’s eyes. “When Harry announced that she liked women her life went downhill from there. Not because of that— but that’s how my parents saw it. Truth is, she struggled with finding the right woman just like she did with men. She thought she was happy with Clara, she even wanted to introduce her to my parents, but they wouldn’t have it. They’re just—they’re just horrible to her. When I was younger I stayed out of it because I didn’t want to be in the line of fire, and now that you and I are together…I guess you’re right. Christ, I’m afraid of what they’ll think. I’m their only son. They had so many expectations for me, and I haven’t met any of them.”

“Welcome to my world.”

Their eyes met again, and that’s when John realized: he didn’t know anything about Sherlock’s family. He knew Mycroft was weird and over protective, yet oddly caring, but that was about it. He never considered that maybe Sherlock’s parents thought he was just as strange as everyone else thought he was.
“I’m not ashamed of it,” John replied. “Honest, I’m not. We could make out in the middle of fucking Scotland Yard if you want to. I just…you’re right, I’m just afraid. I’m a coward.”

“You’re not,” Sherlock promised. “I know how it feels.”

John looked at him, pleading for advice and honesty. He realized Sherlock must have gone through this with his own family. If he had relationships in university and after graduation someone must have found out.

“I’m sorry if this makes me sound like an arse,” John said quietly.

“It doesn’t.”

A tickling sensation rubbed against his hand, and he looked down to realize Sherlock’s fingers lingering on the top of his hand, as though asking for permission to be there.

“I feel guilty for not telling her,” John admitted. “Especially after tonight. And I feel obligated to tell my parents, but what if they do the same to me?”

His voice broke a little as he finally admitted his biggest fear. Suddenly he found himself leaning closer into Sherlock’s arms, letting his partner wrap his arm around his shoulders. He’d never seen Sherlock be so tender, so open, but it was nice. They scooted together closer, settling against each other.

Yes, it was very nice.

“Then you’ll have me,” Sherlock whispered.

God he wished it were that easy. He couldn’t stand to think of how painful this would be. He only wanted to stay there, still and silent- untouched. His entire body was exhausted, and he was so emotionally drained that it hurt. Eyes closed tight, he leaned into Sherlock.

“You’re being far too nice to me considering I attacked you with a dictionary,” he said.

He felt Sherlock’s head leaned against his, and he grinned. At last Sherlock teased:

“Oh, we can find a way for you to make it up to me.”

Chapter End Notes

I’m SO sorry that I’m so rubbish at updating. I’ve failed miserably at the challenge part of this challenge! But thank you so much for reading and for all your kind comments!

Next chapter: Making Up Afterwards
John slipped out for some air after that. A walk around the block gave him enough time to consider everything Sherlock said, and by the time he arrived back to Baker Street he decided that he simply had a panic attack. He needed to learn to help Harry without worrying about himself. He and Sherlock had only been together less than three weeks—no need to be so worried so soon, right?”

As he snuck back into the flat he felt a little guilty for running out. His heart skipped a beat when he walked in and noticed Sherlock leaning back in his armchair, reading a German newspaper. John rest against the doorway for a moment, taking in the sight. A tired smile crossed his face.

“Sorry,” he muttered, “I just needed some air.”

“Understandable,” Sherlock replied, without looking at him. “Two A.M. is a perfectly safe time to go out for air.”

For a moment John worried Sherlock really was offended, but then he shot a grin at him from above the newspaper. John smile grew wider. He walked over to the armchair and gently took the paper from Sherlock’s hands. As it fell to the ground John climbed on his lap, straddling him.

A soft groan escaped him as his lips brushed across Sherlock’s. His lover’s hands reached up to grasp his arms; his palms ran over them as the kiss deepened. When they finally broke apart John sat back, licking his lips before saying:

“I’m very impressed, you know. A couple of weeks ago I couldn’t get you to say two words to me, and I’ve been wondering…were you just that nervous of being around me? Because of the whole having feelings for me part, I mean.”

His reply was another kiss. He shuddered as Sherlock’s trail of kisses drifted from his lips to the sensitive skin of his neck.

“I need to work out things with Harry,” John admitted, his head tilted as Sherlock devoured his neck. His eyes fell closed with a moan. “And I want to tell people about us, but I think maybe we should take it slow. You know, get to know each other past all the…sex.”

Sherlock nibbled at the skin just beneath his chin, and John nearly shot off his lap.

“There’s more we don’t know about each other?” Sherlock mumbled. John groaned as Sherlock’s tongue lapped at his ear before diving back into his mouth.

Suddenly, none of that mattered anymore.

They broke apart gasping, foreheads resting together.

“Want to go to bed?” John whispered.

Sherlock nodded feverishly and helped John stand. Wordlessly, they hurried to the nearest bed—Sherlock’s hands locked together as they tore through the door.

John immediately pinned Sherlock against the back of the door. With the door closed they were
closed off from the world, and Sherlock didn’t seem to mind that his moans echoed loudly in the darkness of the room.

Quickly, he got to work on Sherlock’s shirt. Sherlock let out a long, uncharacteristic sigh of relief as he helped John undress him. John took a moment to lick a stripe down his torso and trail kisses back up to his neck before shoving his tongue into Sherlock’s mouth again. His tongue traced the roof of Sherlock’s mouth as he got to work on his trousers. Sherlock was practically shaking as he helped him. Shoes and socks were soon gone as well, and Sherlock was left awkwardly pinned against his own bedroom door in just his pants.

“John,” Sherlock moaned. He began tugging at John’s shirt, and John helped him pull it over his head. He gasped as his bare chest met cool air. “John.”

It was almost like he was warning him that he was wearing too many clothes without being able to say it.

“Okay,” he whispered, nearly ripping apart the buttons of his trousers. He gasped loudly as the trousers were forced down to his ankles. He allowed Sherlock to do the work as his own hands roamed his lover’s back and chest. “Okay…bed.”

He lowered them both back to the edge of the bed. The dance of lips, tongue, hips, thrusts, distracted him, and they unceremoniously fell to the mattress. Sherlock’s moans once again bounced around the room, his own following, muffled against the skin beneath his lips.

John forced the weight of Sherlock beneath him as they rolled over. Sherlock seemed to read his mind and crawled back against the pillows. He gazed up as John’s lips continued to graze his chest. It was as though he was mesmerized, and Sherlock seemed perfectly content with lying back against his pillows and being taken care of.

His hands traveled down to Sherlock’s pants as he kissed his skin. He rubbed his cock through the fabric, enjoying how high-pitched the moans suddenly became. Sherlock began squirming so he placed his other hand on his hips. Gently, he lowered the pants down below Sherlock’s hips to let his cock spring free.

“John,” Sherlock gasped.

“What do you want?” John whispered, trailing his fingers up Sherlock’s thigh.

A hand was suddenly in his hair, combing through his fingers and guiding him down. He took in Sherlock’s length as he pressed a finger in to begin opening him up.

“John,” Sherlock whispered again. He struggled a bit at the over stimulation before choking out: “You don’t have to.”

John grinned. It was far too ironic: Sherlock being the understanding, patient, one. John leaned up so their faces were only inches apart. Their lips brushed together in a soft, quiet kiss. The silence of the room sent shivers up his spine, not helped by Sherlock’s fingers dancing up his arm.

Sherlock must not have realized the kiss was a distraction from his hands, spreading him open. A deep, erotic, moan sounded below him, and John’s grin widened.

“When was the last time someone did this to you?” John asked, pushing in a second finger.

“You don’t want to know,” Sherlock said, gasping a little. “If it makes you feel any better, you don’t have much competition.”
After fishing around, John found the lube in a bedside drawer. They had only done this a couple of times in Sherlock’s room, but he couldn’t help but to notice how much more comfortable and relaxed Sherlock seemed here.

“That’s nice,” Sherlock muttered against his lips before sharing another kiss.

John moaned in agreement as he pushed in a third finger. Sherlock arched off the bed a little, and he took that as a sign he was ready. He pulled out completely, resulting in a series of pants and gasps from Sherlock. He was panting hard himself as he lined up.

Eyes closed, he pushed in. Sherlock moaned again, but this time it sounded almost painful. Fingers wrapped around his forearm, and John’s eyes flew open.

“Are you okay?” John asked.

“Good,” Sherlock rasped, nodding. “Good… god, that’s good.”

“Did I mention I’m sorry for hitting you?”

“Not really,” Sherlock gasped. “And you slapped me! Like a girl.”

John grinned and pushed in harder. Sherlock cried out.

“Like a girl?” John challenged.

A smug, sloppy, grin spread across Sherlock’s face. They settled into a slow, easy pace at first as they adjusted to the feeling.

“Sorry if I’ve been weird,” he offered. “Just…getting used to it, you know?”

Sherlock groaned as he began thrusting harder, John’s hands planted on the bed at either side of Sherlock’s head.

“Do we have to do the talking bit?” Sherlock murmured.

He began thrusting harder.

“Fuck,” John grunted. “God that’s good. Still don’t want to do the talking bit?”

“Fuck,” Sherlock whispered.

“Thought so.”

The sounds of skin slapping together mixed in with the pants, the grunts, and he closed his eyes to relish in it all. He reached out to grasp Sherlock’s cock and began stroking, sending him closer and closer to-

“John!”

Sherlock let out a series of grunts and swears. His fingers grasped John’s arms hard enough to leave marks, but John didn’t care as he leaned down. Their lips connected in a steady, gentle, rhythm compared to their thrusts.

“Fuck!” John whispered as his orgasm swept through him, pushing him deeper and deeper into Sherlock.
A final gasp of ecstasy erupted beneath him. Sherlock arched so that they were mid-air, in each other’s arms as he came. Gently, he lowered Sherlock back to the bed and pulled out. He stroked himself, pushing through the last of his climax.

“Oh god,” he finally gasped, falling beside Sherlock.

He turned to look at him, and Sherlock rolled toward him, laughing. It was surprising enough to make him grin again.

“Did I mention I’m sorry?” John teased.

His head rest in his palm; he was completely spent. Sherlock reached up, running his fingers through his sweaty hair.

“I’m still not sure what’s you’re sorry about,” Sherlock admitted.

A wave of relief trickled through him. Maybe he was just panicking. Overreacting. Terrified.

“It’s nothing,” he lied quietly.

And they leaned in for a final kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Did I mention I fail? I'm going to try my best to catch up this weekend, promise! But thank you for continuing to read!!
“Do I have to go to this wedding? It’s not even my family!”

John rolled his eyes as he checked his hair in the bathroom mirror for the dozenth time. He listened to Sherlock complain about the wedding so much that morning that all he could do was laugh.

“It’s not a big deal,” he called toward Sherlock’s room. “She’s my second cousin. She’s cool. She’s perfectly normal person who’s a part of the normal side of the family. Harry won’t be there, and my parents definitely won’t be there. You agreed to be my plus one months ago!”

He could hear Sherlock storm through the hall, and John turned to the door, bracing himself. His breath hitched when Sherlock appeared, already wearing a slick dark navy tux and a tie wrapped helplessly around his shoulders. There was actually a hint of the scent of hair product and cologne as John took a step toward him. Breathing was becoming very difficult.

*Of course he doesn't know how to tie a tie*, John thought to himself.

“That was before I became your plus one,” Sherlock shot.

Their eyes met, and Sherlock’s twinkled for a moment. John reached up and began straightening Sherlock’s tie. Sherlock looked away, squirming.

“It won’t be that bad,” John promised. “There will be free food. That’s a plus, right?”

“Weddings are boring,” Sherlock mumbled. “And stupid.”

John swallowed, trying to hide his anxiety as he continued working on the tie. He wasn’t sure why it surprised him- of course Sherlock would hate weddings. There wasn’t much he didn’t hate.

“You never wanted to get married, then?” John asked softly.

Sherlock’s eyes flicked away again, and John felt guilty for asking. But he wanted to know.

“I didn’t mean-“

“It’s just one wedding, Sherlock,” John said. He finished the knot and patted Sherlock’s chest. “It won’t kill you.”

He shoved past Sherlock, a little harder than he meant. Suddenly he was stopped, pushed against the wall, and found Sherlock’s lips connecting with his. When they broke apart their faces lingered close, and Sherlock’s eyes lifted up to meet his.


John’s eyes danced away. The flat suddenly felt too hot, and he knew there wasn’t time for this.

“Come on,” he said, “let’s go catch a cab.”
He took Sherlock by the arm and led him back to the living room. They finished getting ready in silence, though the more he glanced over at Sherlock the more he realized how guilty he looked.

“Let’s just go have a good time,” John announced. “Stefanie’s great, and her fiancé, David, teaches chemistry so who knows, you actually might get along.”

Sherlock’s nose scrunched up at the word ‘teaches’, and John realized his mistake.

“Teaches?” Sherlock spat. “He teaches chemistry?”

John rolled his eyes and waved an accusing finger at Sherlock.

“Do not start with that!” He warned.

“Who in their right mind would want to teach?” Sherlock complained as they headed out the door. “I’ll never understand spending your whole life studying a subject, perfecting it, only to turn around and… teach it.”

“Forget I said anything,” John teased.

His hand rested on Sherlock’s back as he led him outside, but when they hit the streets they both automatically shifted away from each other. Sherlock stopped a cab and they slipped inside, without a word.

“Your parents won’t be there?” Sherlock asked after a few minutes of silence.

Sherlock’s eyes traveled over to him lazily, and a sheepish grin spread across John’s face.

Chapter End Notes

To be continued!!
Sherlock was right.

Weddings were boring.

John admired Sherlock for managing to stay awake during what felt like an endless ceremony. Even the reception wasn’t as fun as he thought it would be. He and Sherlock sat at an empty table, arms crossed and looking miserable to anyone passing by.

“It will be fun, he said,” Sherlock shot playfully. “My cousin’s one of the normal people.’”

People waltzed past their table- literally- as the music sped up from the depressing slowest.

“Maybe I don’t know my cousin as well as I did when I was twenty-five,” John admitted. “Still, when you’re invited to a wedding you go. Just…come on, we should be able to sneak out of here by now.”

He grabbed Sherlock’s hand and helped him stand up. Of course just as he did, Stefanie slipped into a seat next to them. She let out a long, dramatic sigh of exhaustion and smiled at him.

“You’re not leaving, are you?” Stefanie asked.

Sherlock’s eyes narrowed, pleading with him, but John didn’t have the heart to say no to the bride.

“Course not,” he replied.

Stefanie looked away, pouting, not afraid to hide how annoyed he was.

Stefanie grabbed his hand and grinned.

“Excellent!” She exclaimed. “I’m so sorry that I’ve been ignoring you. There are just all these people…honestly I’m not sure who half of them are or who invited them. I wanted to catch up, though. I haven’t seen you since…god, maybe since you left for Afghanistan.”

He noticed Sherlock was watching him in interest now. John swallowed nervously, wondering how the conversation got here so quickly. He and Sherlock never talked about the war- it was one of the few things Sherlock always seemed to respect. But he could tell now from the curiosity in his eyes that Sherlock always wondered.

“I was really sorry to hear you got shot,” Stefanie admitted quietly. “I know how excited you were to join the army. Everyone thought it was this weird phase, but I could tell you were serious about it. I totally admired you for it.”

“Thanks,” he replied, a little too quickly and a little too high-pitched.

That was a story he hadn’t heard before, but it didn’t really surprise him. Sherlock kept studying him, deducing what was going on in his mind.

It wasn’t something he wanted to think about now.

“So you two…flatmates, right?” Stefanie said, glancing between the two.

John’s eyes closed briefly as he realized how lame it sounded and what she was implying. She
must have thought he was so boring that he would actually bring his flatmate to a wedding.

“And friends,” Sherlock explained. He looked to Sherlock, eyes wide as he wondered where he was going with this. “And business partners.”

“Sort of,” John mumbled.

Great. This was possibly even worse than admitting they were sleeping together.

“So?” Stefanie asked, eyes lighting up.

“Yes,” Sherlock said. He swallowed nervously, like he did sometimes when he realized he was in the spotlight. “He helps me solve murders with the police. I’m sort of a consulting detective.”

“That sounds cool!” Stefanie exclaimed. John bit back a groan; the reply couldn’t have sounded any more fake. He nearly melted to the floor when Stefanie turned to him. “So you help look for clues?”

John kicked Sherlock under the table, but he only grinned.

“I offer medical advice,” he admitted. He knew how lame that sounded when Sherlock smirked at him. “It’s really not that big of a deal.”

The song suddenly changed to something slower, and Stefanie’s eyes lit up.

“I love this one!” Stefanie exclaimed.

She grabbed John’s hand, and before he knew it he was being pulled onto the dance floor. He looked back at Sherlock in horror, but Sherlock only grinned.

“Come on, relax!” Stefanie encouraged. He tensed a bit as her hands landed on his arms and hip, and he reminded himself this was all in fun. Obviously. She was his cousin, after all- “Actually, I just wanted to an excuse to talk to you alone.”

He looked up at her, surprised. He was even more surprised to find she was still grinning. As she led them further away from their table, he realized she was glancing at Sherlock over his shoulder. She leaned in toward him suddenly and whispered into his ear:

“You two are sleeping together.”

His eyes lit up in horror as he pulled back a bit and stared at her. He had to remind himself to keep moving, keep up the act. Stefanie was still grinning.

“Did you really think I wouldn’t be able to figure it out?” She said. “He’s wearing cologne, John! It’s adorable. You two, together, you’re an adorable couple.”

He tried to swallow his nerves away, but his throat only seemed to tense up more. It was the first time anyone ever referred to them as a couple, and the word sounded foreign to his ears. He still couldn’t figure out what they were past the sex, life-saving, murder solving, adrenaline-

His mind was spinning so far out of control that he didn’t hear Stefanie trying to get his attention. She leaned in to whisper in his ear again:

“You’re gay.”

Her eyes were lit with excitement and curiosity when she pulled back, and they seemed to twinkle a
bit when she realized how uncomfortable she was making him.

“It’s alright, John, I’m not bothered by all that conservative bullshit,” she said. “I think it’s great! Seriously, you look…happy. Younger, even. A bit more full of life.”

John was certain she added that last part to cheer him up, but he couldn’t help but to wonder if that was true. Would that be how people would see him, if only he and Sherlock went out more?

“Thank you for bringing him,” Stefanie continued. She sounded so sincere that he wasn’t sure what to think. He realized she didn’t know that when he signed Sherlock up to be his plus one that he wasn’t really his…plus one. But he didn’t correct her. “I take it you’re keeping it a secret?”

They moved so that John was facing the table now. He watched as Sherlock’s eyes roamed the crowd, obviously fighting the urge to stare at his boyfriend dancing with the bride. He nodded.

“It’s just weird, alright?” He whispered.

Her grinned widened.

“I was right!” She exclaimed quietly. “Oh my god, this is great!”

She stopped leading the dance and instead threw her arms around him. He awkwardly accepted the embrace as onlookers stared at them in interest.

“I’m happy for you,” she whispered before letting go. “And proud. I know it must not be easy. I heard about what happened with your family, after Harriet…”

“It’s not that serious,” he lied.

“He’s staring at you,” she whispered.

John’s eyes widened as he looked over to Sherlock. They connected, gazed at each other as John moved through the awkward slow dance.

“I think he wants to dance,” she teased.

His stomach turned to knots as he realized she was right. Or maybe he was just going crazy. Sherlock was studying his every move, as though transfixed with how the dance worked.

“Go ahead!” She urged.

“No!” His cheeks went red when he realized how desperate he must have sounded. “I mean…I don’t think…we’re just taking it slow.”

“Like said, adorable,” Stefanie said. The song ended and she gave him one final hug. “Thank you for coming, really. Call, text, whatever, anytime. We’ll be moving back into the city. I’ll tell you all about it-“

She was pulled away by her new mother-in-law before she could finish, and John was left gazing at Sherlock. Sherlock looked away the moment he realized he was staring.

He gazed around the dance floor, and it was at that moment that he realized he really didn’t know any of these people. What was the harm?

Taking a deep breath, he decided…*do it. It’s just one dance, it won’t kill you.*
He strode toward Sherlock. His breath slowed to a stop just as he was ready to open his mouth and ask-

Suddenly Sherlock reached in his pocket for his mobile and showed him a blinking contact displaying Lestrade’s name.

“I’ll be right back,” Sherlock promised.

John nodded, feeling ill. Sherlock disappeared out of a nearby exit, and it only took one glance around the crowded room before realizing his only choice was to follow him.

He needed air.

Sherlock was finishing up his conversation when John reached him. It was beautiful outside- the edge of the church lot met miles of rolling hills. The wind blew around them, playing with Sherlock’s hair just enough to make his insides tense up. The moment he hung up the phone, John rushed up to him.

“Lestrade has a case,” Sherlock announced as he spun toward John.

John stopped him with a kiss. Sherlock was so stunned that his arms lingered awkwardly in the air before finding their place on John’s arms. A door closed nearby, and they both jumped, breaking apart. Sherlock gazed down at him, confused, but John could only stare at him helplessly.

“She figured it out,” he admitted. He stepped away, bringing a hand to his mouth in shock. “That I’m gay, I mean. And it was perfectly fine with her.”

“Of course it was,” Sherlock replied. “You’re gay, not a criminal.”

“I can’t figure out what you want,” he admitted, all in one breath. “I can’t deduce you like you can me.”

Sherlock shook his head, and John realized how completely lost he looked.

“I can’t deduce you,” Sherlock said quietly. “Not like you think I can.”

“So…” John stopped. He didn’t know what this was supposed to mean.

“You were going to ask me something back there,” Sherlock pointed out.

“Right,” John nodded, nervously. He tried quickly to think of a lie, anything, but Sherlock beat him to it.

“You were going to ask me to dance,” Sherlock realized.

Sherlock’s mouth hung open in shock, and John could only stare at him.

“I-“

“Come on,” Sherlock whispered.

John froze when Sherlock’s hand fell in his. He felt completely under Sherlock’s control as he was led back to the reception. The music echoed in his mind, like it was from somewhere distant and not real. Sherlock’s hand inched toward the small of his back, and heat suddenly filled his body, head to toe.
But when they got back inside the music suddenly stopped, and John realized people were already dealing with the mess left behind. Only a few guests remained, chatting in corners. Noise and cheers from outside signaled the party had moved on. They glanced at each other, both their cheeks red with embarrassment.

“So…” John said, finding it hard to form words. “Lestrade?”

Sherlock nodded quickly.

“Come on, I’ll tell you in the cab.”
The crime scene was quite close, out in an abandoned field. Sherlock let John pay the cab fee as he jumped out and immediately roamed around the scene. Their victim was a young brunet, in her twenties, who was found in the field two days before. The police were left with a cause of death but no weapon, suspect, or identity for the victim.

“It’s just an empty field,” John announced as he stepped up behind Sherlock. “How can they have missed anything?”

In his mind, Sherlock zoomed in on a damp spot a few meters away. As he raced toward it he took note of a footprint buried in the mud—barely visible thanks to a weed growing over the spot. John rushed after him, warning not to mess with the crime scene. He held a hand out to stop John when they almost got too close.

“What is it?” John asked.

Sherlock’s breath almost slowed to a stop as he noticed a bit of pink sticking out from the glass.

“What colour is grass?”

John simply stared at him, and Sherlock was sure he was worried about him losing his mind.

“What?” John asked quietly.

He kicked the grass out of the way enough to reveal a pink headband with fuzzy bunny ears sticking out of the top. The headband was muddy and grimy from its two-day stay in the field. Sherlock glanced around—he could just barely make out imprints where Lestrade’s team marked evidence. The headband was nowhere near where the body was found.

“What do you suppose that means?” John asked, glancing at him for guidance. “Some kind of cosplay?”

Sherlock stared at him. John might as well have been speaking Mandarin.

“What?” He snapped.

John’s eyes widened, like he’d grown a second head.

“Just…” John’s voice fell and he looked away; his cheeks turned a shade of maroon. “Nothing.”

A flash of memory threw him off-guard, ripping him out of the present for a moment. He closed his eyes, and suddenly he was twenty-five and living on the streets. He was wondering around, looking for somewhere to stay for the night and glanced up to see…

“I recognize this,” Sherlock whispered.

He took out his phone and snapped a picture, both for his sake and for Lestrade’s. He immediately got a “don’t leave, don’t move” response from Lestrade, but he was already tearing off toward the road.
“Sherlock!” John called as he chased after him.

He didn’t stop. His heart pounded and his breath quickened as he hit the pavement.

“Sherlock!” John exclaimed again, grabbing his arm. He swirled around and glared at him for slowing him down. “Shouldn’t we call a cab?”

John was glancing down the road back to town, and Sherlock knew he was worried about the walk. Rolling his eyes, he shot:

“Walking is quicker than waiting for a cab.”

“I don’t get it-“

“I haven’t said anything. You’re not supposed to get it.”

“Where are we going?” John demanded as he fought to keep up with him.

Sherlock whipped out his mobile again and began typing the name of a club into the browser. He pointed it to John. That same shade of maroon began to blossom on John’s face.

“Sherlock, you know what that place is, right?”

“Yup.”

John swallowed nervously, as though he’d hoped Sherlock would say anything but that.

“Then why are we going there?” He asked.

Sherlock turned to him and grinned.

“It’s where our victim worked.”

Chapter End Notes

I feel like this story jumps from being too angsty to too cheesy, and I thought it was time for the boys to get back on a case. This is just a teaser of things to come!
John stood perfectly stiff as he stared up at the club, his hands fists by his side.

“I’m not going in,” he declared. “You can’t make me. Not even for a case.”

“Stop being a child,” Sherlock teased. An annoying half-smile was plastered across his face, and John knew he was enjoying his embarrassment.

“A child wouldn’t be allowed in there!” John exclaimed, shaking an accusing finger at the building. “Sherlock, this is ridiculous. Why don’t we just call Lestrade and let him go through the humiliation?”

Sherlock smirked as he stepped off the street and strode up to open the glass doors.

“Because he would call me and order me to do it,” Sherlock replied. “I’m saving him the extra step.

“Good,” John mumbled. “I’m glad you’re looking out for Lestrade.”

“You’re forgetting something, John.”

He turned to Sherlock, speechless. How could he be forgetting anything? The case was already getting more ridiculous by the minute. The sheer fact that they were in this part of town and lingering outside this place in broad daylight was enough to make his skin crawl.

“I’m forgetting something?” He repeated. “You drag me out of my cousin’s wedding to investigate a sex club!”

“I believe the appropriate term is BDSM.”

John’s head nearly rolled off his shoulders.

“Hang on a second,” he said, holding out a hand that was trembling ever-so-slightly from anxiety. “You don’t know who James Bond is, you’ve never heard of the bloody X-Factor, and a minute ago you didn’t know what cosplay was, but you know about BDSM?”

Sherlock shrugged.

“I read.”

It was all he could do to not choke on his own breath. There was clearly a history here that he did not want to know about.

Not to mention the fact that an image of Sherlock dressed in leather kept popping into his mind, making his breath short and quick and his clothes feel too tight.

“You recognized this place,” John realized. He shook the image of Sherlock from his mind as he pointed out: “You recognized the headband and knew where it belonged.”

Sherlock’s lips turned up in another grin, and he swung the door open. John looked around
anxiously, rolling back on the balls of his feet as he tried to convince himself that Sherlock knew what he was doing. At last he took a deep breath, closed his eyes for a moment to keep his cool, and followed him inside.

As soon as he looked around he realized Sherlock was right. He was forgetting something.

The club wasn’t open yet.

The main room was rather small, but it was obvious a hall in the back led to additional rooms. He shuddered to think of what was beyond the simple, empty dance floor. A bar was packed into the right side of the floor. A few tables and booths lined the wall, but the place looked surprisingly innocent in daylight.

Behind the bar a middle-aged man—obviously the manager—was chatting with a young, pretty blonde. John swallowed, nervously, as his eyes roamed her small frame, her short shirts and a top that left most of her mid-drift exposed. He couldn’t help it, but god he hoped Sherlock didn’t notice.

“Can I help you?” The manager asked as they approached. “Want a drink? It’s a bit early, but why not? Here, try this.”

He poured them both a foul-looking, dark coloured drink without even looking at them. As they neared the manager and his employee finally looked up, and the minute the two laid eyes on Sherlock their eyes lit up with anger.

Of course Sherlock would have enemies in a BDSM club.

Of course he would.

“You!” The blonde exclaimed.

From the nametag on the counter he gathered her name was “Sam”. The manager’s name was “Steve”—but he had to wonder if those were their real names.

“I was just wondering—“

Before Sherlock had the chance to finish Sam reached for one of the drinks and threw it in Sherlock’s face. John pursed his lips to keep from laughing at Sherlock’s stunned reaction. His partner’s eyes were shut tight and dripping with alcohol. His hair, so nicely styled for the wedding, was now a sloppy, wet, mess. John could even smell the drink on him.

The manager looked like it was all he could do to not do the exact same thing.

“If I could ask a couple of questions,” Sherlock finished quietly.

His eyes fluttered open carefully. John was shocked to see how quickly Sam went from furious to down-right upset and on the verge of tears.

“No,” she protested, hands in the air. “No, I’m not talking to you.”

“Right. Can I just have a look around then?” He asked. “I’ll be much more polite than the police.”

The girl scoffed, but the manager held a hand up to her, warning her to calm down.

“Police?” Steve repeated.
Sherlock’s eyes twinkled.

“You do know one of your employees is involved in a murder investigation?”

Steve’s eyes went wide, but Sam only laughed and shook her head incredulously.

“No way,” Sam said. “Not this shit again. I won’t deal with it-“

“So you do know something?”

John closed his eyes, wishing for Sherlock’s sake he hadn’t said that. He wasn’t surprised when a second drink was thrown at the consulting detective. Sam stormed away, muttering to herself and running her hands through her hair.

Sherlock grinned at the manager.

“Sorry about that,” Steve said. His voice got real quiet, like he was about to be ill. “She’s had a rough day. I don’t think she got much sleep last night. Is there really going to be a murder investigation? Because I can make sure this place is closed down so the police can-“

“No,” Sherlock said. “Actually-“

John’s eyes went wide as he immediately realized where this was going.


Sherlock cleared his throat.

“What I was going to say is I really just need to look at some security footage and employee schedules,” his eyes twinkled again, and now John felt like he might be sick. “Unless you had a better idea, John?”

His face went red from embarrassment. Again his fists were clenched at his side, and he was wishing that he had a drink to throw at Sherlock.

“Come back with the right permits and you can look at whatever you need,” Steve promised. “No offense to the police, but I’d rather have you two snooping around then a squad of coppers. Less intimidating for the guests, you know?”

John choked on his own breath a bit at the term guests, but he decided it was best to keep his mouth shut. Steve and Sherlock exchanged business cards, and John grimaced when Sherlock set up a time to return later.

He was too grateful for the fresh air as they stepped back outside. Across the street a couple of young, homeless, guys walked past them, and he could have sworn Sherlock looked up and nodded at them.

“Do I even want to know?” John asked as they took off down the pavement.

Sherlock kept his eyes peeled to the ground. His breathing seemed too shallow, and John noticed he had gone a bit pale.

“Are you alright?” John asked, pulling at his arm. When Sherlock turned to him he looked like a lost puppy in from a day running around in the rain. “I’ve slept with girls, and I’ve never had one of them throw a drink thrown in my face. What’s going on?”
Drawing in a deep breath, Sherlock grabbed his arm and led him to the alley beside the club. John tensed a bit at the intense, wretched smell coming from the rubbish and filth in the alley. But it shielded them from passerby, and the shadows seemed to allow Sherlock room to breathe. He let out a shaky breath as he reached up and wiped the alcohol away with the sleeve of his tux.

“I may have accused her of murder at one point,” Sherlock admitted. John’s eyes widened. “It was my very first case. Actually, it wasn’t even an official case. I witnessed a murder on this street. Right over there.”

He pointed across the way to a small car park on the other side of the street. When he turned back to Sherlock he was surprised to see how nervous and, frankly, scared he looked—like all the memories were tumbling back to him.

“I didn’t realize it at the time, though. I was high, John.”

John’s breathing slowed, and he froze completely at Sherlock’s confession. Sherlock gazed into his eyes, pleading with him to give him a chance, and it was all John could do to not go into complete panic mode. Of course he knew Sherlock had a history with drugs—the random searches and “danger nights” weren’t for nothing—but he always tried to think of that as something far in the past.

“I was thirty,” Sherlock continued. John could see the anxiety swirling in his eyes, desperate to know how he was going to react. “I was homeless. After my final hit that night I wondered around, looking for somewhere to stay. I was feeling a bit ill. I didn’t realize it at the time, but the last hit of cocaine I was given that night had some heroin mixed in with it.”

“Jesus Christ,” John whispered, bringing a shaking hand to his mouth.

How had Sherlock just not realized something like that? And how could he just accept drugs like they were…biscuits? Without thinking, without any conscious decision behind it?

“I was out of it. I was wondering around aimlessly. I can still feel it, when I think back. The intense nausea, the headache…I walked passed this club, and all I was thinking about was the likelihood of someone bothering me if I passed out in this very alley. I didn’t hear the screams or see anything, but the later that night the police came to collect me because I showed up on some security camera. It was Lestrade who came to get me. I was…I was lost, by then. He took me to the A&E and interrogated me the next morning. I’ll never forget his face when I had to tell him I was so high I didn’t notice a fucking murder happening nearby.”

John stared at him. For the moment he was simply trying to breathe and not panic. His mind jumped from images of Sherlock, passed out right where they were standing and the idea that Sherlock never told him about this. He couldn’t imagine what other baggage Sherlock was walking around with. When Mycroft worried about Sherlock going back to his old habits, John thought he might just be paranoid. Maybe Sherlock did drugs once, and Mycroft was over-reacting. But this…he never expected anything like this.

“That was the last time I did anything,” Sherlock whispered. His eyes were desperate and helpless his pupils locked with John’s. “Anything on that level, I mean. I had a couple of relapses—“

John’s eyes fell closed. A couple of relapses?

It was all he could do to not be sick right there in the alley.

“Lestrade was furious that I was ruining his case, but he made sure I got help. He managed to get
ahold of Mycroft, who wasn’t exactly thrilled to see me. Mycroft wanted to throw me into rehab immediately, but Lestrade talked him out of it on the basis that I help him out with this case. He thought that if he could get me to clear my mind those memories could come back. He interrogated me about everything. I was his only chance at having a lead witness.”

“And you blamed Sam?” John asked.

It wasn’t the first question he wanted to asked, but he knew now was neither the time nor the place. Not when both he and Sherlock looked like they might faint. Sherlock nodded. He glanced away, and John swore there was a trace of tears in his eyes.

“Her boyfriend was the victim,” Sherlock explained. “She was late to work that night. Her co-workers had reported strange behavior and fights between the two. Whoever the suspect was wore all black, a ski mask, the works- but I had this gut feeling. She was arrested but released later when they found the real culprit.”

“Who was it?” John asked quietly.

Sherlock shrugged.

“They pinned it on an old school mate of the boyfriend’s,” he said. “I need to go back over that case. It can’t be a coincidence that two murders are connected to the same club within five years.”

John nodded. He agreed, but he wasn’t concerned at all about the case. He was concerned about Sherlock, and what bringing up this kind of past would do to him. He was concerned about the drugs, and worried about what his cravings were like now. He was thinking about Lestrade and the fact that he never mentioned he was the one who pulled Sherlock off the streets and helped him get off drugs.

“I’m clean,” Sherlock whispered. Their eyes locked again, and John swallowed. Sherlock clearly wanted him to give him a chance, to listen. And he wanted to, he did, but he just couldn’t comprehend it. “I swear, John. It didn’t take me long to realize that if I was doing something productive with me life, if I was making a difference, the cravings went away. Lestrade admired that, and that’s why he puts up with me. I did a stent in rehab on Mycroft’s orders and on his dime, but after that…I’m a different person now, I swear. I’ve never forgiven myself for that night.”

“When was the last time you used?” John asked. He drew in a deep breath. “You said there were a couple of relapses.”

He was surprised when Sherlock looked him directly in the eye and admitted:

“Last year. Right before I met you.” John nearly stopped breathing. He didn’t know what frightening him more- that it was so soon, or the implication that he was the one stopping Sherlock from having cravings. “Mycroft forced me back into a program. It was a short, 90 day type thing. Afterward I pleaded with Lestrade to let me help on the force again. I already lost his team’s trust, but I didn’t care.”

Now he understood why Donavan was always so pissed at Sherlock. Lestrade had given him a lot of second chances- honestly more than he probably should have.

“John, please,” Sherlock said. His voice was so small, so hurt and desperate that it nearly tore his heart in two. “That’s not who I am now. This is my chance to go back and…fix things, the best I can. This can’t be a coincidence. I’m going to go to Lestrade and propose we re-open his old case, but I have to warn you, a lot of my past will be brought up. It won’t be nice, or easy. You won’t
like what you see.”

John nodded. He felt numb, like this wasn’t real. He could believe that Sherlock was clean, but he couldn’t get over the image of him so ruined by drugs and life on the streets. No wonder Sherlock was so skinny and malnourished. No wonder he wondered the flats most nights, like he wasn’t sure what he was supposed to be doing. No wonder he was so untrusting of society.

“Thank you for telling me,” he said quietly. “I…I just need sometime, alright? I’ll meet you back at the flat.”

He took off without even looking at Sherlock again. He needed to go somewhere where he could breathe, where he could think. The case went from strange and weird to too close to home in way too short of time for his mind to comprehend.

John knew he wasn’t in the best part of town for walking. He wrapped his arms around himself, hugging his suit jacket close to his body. He pictured Sherlock, roaming this same sidewalk just five years ago, looking for a simple, safe, place to stay the night. He knew there had to be more to the story, and he knew he would have to ask.

One thing was for sure, there would be no turning back after this…and he wasn't sure if he could handle that.

Chapter End Notes

This story has gone in many directions I never imagined it going in. I didn't intend for it to be entirely cute and cheesy, or entirely angsty, or a case fic. But I figure, a month in Sherlock and John's lives- it's going to get emotional. In that month, surely they will conquer some big cases. This idea was an opportunity for me to really start looking into their pasts. That history will be key in the progression of their relationships- just like I think it would be "in real life".

Let me know what you think about doing another set of case fic type chapters. I promise they won't delve *too* far into the case. Just far enough so that you're not reading this and thinking...shouldn't they be solving crime at one point? It also won't stay so dark and gloomy! (Although I feel like I've been saying that for 21 chapters!)

Thanks SO much for reading!
His fingers tapped madly against the stack of papers. His knee bounced up in down. His breathing was short and haggard. Words danced around the notes he was trying to study.

Sherlock was sure John would be back long ago. When John said he needed time he thought maybe an hour, two at most, for air. That was three hours ago. Now he was worried John meant that he needed time- he needed to be away.

For the dozenth time that afternoon he glanced to the entry to the living room, hoping to see John storm through. He forced his eyes back to the notes and tried to concentrate, but the moment he had some clarity his eyes would flash back to his mobile.

Should he text him? Phone him, even? Wasn’t that what people did when relationships take a turn?

At that moment the click of a doorknob sent his heart racing, and Sherlock resumed roaming through the notes, trying to act casual.

“Hey,” John said weakly as he entered.

Sherlock looked up at him. He was surprised to see how exhausted John looked. His loafers were already tossed over his shoulders in defeat. His waistcoat hung loosely around him, and the top button of his shirt was open to give him room to breathe. John leaned against the wall, and for a moment they just gazed at each other, sizing each other up.

He felt like he couldn’t breathe.

Suddenly John’s eyebrows furrowed.

“What’s that?” He asked, pointing to a shoebox on the table.

Sherlock tensed when John sat down next to him, and his voice was a little too uneven when he offered:

“Look inside.”

John glanced at him, skeptical, before diving into the box.

The first thing he pulled out was an old photograph of him and Mycroft.

“Is that…” John trailed off as a smile crossed his face.

Sherlock grinned.

“Me and Mycroft,” he explained. “Mycroft’s fourteen there. I’m seven.”

“The teenage years weren’t very good to Mycroft.”

“Neither were the rest of them.”

They both laughed and settled back against the sofa cushions. John reached for the next item, and
when Sherlock realized what it was it felt like the world stopped. The photo was of a young woman with strawberry blonde hair. She was holding a baby at a park.

“Who’s this?” John asked, glancing at him.

“My mum,” Sherlock admitted. He held out his hand, and John slipped the picture into it. “I forgot I had this.”

“Is that you?” John asked quietly, pointing at the baby.

Sherlock nodded, feeling a bit weak. John placed a hand on his shoulder, and Sherlock leaned forward. Elbows on his knees, he ran a hand over his mouth. It was a few moments before he got over the shock.

“I’ve never heard you talk about her,” John finally said.

“She died when I was ten,” Sherlock admitted. “She was ill. Mycroft was seventeen…he was very upset about it. He was about to go off to school- early admission, of course- and he was so confident about it.”

“I can only imagine,” John laughed.

A shadow of a smile crossed Sherlock’s face.

“Her death really brought him down,” Sherlock said. “He pushed me away completely. It was already weird enough, being seven years apart.”

“I would think that would bring you together.”

Shaking his head, Sherlock ran a hand through his hair. He let out a sigh as he continued:

“Mycrof went off to university anyway. I suppose he put all that anger toward his studying because he did very well in school. He graduated early and was immediately offered a job. For the longest time he told us he was a lawyer. I never found out he was doing government work until he the first time he had to bail me out of my problems.”

He gazed at the photo and bit his lip, willing to keep the emotions threatening to boil over at bay. Something sour stirred in his stomach, and suddenly he regretted bringing up these memories. Maybe he was ready to share them with John, but he wasn’t ready to deal with them himself.

“Sherlock…what’s with the feud between you and Mycroft?” John asked, treading carefully.

Perhaps it was the way Sherlock was gazing at the photograph, with his eyes full of more hatred than longing, but somehow John managed to read his mind.

“The hand reappeared on his shoulder, squeezing him there gently to tell him it was okay. He realized then that John wanted to hear, that he no longer had to hide or worry about bothering him. The small touches, the looks, were like his way of saying talk to me.

“We’ve never understood each other,” he admitted. “Mycroft was always mature for his age. My father loved him. My mum tried to make me feel better about the favouritism, but the truth is…I always envied him. I envied him for being able to know her longer than I did. I never felt he deserved it. It’s selfish, but I can’t help it. I loved her, and once she was gone everything changed. I
was their punching bag. I felt like no one cared. I was ten.”

John squeezed his shoulder again, and Sherlock closed his eyes briefly. He sat the photograph. His eyes fluttered open as he reached back into the box and pulled out a final picture. A grin spread across John’s face as he handed the photo to him, and Sherlock found himself grinning as well.

“No way!” John exclaimed.

They gazed at the photo of a twenty year old Sherlock and another guy. He didn’t have the heart to tell John the full story, but he thought he might get a kick out of the one picture he had of him and a boyfriend.


“Luke?” John repeated, as though testing how the name sounded. “Adorable.”

As his own eyes roamed the picture, Sherlock found himself surprised to see how young he was. The picture was a shot of just their faces. He could still remember Luke holding out the camera as they posed in front of a campus building. Luke was smiling brightly with a twinkle in his eye while Sherlock smirked, his hair much shorter than it was currently.

Of course he knew he was twenty when the photo was taken, but seeing himself so young and healthy felt surreal. John always joked about how he was the older one and Sherlock was the lucky one who still had a few years to go before he had to start worrying about age, but he always felt older than his years. Looking down into his own, twenty-year old eyes, and not being able to tell his past self the mistakes he was already starting to make was painful.

But John was smiling, and it was enough to make him feel better. For the moment.

“Your hair’s nice here,” John commented. “It looks lighter.”

“It is,” Sherlock replied. “He actually convinced me to dye it. He said it would give me a bit more…edge.”

John’s nose scrunch in disapproval as he handed back the photo.

“You should have known then,” John teased.

Sherlock pushed back the urge to say you have no idea.

“He went on to get a nose ring,” Sherlock replied instead. It was a lie, but there was no way he was ready to admit the truth. “That’s when I knew.”

Their eyes met again, and Sherlock’s twinkled. A long pause followed until John finally burst out laughing.

“This is great!” John said. “Really, Sherlock, it’s sweet of you to drag all this out for me. I’m sorry I freaked out back there. It’s just hard to picture those things happening to you.”

Suddenly John’s hand was on his face, and for a moment Sherlock stopped breathing. Their eyes met, and Sherlock bit his lip to keep it from trembling. He knew happening to you meant those things you did. John caressed his face, his fingers brushing ever-so-slightly through his hair. Sherlock breathed in deeply, trying to keep control.

“Would you work this case with me?” Sherlock asked. “I can’t do this alone.”
John looked stunned for a moment but then offered a single nod. Sherlock leaned in then, scooping John into a soft kiss. Their lips brushed together once, twice, before John pulled away. Sherlock breathed in sharply, wiping his hand across his mouth. He was still getting used to the heart-pounding adrenaline that rushed through him every time John so much as touched him. Each kiss was electrifying, leaving him wanting more. He inched his hand toward John’s, hoping to offer the smallest touch, the smallest hint that he was looking for more, but John dove back into the box instead.

There was a key to his first flat. Plane tickets from his first trip abroad. A necklace of his mother’s. A simple necklace from Luke. His eyes went wide when he realized the gift was still there, but if John was offended he didn’t let it show.

“My life in a shoebox,” Sherlock said. “Pity, isn’t it?”

“How many treasures of mine have you seen?” John pointed out. “Do you have more, in the flat?”

He had a few important folders of old case note and rehab papers. But beyond that, nothing John needed to know about.

“Just the violin,” Sherlock said. “It was my mum’s.”

John’s eyes lit up, like he was even more impressed than before.

“It was passed down through her family,” he admitted. “Apparently she never really played much, but I wanted to learn it.”

This time John leaned in, capturing him in another kiss. Sherlock breathed in deeply as their lips and tongues danced together in a gentle rhythm. He brought a hand up to John’s shoulder, holding him in place as John’s hands settled on his lips. When they broke apart for air, John announced:

“Of course I’ll work the case with you. Just promise me…none of that BDSM stuff, alright?”

Sherlock grinned, with the corners of his lips pressing against John’s cheek. Just the very idea sent dirty, filthy, thoughts flooding to his mind. But he would never admit it.

Instead he kissed him again.

“You’re going to learn all about me, Dr. Watson,” he warned when they broke apart again. “Are you ready?”

Foreheads pressed together, their eyes lifted up to meet.

And John nodded.

Chapter End Notes

I'll say the same thing I said in my other fic, Left Behind. I am SO sorry I've been struggling with the updates! It's got nothing to do with the story. I still absolutely love writing this story! For the past two weeks I've devoted all of my spare time to job searching, making this a bad month to choose to do a 30 day challenge! I've found a new job, and I think a lot of things are about to change for me in a very positive way. Hopefully this story will only benefit!
Thank you for reading and for your nice comments!
John moaned as Sherlock’s tongue traced the roof of his mouth. He lay awkwardly on his back as Sherlock leaned over him, devouring his mouth and pressing his fingers gently against his nipples. After finally coaxing him to sleep following a night of sex, he awoke the next morning to a trail of kisses running across his shoulder.

The tongue escaped his mouth and lapped at his ear, his shoulder, his neck, and back to the ear instead.

“Not that this isn’t a brilliant way to wake up—“ John groaned as the tongue lapped at his ear again, “but we have to meet Lestrade in a few hours.”

His reply was a line of open-mouth kisses down his torso. He squirmed as Sherlock dared to go lowers, and he nearly arched off the bed when Sherlock licked at his shaft. A loud moan filled the room as Sherlock took him in whole. His cock hit the back of Sherlock’s throat in a gentle, steady rhythm.

“Sherlock,” he whispered.

Sherlock responded by climbing over him and fumbling around the drawer next to the bed. John groaned, squirming at the weight on top of him as Sherlock began stroking him. He shuddered violently as a cool finger slipped into him, and they both went stiff at the contact. He relaxed as Sherlock moved above him, rocking them slowly into the mattress.

“Sherlock,” he moaned again.

His eyes flew open as the contact intensified, and suddenly he froze. He stopped breathing. His fingers gripped Sherlock’s back.

“John,” Sherlock murmured.

Sherlock tried to kiss him, but John squirmed away, hitting his lover's back to get his attention.

“Sherlock, stop!” He finally exclaimed.

Sherlock sat up and stared at him, hurt. All John had to do was point behind him, and Sherlock went completely stiff.

“Mycroft,” Sherlock breathed.

Mycroft Holmes leaned against the doorway, arms crossed and wearing a smirk. Pupils blown wide from adrenaline and shock, Sherlock simply stared at him, trying to catch his breath.

“I must say, I never imagined we would find ourselves in this situation,” Mycroft teased.

Glass shattered against the wall beside Mycroft, and it took John a moment to realize Sherlock had thrown a glass from the bedside table at his brother. Mycroft casually brushed a hand through his hair.

“Mature,” Mycroft spat.
“Get out!” Sherlock roared.

“Sherlock-“ John warned.

He threw himself back against the pillows and shut his eyes tightly, hoping this was all some nightmare. When he opened them to the image of Sherlock’s flushed skin and his own fingerprints on his back, John felt ill.

“Get out!” Sherlock shouted again, throwing a pillow at the door as Mycroft slipped out of the room.

Breathing hard, Sherlock turned back to John, his eyes filled with horror.

“Fuck,” Sherlock whispered, running his hands through his sweaty hair. “How long was he there?”

“I don’t know,” John admitted. “My eyes were closed.”

“Shit.”

His lover looked down at him, pleading for his help, but John didn’t know what to do. He looked instead to the bedside table, where his mobile was lit from a text alert. Mycroft’s number was displayed.

“I’ll talk to him,” John offered as he reached for his phone.

“Why?” Sherlock said, shifting out of the way so he could stand.

He simply waved the mobile at him, showing him the message.

“I think he’s here for me.”

They gazed at each other for a long moment. Neither of them wanted to know what would happen once John left the room. Drawing in a deep breath John leaned forward and kissed Sherlock softly.

“I’ll take care of it,” he promised.

He pulled on his pyjamas as he disappeared from the room, leaving Sherlock fuming on the bed.

It didn’t take him long to find Mycroft. The elder Holmes was shifting through the fridge, admiring the latest in Sherlock’s experiments.

“I would think that sharing a bed with you would mean he would actually listen when you tell him to stop with this disgust-“

He turned toward John and was met with a fist flying across his nose. The punch didn’t phase him, but his eyes narrowed, glowering at him darkly.

“Now I’ll have to wash my face, knowing where your hands have been.”

John shoved him back, pinning him against the fridge.

“Adorable, you’re already protective of him,” Mycroft smirked. ”Of course, you always were. I should have known.”

He raised his fist again, but Mycroft simply grabbed it, forcing him back. John breathed hard, forgetting how strong Mycroft must be from all his training.
“What do you want?” John demanded.

Mycroft pushed him away easily and brushed off his jacket.

“I know about the new case, and I felt like I should warn you-“

“Too late,” John shot. “He’s told me everything, and it’s fine.”

“Then he’s told you about Luke?”

Once again he nearly stopped breathing. His hand rested awkwardly against the fridge as his eyes searched Mycroft’s face, searching for clues. Sherlock’s brother gazed at him: it was a warning John was all too familiar with by now.

“Yeah,” John said, his voice a little weaker than he would have liked. “Yeah, he has. And it’s okay. We all have pasts. I’m sure even you have a relationship you’re not proud of.”

He was surprised when Mycroft grimaced, hinting that John was right. His eyes trailed to the floor for a moment and then back up to John, hardening as he pleaded for him to listen.

“Ask him to tell you the full story,” Mycroft said. He grabbed a dishrag for the blood dripping from his nose. “Or better yet, ask Lestrade.”

With that Mycroft stormed out, taking the towel with him. Sherlock crept into the room as John stared after his brother.

He had suspicions Sherlock was hiding something. It just didn’t make sense, his fear of relationships and being so emotionally detached. John wasn’t sure what worried him more: the idea of Sherlock being so hurt by someone that it shunned him into silence for so long or the possibility of Sherlock hiding something terrible from him.

Slowly he turned toward Sherlock, taking in the fact that he was fully dressed and ready to walk out the door.

“Are you okay?” Sherlock asked, reaching for his hand.

Looking down, John realized that his knuckles were bruised from the hit. He hid them in his other hand and nodded.

“Yeah, fine,” he said. He offered Sherlock a small grin. “You should see the other guy.”

A bright grin spread across Sherlock’s face, and John was shocked when he was pulled in close and offered a fierce kiss on the lips.

“I’m just happy we were under the blankets,” John admitted quietly, smirking.

“What did he want?” Sherlock asked when they broke apart.

He began making coffee as John leaned against the counter. While he was curious to know what Mycroft meant he didn’t want to come across as not trusting of their relationship. At the same time, if Sherlock was going through something, if there was something he was haunted by, John wanted to know.

"Nothing," he lied quietly.

He accepted the coffee Sherlock offered him and began sipping at it, grateful for its warmth.
"Good," Sherlock said. "Get dressed. Lestrade just texted me, he needs us earlier."

John simply nodded, feeling like he was in a daze as he walked out of the room to shower.

Chapter End Notes

Coming up next: "Explaining their unconventional relationship to a disproving third party"
John welcomed the sun and air as they burst out of the Yard. Lestrade’s briefing for the morning was short and quick, as nothing more had been determined. He and Sherlock were sent off to continue to look for connections between the victim and the old case, but beyond that John had missed out on many of the details. He was focused on Sherlock, who was uncharacteristically still and quiet.

“Are you alright?” John asked. They took off down the pavement; he had to rush to keep up with Sherlock. “You look a bit…”

“Like my brother walked in on me while I was having sex?”

John’s face went white.

“God, don’t mention it,” John pleaded quietly. “I might throw up.”

“I literally had my finger up your arse!” Sherlock whispered.

John’s eyes dashed around in panic as he prayed no one overheard that.

“What was he doing just barging in, anyway?” Sherlock wondered out loud. “What did he say to you?”

Once they were outside, Sherlock turned to him. They lingered close to the wall of the building, tempting to hide amongst the sea of people entering and exiting around them. Gently, Sherlock picked up his slightly bruised hand and grinned.

“He told you something that’s bothering you,” Sherlock said. “Possibly even more than getting caught. What was it?”

He gazed up at him helplessly, admiring his demand for honesty but wanting to protect him all the same. He wasn’t sure how much longer he could go with Sherlock closing off his past, but their relationship had progressed extremely quickly over the past few weeks. But while John knew it wasn’t fair to expect Sherlock to confess everything, he wanted to know what the deal was.

Drawing in a deep breath, he lowered his voice and admitted:

“He told me to ask you about Luke.” Sherlock’s eyes darkened and then dashed around, looking anywhere but John. He looked like he might bolt at any moment. John held a hand out to him.

“Please…don’t bolt. You don’t have to say anything. I mean…it’s not like I’m offering you the details on my past.”

Sherlock’s eyes stayed glued to the distance. He could see how uncomfortable Sherlock was, how he was struggling with whatever demons he was hiding.

“But if you do want to tell me, it’s okay,” John said quietly.

At last Sherlock nodded and let out a shaky breath.

“Let’s get a cab.”
Sherlock’s voice was nearly a whisper as he swirled around to the street and started hailing a cab. When they got inside he was stunned to find Sherlock’s hand lingering beside his. John turned to him and offered a grim smile. He never asked where they were going and Sherlock never said, but when the cab came to a stop at a cemetery he turned to Sherlock, eyes wide.

“Sherlock?” He asked quietly.

“I can tell you about Luke,” Sherlock said, eyes glued to the cemetery. “But I thought you might want to meet him.”

Walking through the cemetery with Sherlock felt surreal, like he was dreaming this. His mind was racing with the implications: that Luke was dead, that something tragic must have happened, and this was why Sherlock was so emotionally detached for so long.

“I haven’t been by in a while,” Sherlock admitted as they stopped at a grave that read Luke Sheppard, October 1, 1975- December 29, 2005. His partner bit his lip, and for a fleeting moment John thought Sherlock might actually get emotional. Glancing around, he made sure they were alone before reading out and placing a hand on his arm. Sherlock relaxed into the touch at first, but as he began explaining he only seemed to tense.

“He was stabbed when we were both thirty years old,” Sherlock began. John let out a low whistle, but he wasn’t sure Sherlock even noticed.

For a long moment they stood there in silence. Sherlock turned back to the grave, his mind already back in the past. John stared at him, wondering if he had heard correctly. As much as he heard about Sherlock’s past he never wanted it to be real, and seeing Sherlock standing in the cemetery, this upset and ashamed, made it painfully real.

“I’ve told you about the drugs,” Sherlock continued. “It was all because of Luke. It started at university. We were both only twenty-one when we first met. He was my first, by every meaning going through your head right now. I didn’t know he was into drugs until he came to my dorm room one night, high and terrified, wanting to borrow money. I promised to give it to him if he promised to stop.”

John held out a hand, pleading with Sherlock to slow down. Sherlock immediately fell silent, and John took a deep breath.

“You knew he did drugs, and you helped him?” John asked.

His voice quivered slightly, and Sherlock just gazed at him helplessly.

“And eventually, he turned you onto drugs to?” John said.

His voice shook a little too much, and his eyes were a little too sharp as he turned to Sherlock. His partner stood with his hands clutched tightly behind his back, looking a bit too small. As the wind whipped around them John sucked in the air, reminding himself to just breathe.

“It was an…exam,” Sherlock shook his head, like he couldn’t quite remember, but from the dark look in his eye John had a feeling he could remember every detail of the exact moment. “I was extremely stressed out, so he suggested I take something to relax. That wasn’t when the cocaine started, but that’s how it all began. That one pill.”

John wanted to ask what it was, but Sherlock’s face was a ghostly white, and he looked like he might be sick if he had to go into any more detail.
“What happened to Luke?”

He spoke hardly above a whisper, and there was a long pause before Sherlock finally admitted:

“I was out of rehab, and Mycroft helped me get a flat. By then he was already pretty powerful- he was able to keep an eye on me and watch those I was acquainted with, much like today. Luke somehow found out about where I lived. He came to me, begging for a place to stay. He was clearly unwell so I let him in. We…”

Sherlock swallowed nervously and stole a glance to John, and he understood it was his way of saying hooked up.

“I knew it was a mistake. I didn’t want to get back to that life. There was always just something about Luke…Mycroft said he made me feel safe.”

John snorted. He couldn’t help it.

“How nice of Mycroft to offer relationship advice.”

The faintest of smiles crossed Sherlock’s face, but it soon fell again.

“I soon realized why he needed a place to hide,” Sherlock continued. His voice was so stiff and quiet John could hardly hear him. “A man came to the flat in the middle of the night. I woke up to Luke yelling at someone in the living room. They were already fighting. By the time I got to them, the man had him pinned to the ground and stabbed him. When he realized I was there he rounded on me. I was still pretty weak. All it took was one good hit to knock me out. The police were there when I came to, and Luke was dead. It was…horrifying.”

“Jesus…” John whispered.

Sherlock was trembling ever so slightly, just enough to attract his attention. While he wanted nothing more than to reach out to him and be there, he still felt ill inside. The thought of Sherlock, just sleeping around like…a normal person…bothered him.

“You slept with him, even after all that?” He asked.

Sherlock offered a single, stiff, nod.

“You were having sex with a drug dealer?”

He led the thought sink in as Sherlock croaked out:

“Yes.”

His lover looked almost childlike as he hung his head, as though waiting for a punishment. John breathed in and out slowly, willing himself to not panic. It was weird enough getting used to this idea of Sherlock being an emotional, fragile human being and not the boxed up, silent, mastermind he was used to. It was no wonder Sherlock stayed so quiet, no wonder he lacked any kind of social skills. It was no wonder he refused to have any kind of sexual relationship since then. But the way Sherlock obviously felt about this man- this man who put him in harm’s way, asked him to change his life forever, to risk it completely- it made him rethink everything he knew about him.

“Did you love him?”

The two looked at each other. For a moment he thought Sherlock looked angry, resentful, but their
eyes remained locked as Sherlock admitted:

“Yes.”

John swallowed as tears threatened to surface. He tried twice to reply and failed, but Sherlock saved him the effort.

“Luke changed my life,” Sherlock went on. “He put me in danger, he forced me to risk my life, my health. But there was something about him…Mycroft was right, I felt safe. I felt like he protected me from others, and I never had that before. And I loved it.”

Sherlock studied him, and John felt like he was being challenged. But what was he supposed to say? That it wasn’t weird at all for Sherlock to love a drug dealer?

“I didn’t know anything then, John,” Sherlock said quietly. “I didn’t know anything about the world, about people. I was desperate for someone to like me. I was desperate to be wanted. I was stupid. I look back on that part of my life and I can’t believe it’s me.”

“Do you still love him? Even if he’s gone?”

He was openly batting away tears now, and Sherlock seemed startled to notice that. But he didn’t care. Hearing Sherlock talk about love like it was nothing, like it was simple, hurt.

“Now that I really know who he was and what he was doing to me, no,” Sherlock said. “But I can’t erase the past. I can’t change how I felt then.”

John held his breath to stop himself from saying the inevitable do you love me? He didn’t want to push that on Sherlock. He didn’t want Sherlock to think this was a make or break moment…though he wasn’t sure how willing he was to be so intimate with him after learning all this. He knew it wasn’t fair, but Sherlock couldn’t change the past and deep down, he worried this guy still meant something to him.

“What is it?” Sherlock asked.

“I…” he thought quickly, trying to put the pieces together. “I just can’t picture it. I can’t imagine you just giving your body away like that. Both to drugs and to another man.”

Sherlock’s eyes narrowed.

“You slept around with women all the time before me,” Sherlock shot. “You’ve been on dozens of dates with women you liked for shallow reasons like their hair and their eyes. I’ve had one serious relationship my entire life because I thought I was loved.”

John’s eyes widened a bit with hurt and disappointment.

“He introduced you to drugs,” he whispered. “He put you in physical danger, and he damaged you emotionally.”

“It’s complicated.”

“No, no it’s not,” John said, shaking an accusing finger at him. “It’s messed up.”

Sherlock simply stared at him, as though he didn’t know what he was supposed to do.

“That was five years ago, John,” Sherlock said. “I got better. I’m still getting better.”
“But the feelings you have for me…they’re just like with him.”

“That’s not true.” Sherlock took a step closer to him, and John held his breath. They stared each other down, neither wanting to make a move but neither wanting to run away. “Would you ever put me in danger?”

John swallowed and shook his head.

“No.”

“Would you ever ask me to hurt myself?”

“No. Sherlock—“

“It was a complicated and fucked up relationship,” Sherlock said. John was shocked to hear him swear in public, and when he realized how close they were standing he was grateful to see the cemetery was still empty. “Mycroft got me out of it, and he’s been protective of me ever since. He knows the work it took to save me, and he wants to make sure neither of us has to go through that again. But he knows you would never hurt me. Dare I say it, he likes you. I think he asked me to talk to you about Luke for your benefit.”

He blinked, completely stunned.

“I won’t hurt you, ever,” John promised. “Just…swear to me…swear to me you’re clean.”

“I’m clean,” Sherlock said. “I swear.”

“If I ever catch you don’t drugs- even just once- I’m done. This is over.”

Sherlock nodded, and John stayed silent. He knew he wasn’t telling the truth. He knew he would always give Sherlock a second chance, and a third, but he didn’t want him to know that. Letting out a shaky breath he turned to the gravestone. The grave looked so innocent and solemn; no one would ever guess the story of the man at rest beneath it.

Their silence was broken by the buzzing of Sherlock’s mobile, and they both jumped. Sherlock glanced at the text and showed it to him.

“Lestrade wants us at the club,” Sherlock announced. “There are new developments.”

He glanced back at John, who simply stood there looking lost.

Truth was, he didn’t want to go back on the case. He needed time to think this over, to decide how he felt about this. He was never comfortable with the thought of Sherlock having a history of drug problems- let alone the thought of him sleeping with a dealer.

“Let me prove myself to you,” Sherlock said suddenly.

John looked up to him, confused.

“What?”

“Let me prove to you that I’ve changed,” Sherlock said. “I want to solve this case. I want to solve it more than any other case I’ve ever had. I was messed up until I met you, John. You have no idea. Let me prove that I’ve changed.”

Sherlock held out his hand, and John only stared at it.
“You don’t have to prove anything,” John whispered. “Just…we both have our demons, yeah? It’s not fair for me to judge you.”

“It is fair.”

Their eyes met again. John wondered what he meant, but he didn’t have time to guess before the mobile buzzed again.

“Lestrade’s getting impatient,” John said. “We should go. Don’t worry about it, alright?”

Sherlock looked after him, unconvinced, as they walked back to the main road.

On one hand, John was grateful for the distraction of the case. He had to decide how much it bothered him, this new information about Sherlock. He wanted to know more about his past… more about the danger he was in and how he lived on the streets. He was too ashamed to ask Sherlock to face those demons again, but he felt like it was the only way he could completely trust him.

As their feet hit the pavement, John had an idea.

“Do you want to go to the pub tonight?”

Sherlock stared at him, awkwardly holding his mobile to his ear to phone Lestrade.

“You and me, drinking,” John said. His eyes twinkled. “And a game of questions.”

Chapter End Notes

And now I’m even more behind. I majorly fail at this!!!!!! All the same, thank you SO much for reading and for your comments!!!!!!!!
They slid into a booth at the back of the pub, away from the fans watching the match by the bar. John ordered for them while Sherlock looked around, transfixed by the place.

“Have you even been to a pub?” John asked him.

Sherlock glanced at him, debating about telling the truth. John had this smirk on his face like he did whenever he discovered something new - something odd - about him.

“Of course,” he said.

He kept his eyes to the table to hide how uncomfortable he was. He wasn’t sure if he felt weird because he was around people in a dark, noisy place with alcohol or if it was because he was in a dark, noisy place with alcohol and John.

It wasn’t as though he expected John to be entirely accepting of his past. He certainly didn’t expect him to understand. But deep down, Sherlock hoped he would at least listen. He hoped he wouldn’t be so cold and judgmental.

“You okay?” John asked.

Sherlock noted that as soon as he entered the pub John seemed to relax. He glowed a bit and his eyes were lit up with excitement. This was his territory.

“Yeah,” he lied. “Just a bit noisy.”

“There’s a match,” John said, grinning up at the telly.

Right. Like he was an idiot.

John started them out with a couple of lagers. Not his drink of choice, but he didn’t have the heart to correct them.

“The fact is this,” John announced. “I don’t know you, Sherlock, and you don’t know me. That’s why every time I find out something about you I just seem shocked. It’s time for some honesty.”

Sherlock snorted. He couldn’t help it.

“What?” John frowned.

“Irony,” Sherlock replied simply.

The waitress returned with their drinks, which Sherlock immediately accepted, grateful for the distraction.
He gagged a bit when he took the first sip. John grinned as he easily swallowed the lager down, though his face contorted, like he tasted something too bitter.

“Lovely,” John said, sitting the drink down. “It seems like there are a lot of things about your past that you never worked through. And…I have my fair share of demons too. I want to be there for you, Sherlock. I want to understand you, I swear it. This has got to be the weirdest relationship I’ve ever been in, but we have this...bond that’s unlike anything I’ve ever seen. And I like it.”

Their eyes connected over their drinks, and John’s twinkled as a half-smile crossed his face.

“But we both have secrets,” John said. His voice fell and his eyes sunk to the table. His hands gripped his glass tightly, seeking comfort. “And yours are a bit darker than I expected.”

“And yours?”

His voice was a bit too sharp, and John’s eyes shot up, unamused at the accusation.

“I’m not perfect,” John whispered.

Silence fell between them, and Sherlock tried more of the lager for the sake of breaking the ice. He winced at the taste but welcomed the warmth.

“What’s this game you mentioned?” He asked.

This seemed to perk John up a bit.

“It’s simple,” John said, pausing for another sip of his drink. “Usually it’s played like, I ask a yes or no question and you have to answer truthfully. But I think we should go a bit deeper…I ask a question and you answer. Doesn’t have to be yes or no.”

Sherlock stared at him. He wasn’t sure if he should think is that it? or if he should back away.

“That sounds ridiculous,” Sherlock snorted. “It’s just a pointless excuse to get me drunk”

John grinned.

“Is there a problem with that?” John teased. Sherlock mirrored his smile. “I say we get twenty questions each. Ten for you, ten for me.”

“Yes, that is how you count to twenty.”

John rolled his eyes and continued:

“Here, I’ll start simple. When was your first kiss?”

Caught completely off guard, he froze. The drink lingered in his hand, above the table, as he stared at John.


He felt weak. Suddenly he was realizing the point of this game.

John shrugged.

“If he was, as you said, your first.”
By now John was already half-way through his first lager, and he raised a hand to catch the waitress’ attention.

Swallowing, Sherlock closed his eyes and went back in time to his dorm room, nearly fifteen years ago. He was a scrawny, pale, quiet student with one friend in his whole building. It was raining outside and the dorm was quiet. It was late, two- no, three- in the morning. They were sitting together, bottom bunk, not studying. Luke leaned in toward him, capturing his lips before he realized what was happening. Before he even realized what he was feeling. His body tensed against the rough, quick, kiss. There was a distinct taste on his tongue as it dipped into Luke’s mouth, a taste he would soon know as alcohol. He smelled of sweat and smoke but somehow it was intoxicating-

He realized John was studying him, waiting for an answer. A sloppy smile was plastered on his face and John had a new drink in hand.

“University, second year,” he said simply. “Rainy night.”

It was all he was willing to offer. John laughed a little and gulped down part of his drink.

“Well then,” John grinned. “Your turn.”

His mind was still reeling from the memory of the kiss. He could still feel Luke’s lips on his and worse he liked it.

He needed to get away from those memories. Now.

“When was your first time?” Sherlock asked.

John went stiff and the grin disappeared from his face.

“My first time?” John repeated.

Sherlock smirked.

“When did you lose your virginity?”

John’s cheeks turned red and he sipped at his drink, without being told to.

“I was seventeen,” John finally admitted. “My parents thought I was at this girl’s house studying, but I was really…”

“Taking her innocence?” Sherlock teased.

John’s face was practically maroon now.

“It was one of the stupidest mistakes I’ve ever made,” John said. “She didn’t even talk to me again afterward. I think she was just using me.”

“You think?”

Sherlock grinned, enjoying the chance to relish in John’s discomfort for once. His partner rolled his eyes and retaliated by taking no time in asking his next question.

“You and Irene…did you ever?” John asked.

He thought back to Karachi, to the secrets he could never tell and the moans sounding off at each
of her ringtones. At the time he thought it was the closest he ever came to feeling something for someone. But they kissed, and he felt nothing. She pinned him down against their hotel bed, her lips on his mouth, on his neck...nothing. He escaped the hotel, catching an early flight with the lame excuse of *new case*.

“One kiss,” he admitted quietly, “and I felt nothing.”

John glanced away, clearly feeling uneasy.

“I swear, John—”

“It’s okay,” John replied quickly. Their eyes met, but from the high-pitched squeal of his voice he couldn’t be sure John was telling the truth. “It’s okay, Sherlock, it happens. This is why this is good...for the honesty.”

“Yeah, honesty,” Sherlock mumbled.

“You need another?” John said. “How about shots?”

Sherlock’s stomach moaned at the thought, but he simply shrugged and let John order vodka and rum.

“My turn,” Sherlock said. “Are you afraid to tell your parents you’re gay?”

John downed the rest of his drink. His cheeks were flushed, his eyes wide. His own game was clearly working against him. The waitress returned with shots, and almost as soon as they reached for him John was already announcing:

“Cheers.”

He downed the shot without hesitation. Sherlock stared at it first, considering that the last time he did shots was with Luke in school. Taking a deep breath, he forced the thought away as he tilted his head back.

His stomach immediately went sour at the taste, but he shook his head, willing the feeling away.

“I won’t lie,” John finally said. “After seeing what happened with Harry, I’m nervous. But she’s made her fair share of mistakes. The booze, the people she chose to be with...their row goes a lot deeper than her sexuality. Still though, I’m not sure what they’ll think. I’m forty, after all, and just now coming out.”

Sherlock nodded, shocked with how sincere John was being. He was sure part of it was the alcohol, but perhaps this was the right step forward.

“Two and two,” John said after a long pause. “Eight left, better choose carefully so...have you always known you’re gay? Before Luke, I mean. I’m sorry if that’s an offensive way to put it but...you know what I mean, right?”

Sherlock didn’t hesitate to reply:

“I never considered it, honestly. There was never anyone I was attracted to. When I met Luke I just knew that we had a connection. One deeper than friendship. I realized I liked him, and I thought it was okay.”

Suddenly he wished he had another shot to down. He wanted to tell John to stop it, to stop making
him remember all this, but at the same time the memories were numbing. He needed them after suppressing them for so long. It was the addictive nature of the relationship returning, and as much as he knew he shouldn’t, he wanted it.

And the more he dished out his past, the more he wanted to know about John. He glanced at his partner, his lover, running his eyes over every inch of his body until they landed on his shoulder. John’s eyes danced away and he squirmed, knowing what was coming for him.

“What happened when you got shot?” Sherlock asked quietly.

He shifted around the table so that he was practically shoulder to shoulder with John. The rest of the pub seemed to fade away and it was just the two of them, hidden in the back. John glanced up at him, pleading with him.

“Well you another drink?” Sherlock asked quietly, noticing their supply was empty. His voice was quiet, just loud enough for the two of them to hear.

John shook his head. He looked desperate, childlike, but finally he closed his eyes and began:

“I was on assignment in Afghanistan. There was a skirmish, and I was deployed out to help. Usually I just stayed at a medical base, doing surgeries but this was an emergency. It was…chaos. I was trying to stay on top of it, trying to find the men who were hurt and it just…hit me. I was knocked on my back before I even realized what was happening. At first I didn’t even realize it was shoulder because my chest hurt so badly and the blood was everywhere. There was someone talking to me, people shouting, but I couldn’t hear what they were saying. I guess they were freaked out that their doctor was hurt. I wanted to keep it together but I just…lost it. I went into shock until I finally just passed out. I woke up in an infirmary, all patched up, and the chaos was over. My army career was over. Everything I worked for…god it was over so quickly- with one bullet. It took me a long time to get over that fact. It hurt more than the bullet did. I was depressed. I was in therapy. I was…a complete mess. And then I met you.”

He felt like he couldn’t breathe as John looked up at him, a sad smile on his face. His breaths came in shallow, harsh gasps, and without thinking his hand inched closer to John’s.

“Now you know,” John whispered. “It was the most terrifying experience of my life, and afterwards I felt useless. Ashamed.”

“It wasn’t your fault,” Sherlock said quietly.

“I know,” John said. He rested his chin in a hand and gazed at Sherlock. “I know, but it still hurt.”

They paused for a moment, toying with the empty glasses.

“Why do you never sleep?” John asked. “I still hear you pacing the flat sometimes.”

At the mention of “sleep”, Sherlock’s head slipped into his hand. The exhaustion would hit him randomly like this sometimes, but he knew it was the emotionally daunting night draining him now.

“I still remember it,” he admitted. “That night, with Luke, it still haunts me. The fights with Mycroft…haunt me. The drugs…I can still remember how they felt. I still battle with it, but I don’t tell anyone. I can’t sleep because the nightmares are too painful. So I stay up and find distractions. Solve cases. Play music. And did I mention distractions?”

A helpless smile crept across his face, and a similar one was etched on John’s mouth as well. The
waitress came by to offer more shots, and he didn’t protest when John accepted.

“Have you ever had any affection for another man?” Sherlock asked. His eyes twinkled a bit as he gazed at John lazily. “Or was I the first?”

This time, John grinned.

“The first and only.”

They both snorted, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to notice they were seated even closer together. He swore the pub got hotter.

“Cheers,” John said again.

The shot made his stomach lurch again, but only for a moment. He felt energy crawling through him, opening up parts of his mind he fought so hard to hide away. And he was surprised to see how good that felt.

“Did I hurt you back there, at the cemetery?” John said.

Sherlock glanced down. His heart pounded a bit faster than normal, and he tried to reach for the next shot but a hand stopped him.

“Sherlock?” He asked carefully.

“I wouldn’t have brought it up,” Sherlock admitted. “But…yeah. Yeah, you did. I wish that I could explain it. I wish I could make you understand. It wasn’t a healthy relationship, but it was a relationship nonetheless. It was damaging and addictive but…I loved him. Even in the end.”

“Is that what the feud with Mycroft is about?” John said.

Sherlock stared at him.

“You skipped my turn,” he teased.

John rolled his eyes.

“I owe it to you, then,” he said. “Seriously…is that why you fight?”

Hesitating, he took a deep breath before admitting:

“Yes. As you can imagine, having a drug addict brother who is in a relationship with a dealer doesn’t look good on the CV of someone working their way up government ranks. During holidays he would interrogate me about school. He found drugs in my bag once…it was the first time we ever physically fought. He threatened not to let me go back. When I was living on the streets he stalked me. That’s when the hidden cameras started.”

“But he never helped you?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“I refused,” he sighed. “After the incident at that club and the murder, I finally let him put me in rehab. But that was only because of Lestrade. He talked me into it, told me it would be okay, and promised to let me help out on cases again once I got out. Like I told you earlier I got out and Mycroft helped me get a flat. After the affair with Luke and his death we fought again…our second physical fight. He told me he didn’t care what happened to me after that…and I almost
overdosed again.”

John stared at him, his eyes dark with guilt.

“I’m…I’m so sorry,” John whispered.

“Lestrade helped me that time,” Sherlock said quietly. “Like I said, he’s given me a lot of chances.”

He took the next shot without being asked to and welcomed the warmth.

“I’ve lost count of the questions,” Sherlock said.

“Thank you for telling me all of that,” John said, inching his hand closer to his. “I’m sorry I overreacted. I know it must have taken a lot to take me to his grave.”

“I don’t need you to approve of my past,” Sherlock said. “I just need you to know.”

John was breathing heavily now; he could feel his hot breath on his own face as they inched even closer. Their lips were nearly together. The laughter and cheering in the pub danced around them at a dizzying pace as John’s hand cupped his chin. He reminded himself to breathe, to not panic. What better place than in a dark, hidden corner of a pub where they knew no one to share their first public kiss?

But John stopped, and his eyes flashed up.

“I owe you questions,” he whispered. “Can I make it up to you at home?”

Sherlock swallowed. His mind buzzed with adrenaline from the drinking, and his heart raced too quickly. His clothed felt too tight, the air too hot and stale, and yet it all made him feel so alive.

And he nodded.

"Let's get a cab."
It was after two AM before they arrived back at Baker Street. They tore into their silent flat, already crashing against walls as they kissed.

“I thought I still had five questions,” Sherlock said.

A wicked grin crossed his face as he began working on John’s jumper. John moaned as it was pulled over his head, making him fall back against the wall.

“How about this,” John replied. Sherlock shivered as a trail of warm kisses ran down his neck. “Instead of questions give you…grants.”

Breaking apart for a moment, Sherlock stared at him.

“Grants?” He repeated.

“Like wishes,” John explained.

Sherlock licked his lips, contemplating.

“That might possibly be the lamest idea I’ve ever heard.”

Once again his lips captured John’s into a harsh, breathless, kiss. They both tasted of alcohol and smelled of the pub. John began working on his clothes as well, shrugging off his shirt and unbuttoning his trousers.

“So you get to learn all about my past?” He asked, lips grazing John’s neck. “And I get sex?”

John grinned against his shoulder.

“Are you really complaining?”

They grinned at each other before returning to the kiss. Slowly they made their way toward the kitchen, bumping against the walls as they went. The flat seemed to spin around them at almost a sickening speed, but he knew it was the alcohol. He wasn’t used to it, his brain wasn’t used to it, and he was sure his body would retaliate in the morning.

John slid a paper bag on the counter, taking the moment to let his hands shimmy up and down Sherlock’s sides, just enough to make him shiver. He never drank, so the buzz from the alcohol alone was enough to give him a sensory overload…let alone the feeling of John’s cool hands on his hips, his sides, his chest, his back.

He moaned a little, and John grinned as reached for the bag.

“Haven’t you had enough?” Sherlock shot.
“How often do we do this?” John pointed out.

They broke apart enough for John to pop open the bottle of tequila he bought. His stomach churned just at the sight, and he decided then and there that perhaps it was best to leave John to do the drinking.

Sherlock wrapped his arms around his chest, standing close behind him as John prepared his first shot.

“How often do we do this?” John said.

“Do you really want to start again now?”

John turned and glared at him before licking the salt from his hand and taking the shot.

“Give me this one night, Sherlock,” he pleaded. “Then I can go back to being your boring boyfriend.”

Their eyes connected instantly and John fell silent. His face went pale as he realized what he said.

“I don’t think you’re boring,” Sherlock whispered.

He knew John was stuck on the boyfriend part, but he decided to leave that aside for now. John bit into a piece of lime and they kissed again. He breathed in sharply at the new tastes in John’s mouth.

The idea popped into his mind and his muscles took action before he fully comprehended what he was doing. He reached for the salt and took a pinch of it-

“Sherlock-“ John warned, running his hands up and down Sherlock’s arms in a comforting you don’t have to do this way.

He kissed him to shut him up. As they broke apart he slipped his finger in John’s mouth, slipping the salt in. His tongue followed, and John moaned.

“How long has it been since you’ve done this?” John teased.

Sherlock grimaced and bit into a piece of lime.

“I was twenty-one,” he said. “It was a weekend before a biology exam.”

John laughed and leaned up to kiss him again.

“We’re too fucking old for this,” John murmured as their lips brushed together again.

“You may be,” Sherlock grinned.

John retaliated by pulling him closer and thrusting against him, just enough to send blood rushing
to his head. He could feel John hardening against his thigh as he teased him. A hand palmed at his cock through his trousers and Sherlock let out an involuntary whimper. John’s fingers only worked faster, unzipping him enough to free his cock.

“So I have five wishes?” Sherlock said. “Can I ask questions too?”

He could have sworn he caught John rolling his eyes. Cold hands ran up and down his warm shaft and he shuddered at the contrast. When John’s tongue danced against his cock he forgot all about the questions. John’s mouth closed around him and he groaned. One hand grasped the countertop beside him and one grabbed at John’s hair.

“C-can you?”

He could hardly stammer out the question, but John seemed to catch on. He took him in deeper. Both of them groaned as his cock hit the back of John’s throat. John reached up and began to slip his trousers down beneath his hips. Sherlock shivered as the fabric brushed against sensitive skin.

John let him go with a “pop” that echoed through the silent kitchen.

“Is that one of your requests?” John asked.

His eyes trailed up to him, and Sherlock nearly melted at the twinkling excitement in them. He could only nod as John took him in again, harder this time.

“Oh,” Sherlock whispered, rocking his hips back a little. “Can you-”

He took one of John’s hands in his and brought it around to rest on his arse. Again, John seemed to read his mind and Sherlock’s moans filled the room as he simultaneously sucked him off and roamed his hands around his arse.

“How is that?” John asked.

His voice was just above a whisper, and that alone was enough to make him whimper. Fingers began playing with the cleft of his arse, and his back arched at the touch.

“Is that one of your questions?” He shot.

John glanced up at him again and grinned. He lifted himself up and grabbed Sherlock’s hands, pulling him into a kiss.

“God you taste good,” John whispered in his ear, before sucking on his earlobe.

Sherlock dipped down to tease John’s nipples with his lips, enjoying the groans sounding off above him.

“How is that?” John asked.

His voice trembled ever so slightly. He was shaken from the alcohol and the sensory overload. His mind buzzed, taking in each touch of fingers and brush of lips.

John obeyed without question, sinking to the ground gracefully and laying on his back. Sherlock grabbed the salt, lime, tequila, and shot glasses before following him. His lips played again with each nipple before he took another pinch of salt in hand and placed it on one of them. John’s eyes went wide, but he stayed silent, watching in wonder as Sherlock drink the salt off him and reached for the alcohol. His hands still trembled as he poured the glass, sending splashes against John’s
chest. John stayed perfectly still as Sherlock placed the piece of lime in his mouth, ready for him to bite into it.

Throwing his head back, he closed his eyes and tossed the shot in. He swallowed it easily this time and licked at the drops of tequila on John’s skin before reaching up and biting the lime. They both moaned as their lips touched briefly before Sherlock let go of him, letting John spit the rest of the lime onto the floor.

He lowered himself so that he lay beside John, and his lover sat up a bit, obviously seeing where this was going. John grabbed the salt.

“Close your eyes,” John whispered.

He did, but he ruined the surprise as he reached out to grasp his cock at the same time as John’s hands closed around it. He grinned and John laughed, pushing his hand out of the way. He placed a kiss to the top of his dick before slipping the salt on him. He couldn’t feel it completely until John’s lips were around him, sucking up the salt and taking in the skin there at the same time.

“God,” Sherlock whispered, tensing up.

“This has got to be the last one,” John muttered.

He grinned at the sound of John moaning as he took the shot.

“Jesus Christ!” John snapped, coughing a bit. “Fuck.”

Lips brushed across his own and Sherlock opened his eyes, without asking permission, and grasped the back of John’s head to pull him in closer.

“Are we really going to do this on the kitchen floor?” John asked quietly when their eyes met.

They glanced around, contemplating how big of an issue it really was. Sherlock swallowed, feeling a little nervous- as he always did. He placed a hand on John’s arm, rubbing at the skin there.

“Can we go to my room?”

John grinned.

“I think that’s…three questions now?” John teased.

Sherlock rolled his eyes as they stood up.

“Shit,” he whispered, grabbing his head as the room spun.

“Jesus,” John echoed again, shaking his own head to get rid of the dizziness.

He tugged off his loafers and socks and pulled his trousers down the rest of the way as John grabbed the tequila.

“Thought that was the last one?” Sherlock pointed out.

John leaned in and kissed him.

“It’s for you,” he said, smiling in and shoving the alcohol at him.

He knew he could only stand maybe one more shot, but his mind was reeling with ideas. John’s
hand brushed against his arse as they stumbled to his bedroom, rubbing at the cleft and slapping
him lightly. As they slipped into the room he pinned John against the wall, snogging him even
with the tequila still in hand.

“Come here,” Sherlock whispered.

His arm wrapped around John’s neck as he led him to the bed and threw him on the mattress. The
bed was unmade and still smelt of their last encounter, but it only made pinning John down
against the same place he spent so many nights contemplating their relationship that much more
intoxicating.

“Mmm,” John moaned again as Sherlock rolled him on his stomach.

“Like that,” Sherlock instructed, sitting up above him and straddling his back. “Don’t touch
yourself.”

“Fuck,” John mumbled against the sheets.

Sherlock grinned as he reached down and sent a trail of kisses fluttering down John’s back. His
lover shivered from the touch and withered beneath him. His own cock was hard by now, almost
painfully so, and he knew it was only a matter of time before the insane night would end in the two
of them passing out. He sucked lightly at the skin just above John’s arse before licking a stripe
down one of his cheeks.

“You’re drunk,” John said.

He grinned a sloppy grin against the sheets as he tried to turn around to see what Sherlock was
doing. Sherlock only smirked as he fingered John, not fully entering him yet.

“There’s still a bit of tequila,” John reminded him.

“I know,” he said quietly, placing another kiss to his arse.

“God,” John moaned, arching up at the touch. “Fuck, I need this.”

Sherlock reached beneath John to toy with his cock. A series of painful-sounding gasps and moans
danced around the room at the teasing.

“Yes, you do.”

His words slurred together, and he knew John was right. He was drunk. He slapped a hand lightly
against John’s arse, testing him. He grinned as John’s arse jumped up and down at the light
touches, beating against him and then hitting the mattress again. He tried hitting one cheek, then
the other, and then changing without warning.

“Fuck!” John moaned.

“Can I keep doing this?” Sherlock asked, leaning down to kiss John’s shoulder.

John only moaned. Loudly. He rubbed John’s left cheek and kept hitting it lightly. The skin turned
a light shade of pink as Sherlock teased him. He reached for the salt, and John nearly shot off the
bed when he placed it just between his cheeks.

His lover panted beneath him as he leaned down, cupping his lips carefully around the salt. He
squeezed John’s arse with his hands as he licked. The groans from beneath him were erotic, nearly
enough to make him cum just from the sound. His own cock brushed against John’s leg, and the friction felt so good that he knew he needed to do it again.

So he did.

He reached for the tequila as he rocked against John and prepared the next shot.

“Oh!” John moaned. “Oh!”

He was louder than usual, surely fueled by alcohol, and it only sent his own hard pounding faster. He closed his eyes and took down his last shot of the night. Carefully, his shaking hands slipped the glass onto the nightstand.

He reached for the lime and a new idea hit him just as he was about to bite it. He wedge it carefully between John’s cheeks so that the juice part faced upward. But from the yelps after he bit down he knew some of the juice leaked onto the skin.

Sherlock removed the lime quickly and replaced it was a finger.

“Oh god!” John whispered. “Sherlock…Sherlock!”

John rutted against his finger, desperate for friction, and Sherlock wasted no time in reaching for lube. He added a second finger, and John started breathing harder, harder and he rocked faster.

“Oh god!”

Sherlock bit his lip, determined to keep quiet as John kept shouting out.

A third finger slipping in, and John went up to his hands and knees.

“Can I…can I-“ John swallowed, fighting for his voice. He was so desperate he was nearly in tears. Sweat pour down his forehead and his hands slipped against the sheets as he fought to hold on.

“Can I touch myself?”

“Yes,” Sherlock growled.

Fuck, were they drunk.

He slapped John’s arse again as he removed one finger and again as he removed the next and again.

“Sherlock!” John trembled.

Sherlock continued to finger him with one hand as the other lubed up his cock. John rutted against him at an impossible speed. His arse trembled as Sherlock gripped his hips, forcing him to keep still as he lined up.

“Oh god,” John whispered again as the head of his cock touched his hole.

Eyes closed, John braced himself as Sherlock pushed in. They both fell forward a bit, finding it hard to keep steady from all the alcohol.

“Oh fuck,” John whispered. “Oh fuck!”

He knew his body was just sensitive from all the booze, but it made him feel good to hear John this excited for him.
He pushed in further, and Sherlock couldn’t help it. A loud, long moan escaped him, and John groaned beneath him.


“Like this?” Sherlock teased as he rocked them both forward.

John groaned and kept groaning as they sunk further into the mattress. His lover’s cock was already leaking and Sherlock grasped it with clumsy hands, running his fingers up and down it as he kissed John’s back.

“Fuck, fuck!” John gasped.

Sherlock stroked and rocked against him in earnest, sending the whole bed bouncing against the walls. John bounced back against him and the feeling— the sounds— of skin on skin were so erotic that he could already feel his orgasm coming on.

He allowed himself one low “Oh!” as he came.

John absolutely erupted, shouting his name as Sherlock kept stroking him.

He pulled out and let John take over fucking himself while Sherlock milked out the last of his orgasm. Cum dripped from his cock to John’s arse, and he shuddered and moaned at the sight.

“Oh god!” John whispered, collapsing onto the bed as he came. He used the sheets as friction as he forced out the last of his own climax. “Fuck, Sherlock, that was—“


He collapsed next to John, and they grinned as their eyes roamed each other, taking in the state of them.

“We’re going to be so hungover tomorrow,” John said as he reached up and brushed Sherlock’s hair back.

He kissed him, and he knew John was right when all he could taste and smell was alcohol.

“Yeah,” Sherlock grinned, “but I think it was worth it.”

Rolling over to his side he gazed up at the ceiling, feeling dazed, exhausted, buzzed and just on top of the world all at the same time. John rolled onto his back as well, wincing.

“In pain?” Sherlock teased.

“Fuck off!” John shot, slapping at him playfully.

They kissed again before collapsing back against the pillows. Sherlock let his eyes fall closed, and as soon as he did his mind seem to welcome the idea of still darkness. His head still spun a bit, but John’s soft breathing as they calmed down was enough to lure him into a restful night of sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I’m not sure how much good that did their honesty problem but...progress, right?
Thanks for reading and for all of your kind comments!
During their Morning Rituals

John’s eyes fluttered open to the immediate realization of Sherlock’s room. He let out a dry moan as he tried to shift positions. His body was like steel. From his neck to his feet he was completely stiff, and his arse stung.

Rolling his head to the side he found Sherlock, laying in just his boxer shorts and gazing at the ceiling like he was in some kind of daze.

“Don’t do that,” Sherlock warned.

He sounded oddly not like himself.

John had to swallow a few times before he found his voice.

“Do what?” He moved again and groaned.

“Move.”

He let out a stiff laugh as he buried his face into the pillow and shut his eyes tight.

“Please tell me we didn’t do everything I remember us doing,” he mumbled.

“Yes.”

He moaned again as he rolled over so that he was shoulder-to-shoulder with Sherlock.

“Did I really do a tequila shot off your-“

“Yes,” Sherlock replied quickly. His cheeks turned red, and John’s stomach turned to knots at the thought that Sherlock was truly embarrassed by the night before. “But that doesn’t come close to everything I did to you.”

Gazing at him with sympathy, he let his eyes roam over his lover’s body. His hair was a mess, his hands were locked together in defeat on his chest, and his face was even whiter than normal.

“You look pale,” John said, reaching out to brush his cheek.

Sherlock shuddered at the touch.

“I threw up,” Sherlock muttered. “About a half a dozen times.”

He couldn’t help but to grin. Of course Sherlock wouldn’t be used to hangovers.

“I don’t remember you drinking as much as me,” he said.

“Yes,” Sherlock agreed. “But since rehab I haven’t had anything more than wine at the occasional gathering, so…”

As he trailed off John’s eyes went wide, and he felt impossibly ill at what Sherlock was implying.

“Oh god!” He exclaimed. “Why didn’t you say anything? Christ…you should have stopped me.” Sherlock shrugged.
“Drinking wasn’t why I was in rehab. Mycroft just likes to keep me away from anything that helps me lose control of my mind. But I don’t think this was the kind of out of control he had in mind.”

John shut his eyes again to block out the image of Mycroft watching them have sex that immediately popped into his mind at the very mention of the elder Holmes’ name.

“I’ll be fine,” Sherlock said. He didn’t sound quite like himself; it was almost like he was trying to reassure himself he was okay. “I just need to…stay still and not blink.”

“Not blink?”

“It helps me concentrate on not being dizzy.”

A small smile appeared from the corners of John’s lips, and he snaked a hand around to grip Sherlock’s shoulder. His body still felt warm and inviting, and he had to pull away to stop himself from getting too excited.

“Just take it easy. I’ll make some coffee…we can sleep off the rest of the morning.”

“Can’t.” When John turned to him, Sherlock looked almost pained at what he was saying. “Lestrade wants me at the crime scene. That was a half hour ago. I’ve never been late to anything ever…fuck, I can’t even move.”

“Tell him you’re sick,” John replied.

“I just had the flu!”

“Tell him I’m sick.”

“He would wonder why I care.”

They glanced at each other and grinned. Sherlock finally seemed to get a little colour back into his face, but just as he did a sickening feeling began creeping in his own stomach. He squirmed, but every movement had him panicking with anxiety as bile built in his throat.

“Shit,” he muttered as he leaped out of bed.

Ignoring the fact that he was still naked, John raced to the bathroom and made it just in time.

“Fuck,” he whispered, dragging a trembling hand over his mouth afterward.

Sherlock appeared at the doorway, one hand rubbing his sweaty neck and the other wrapped around his stomach.

“Not as strong as you thought you were, then?” Sherlock teased.

“Fuck off,” John mumbled.

Resting his head back against the wall he let his eyes fall close. Sherlock was right: staying perfectly still seemed to be the only way to fight the dizziness.

“I’ve got to see Lestrade,” Sherlock said. “He’s texted me again. Seems desperate.”

Despite the determination in his voice he collapsed on the floor beside John.

“Next time I say ‘let’s buy tequila and do body shots’, tell me I’m too damn old for that,” John
sighed.

“I did say that.”

They turned to each other, and John simply groaned again as his eyes fell close.

“Why does that always seem like such a good idea?” John said.

Sherlock shrugged.

“Because it was fun,” he admitted. “While it lasted.”

“Yeah…”

John trailed off as he reached up, grasping the sink for support as he stood.

“Maybe a warm shower will help my headache.”

Sherlock turned on the sink and began brushing his teeth, wincing with each movement. John reached over to start the shower. He rubbed a hand over his forehead, trying his best to ease the pain. He couldn’t help but to notice Sherlock’s eyes wondering his way through the mirror, and his cheeks reddened a bit when he realized his lover was staring at his bare arse.

“As long as Lestrade doesn’t look at your arse we might be okay,” Sherlock snorted.

He didn’t want to, but curiosity drove his eyes back to the mirror. His eyes widened with horror when he noticed his arse was still a light shade of pink.

“God I hate you!” John shot, turning the water onto a stronger setting so that it drowned out Sherlock’s laughing.

At last the water turned warm and he stepped in. Sherlock was leaning against the sink now, watching him. John looked away, painfully aware of how uncomfortable it was for another man to watch him shower. He wasn’t sure why that was- considering all they had done- but his face turned redder, if possible.

“Do you mind if I joined you?”

Sherlock spoke so quietly that John had to turn around to make sure he heard him correctly. His partner sunk back against the sink, surrendering to his own embarrassment and shyness. John swallowed nervously, and nodded.

Stepping forward, Sherlock shrugged off his boxers. John glanced away, forcing himself not to get turned on at the sight, but when a hand reached out to him he grasped it, and when Sherlock leaned in for a kiss he brushed his lips against his.

Behind them the water steamed up, inviting them in.
Mastrubation

As soon as the water hit their backs John was able to put the hangover out of mind. He focused only on the man standing in front of him and the steady stream of water hitting the back of his head and bouncing onto John’s face. John focused on the mouth, just inches from him and closing in the space between them.

Breathing in sharply, he allowed Sherlock to capture his lips into a soft embrace. His hands immediately found Sherlock’s strong forearms and held on there for dear life as the kiss deepened. He moaned as a tongue began exploring his mouth, tasting him and ignoring the foul traces left from the night before.

Sherlock took a step closer, and John was horrified to realize his love was already hard. That’s not what he had in mind when he invited Sherlock in for a wash. His own body was wrecked, sore to the very core of his being. His mind was exhausted with emotion and drained from alcohol, and he just didn’t think he could mentally handle sex at the moment. But Sherlock rubbed his hands over his arms, his chest. Somewhere he had found soap and was rubbing it into John’s nipple, his neck, his back.

“Sherlock-“ he warned.

He pulled back, licking his lips and gazing desperately at his lover.

“I need this.”

Sherlock’s reply was so small, so intense that John moaned in response.

Instead of giving in, he gently reached for Sherlock’s hand and placed it on his cock. Sherlock moaned as John helped him stroke himself. By the steady, tiny thrusts of the hip John could tell Sherlock was excited and aroused.

Frankly, the idea of helping Sherlock masturbate was making himself more aroused than he intended.

“Go ahead,” John said, pulling his own hand away and leaving Sherlock to please himself. “Like that…go on.”

Sherlock closed his eyes and seemed to let himself get lost in the moment. He reached for the soap and used it to lube himself up, and John nearly burst at the sight.

“You’re doing this just to get back at me, aren’t you?” John shot.

Sherlock only grinned.

“Oh,” he whispered suddenly. His strokes sped up, and John felt his own heart rate quicken, like it might as well have been him climaxing. “Oh.”

He moaned as he ejaculated, and a wicked grin spread across his face. John held his breath as Sherlock’s strokes suddenly became lighter, softer, as he came down from his orgasm.

“That’s it,” John murmured. “You just like to torture me.”

“You didn’t get that from last night?”
He rolled his eyes at Sherlock’s grin and leaned in to kiss him.

When he stepped out of the shower ten minutes later, he left Sherlock behind to finish watching his hair. His own arousal was growing so tight, so desperate that he just wanted some time alone in his room. It was too much, with the blinding headache and achiness all over, and as much as he wanted to he knew he would be even worse off if the shower got any more physical. They were supposed to be at the crime scene nearly an hour ago…there was just no time.

“Oh, hello John.”

John nearly fell to the ground as he ran into Mrs. Hudson. Her cheeks went red as she took in his wet hair and towel wrapped around his waist.

“Hi,” he stammered. “I was just washing up. You know…like people do in the mornings.”

She simply stared at him and offered a sympathetic smile.

“When you’re done, it wouldn’t hurt for you and Sherlock to do a bit of tidying up around here. Honestly, you’re not teenagers.”

He simply nodded and hoped she would leave it at that. She kept walking, heading out of the flat, but stopped at the last minute. Without looking at him, she said to the ground:

“Oh, and when Sherlock gets out of the shower do tell him to pick his clothes up out of the kitchen. I’m not his housekeeper.”
“Of all the days for it to be sunny,” John mumbled under his breath as they got out of the cab. He glanced up at Sherlock, who looked ridiculous in a mix of his long, untidy hair, coat, and sunglasses. “I didn’t even know you own sunglasses.”

“Of course I do,” Sherlock shot.

“You look like a bloody comic book villain.”

“Yes, well my shower was cut short this morning on account of trauma.”

“You can’t blame this on me!” John shot. “You were the one who wanted to join me, and you were the one who wanted to-“

He stopped and glanced around when he realized just how loud they were being. They were in front of the club now, and as it was still early in the morning the streets were thankfully vacant.

“Look, maybe it’s not that bad,” John sighed. “After all, this is what she already thinks we’re doing.”

“I’m pretty sure that sweet, innocent, Mrs. Hudson is not thinking that we’re doing that!”

“Maybe she’s not as sweet and innocent as you think!”

It was meant as a clever retort, but he immediately shut his mouth as his face went red in embarrassment. Sherlock stared at him; John couldn’t decide if he looked more ready to laugh or throw up.

“That came out wrong.” John mumbled. “Point is…we should just approach her, as adults, and admit that we’re in a relationship.”

“Right. I suppose we should do the same for Mycroft.”

“Don’t!” John exclaimed, covering his ears. “Just…ugh, I have I mentioned I hate you?”

Sherlock only grinned as he opened the door to the club for him.

When they stepped inside they immediately stopped. Something was off. Chairs were tossed about, glass was on the floor by the bar, and the place was deadly silent.

“Did you happen to bring your gun?” Sherlock whispered.

“No,” he replied. “I was a bit preoccupied.”

“Damn.”

He lingered behind as Sherlock slowly began to take in the state of the place.

“The front door was still closed,” Sherlock said. He took out his mobile. “No further word from Lestrade.”
John’s eyes roamed around the room as Sherlock dialed the D.I.’s number. There were no signs of blood, at least.

That’s when the thought hit him.

While Sherlock waited for Lestrade to answer he moved around to the backside of the bar. A business of this sort in a part of town such as this would have some kind of weapon in case something was to happen, he thought. Sure enough, stashed behind a tower of cloths was a safe. John carefully took it out of the shelf and opened it.

It was empty.

A ringtone began playing through the bar, and he and Sherlock looked at each other. The music was coming from the back of the club, from the hallway that led to forbidden rooms John was sure he could live the rest of his life without stepping foot in. Sherlock kept dialing the number over and over until they could get a good idea of where the noise was coming from, and his partner finally stopped in front of a narrow, black, door at the end of the hall.

John swallowed nervously. The only thing beyond the door was an ominous-looking exit sign. John pushed on the exit door just to test it. The door didn’t budge.

“It’s locked,” John whispered. “What kind of emergency exit is locked?”

Sherlock eyed him but didn’t respond. Instead he tried the door to the room. John let out a shaky breath when he saw the door prop open.

“Trap,” he mouthed to Sherlock.

Sherlock nodded and walked in anyway.

His heart raced as he took in what appeared to be a bedroom.

“What kind of place is this?” He wondered out loud, forgetting that he should be quiet.

The room was painted dark red, a sharp contrast to the white carpet. A dark, wooden wardrobe was against the far wall and on the opposite end, a king-sized poster bed. The bed had curtains that wrapped all around it, except for an opening at the foot of the bed. Sherlock threw the curtains open wide and they froze upon seeing Lestrade laying there. He was out cold with his hands folded casually on his chest, like he was in a casket.

John reached the D.I. first and his fingers immediately found his neck and wrist to check for a pulse.

“He’s alive,” he breathed.

Sherlock sighed heavily in relief, something John found a bit shocking considering how careful he usually was with his emotions around Lestrade, but he didn’t mention it. Instead, he felt around to the back of Lestrade’s head and found a fist-sized lump.

“Jesus,” John whispered. “Someone knocked him out good.”

When he brought his hand down he was horrified to realize blood came with it. There was a cut along with the bump that was still open.

“Call an ambulance!” He exclaimed when he noticed Sherlock had yet to do so.
His partner began dialing immediately, but the sound of heels clicking into the room stopped them both. Looking up, he found himself not too shocked to see the barista they met a few days before.

He was shocked to see her pointing a gun at them.

“Get away from him,” Sam breathed.

She blew a piece of hair from her eyes as she stepped toward them. Lestrade clearly put up a fight—her hair was disheveled, her top ripped at the bottom, and a blue-black bruise on her forehead.

“It’s nice to see Lestrade put up a fight,” Sherlock shot. “You do know that’s a detective inspector from the Scotland Yard you just assaulted.”

“Sherlock-” John warned.

“Listen to your boyfriend,” Sam smirked.

“I was right, wasn’t I?” Sherlock said. “All those years ago. You committed the original murder, and our victim found out, didn’t she?”

Sherlock’s accusations were clearly making Sam uncomfortable. Sweat trickled from her forehead and her fingers kept searching for proper grip around the gun.

“Lestrade figured it out,” Sherlock went on. “He-“

A gunshot went off, and on instinct they both ducked only to realize the shot was a warning shot, sent straight to the ceiling.

“Good,” Sherlock snapped. His eyes were dark and angry, almost enough to frighten John himself. His hair stood up on his arms and his body convulsed into shivers that were difficult to control. He clenched his fists, determined to keep his cool. “Fire as many shots as you want. Draw more attention-“

The gun went off again, and John grabbed Sherlock just in time to send them both tumbling to the floor. As soon as he landed on top of his lover his hands shimmied up and down the body below him, checking for injuries. Their eyes connected, Sherlock’s warning him that he was okay and to not panic. The footsteps drew closer, and John’s eyes danced around, searching for an escape.

He managed to drag them both beneath the bed, and they rolled just in time as the third shot rang out. This time Sherlock landed above him, breathing hard, hot breaths into his face. His eyes were wild and his hands shook ever-so-slightly as they held tightly to the back of John’s head. John opened his mouth to whisper something, but Sherlock held a finger to his lips and pointed with the other finger toward the door.

They were close enough to the door to allow them to make a run for it if they were quick enough. Adrenaline pumped through his body, egging him on, and John nodded his head, signaling that he knew he could do it. Sherlock slowly counted to three with one hand, and they made a run for it.

Gunshots ricocheted off the walls as they flew from the room. He pushed Sherlock so that he was in front of him and out of the line of fire. A bullet flew whizzed right by his arm just as he leaped through the doorway, throwing it close just in time.

Sherlock immediately leapt for the door opposite them and pushed it open. They dashed into the room and shut the door behind it. John held it closed with the force of his body while Sherlock pulled a nearby dresser to block it.
“See if there’s anything in there we can use for defense!” Sherlock said as he began using his mobile to dial out.

John opened the first drawer and froze.

It was literally a drawer full of condoms and lube.

“Um…Sherlock!” He called, but Sherlock was too focused on getting through with the mobile.

So instead he checked the second drawer. Dildos. Of all sizes.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he muttered under his breath before checking the next drawer.

A single riding crop lay before him. He grabbed it immediately and waved it in front of Sherlock. Sherlock ended the call and grinned.

“You’re brilliant!” He exclaimed.

John’s eyes went wide as Sherlock suddenly kissed him before grabbing the crop and heading for the door.

“What are you doing?” John hissed, still panting from the force of the kiss.

He licked his lips as he watched Sherlock get to work on moving the dresser back. Instead of responding, Sherlock simply held a hand to his mouth and smiled.

Panic settled in when he realized he was left empty handed. He checked the last drawer and bit his lip when he found handcuffs connected by a long chain.

“What kind of place is this?” He mumbled.

Sherlock took position on the other side of the door while John hovered near the dresser.

“Can’t we just wait for help?” John pointed out.

At that moment a bullet tore through the air and pierced the wooden door, just inches from Sherlock’s face.

“Right,” John whispered.

Sherlock carefully raised a hand to the doorknob. John had to step aside as it was thrown open, and he selfishly admitted to himself he was grateful the door pinned him against the wall as Sherlock let himself be faced to face with Sam.

As soon as Sam stepped into the room and found it empty she stopped and blinked.

That’s when Sherlock acted.

The riding crop struck straight across Sam’s face with such a force that even John’s heart skipped a beat at the sound. She gasped in surprise and Sherlock struck again, enough to make her tumble against the door.

John drew in a deep breath as he leapt out from behind the door and tackled her, holding her down enough to cuff her to the door handle. At the same time sirens exploded nearby, and John remembered Lestrade knocked out cold in the room across the hall.
By the time he got to the D.I.’s rescue the man was already waking up. He grabbed his head and groaned as his eyes fluttered open.

“John?” He mumbled as John awkwardly climbed on the bed next to him. “When did you—“

“It’s alright,” John assured. He gently placed a hand on the wound, and Lestrade immediately flinched in pain. “Christ, she got you good.”

“Could you help me move so my team doesn’t see me perched up on the bed like some bloody prostitute?” Lestrade muttered.

He smirked and helped Lestrade sit up.

“Is Sherlock with you?”

John frowned, forgetting to answer the question as he dissected it. It wasn’t that he was jealous of being put second to Sherlock- it was the genuine, almost father-like, concern in Lestrade’s voice that threw him off.

“Yeah,” John nodded. “He’s okay, come on.”

He helped Lestrade walk to the hall, and as soon as they stepped into the other room the D.I. shrugged away from him.

“You’re under arrest!” Lestrade exclaimed. He winched at the sound of his own voice and raised a hand to his head. “Jesus Christ!”

Ignoring Lestrade’s obvious pain, Sherlock rounded on him.

“There!” Sherlock exclaimed, stabbing an accusing finger toward Sam. “I was right, all those years ago. How did you find it out?”

“I found a rather intimate picture of her and the victim in her flat…and one of her and the original victim!” Lestrade shot. “I’m fine, by the way!”

“Like that proves anything,” Sam said. She tested her bonds and glared between Sherlock and John. “You and your boyfriend think you’re cute, don’t you? Well, I suppose you had to get the riding crop practice from somewhere.”

John’s face turned bright red as Sam smirked, enjoying the shocked looks on everyone’s faces. Sherlock kicked out a foot to attack her again, but Lestrade pinned him against the wall just in time. The two simply shared a look, a glare that said more than they ever could have in words.

Sherlock was afraid, John realized.

Afraid of Lestrade knowing about them?

Feet finally rushed down the hall as the backup arrived.

“Are you alright, Sir?” Donovan asked as she stepped into the crime scene.

“Bloody terrific,” Lestrade mumbled.

His eyes snapped to Sherlock one last time before he finally let him go and began making his arrest. John watched the scene unfold for a moment in a daze as the team began securing the place.
Letting out a long sigh, John turned back to Sherlock…and he stopped when he realized his partner was gone.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so unbelievably blown away by all the nice comments! A few of you have mentioned you don't want this to end...and honestly, I'm sad to end it! So I'm trying to find a way to continue it! There are a few options, including a sequel, simply continuing the challenge by using the prompts I have yet to use, and taking requests for prompts. I'd LOVE to have your opinion on this!! Do you think the story is complete enough as is, or would you like to see more? How would YOU like to see this continued?

Also...I didn't focus as much on the case as I originally thought I might. I'm sorry if this mislead anyone, but I found other things I wanted to focus on. I think it actually worked out well. There will be a mini case wrap-up in the next chapter so you'll find out what Lestrade meant when he was talking about the pictures.

ONE MORE DAY! *freaks out*

Have I mentioned how awesome you all are?!!
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Breathe.

Concentrate on the breathing.

Panic attacks, he thought, that’s new.

He hadn’t had a panic attack since…possibly since Luke.

Sherlock hid himself in a nearby alley. His hands grasped at the bricks, begging for support as he attempted to not completely freak out because Lestrade knew. Mycroft knew, Mrs. Hudson knew, and now Lestrade knew.

His mobile buzzed and Sherlock gasped, taking his eyes away from the filth-ridden concrete. It was a text from John.

Where are you?

He let out a shaky breath as he leaned back against the wall and began texting:

Alley between

“Sherlock.”

Looking up, he stared in shock as John appeared in the alleyway. Sherlock stuffed his mobile back into his pocket as John breathed a sigh of relief and walked over to him. They gazed at each other for a moment and he took in for the first time how tired John looked. A hand was suddenly on his arm, brushing against him up and down for a quiet moment.

“Are you okay?” John finally asked.

He even sounded exhausted.

Sherlock nodded.

“Fine,” he lied. “Sorry, I just needed air.”

John stepped in front of him and began studying him in a very doctorish way that made him feel uncomfortable. Glancing away, Sherlock tried to push away the awkwardness of the moment with a dramatic sigh of frustration.

“Did you have a panic attack?” John asked, crossing his arms. “I’ve never seen you have a panic attack.”

“I’m fine!” Sherlock snapped. “It’s you I’m worried about.”

“Me?”

Their eyes connected again, and he took one of John’s hands in his. It was trembling ever-so-slightly, and when John realized what Sherlock was doing he folded his hand so that their fingers
locked together.

“I’m fine,” John whispered. “It’s just the adrenaline and…well, I’m not so good around gunfire after the, you know, getting shot part.”

Sherlock squeezed his hand gently and pointed out:

“Most people aren’t good around gunfire.”

John let out an empty laughed and joined him against the alley wall. Sherlock bit his lip as he watched him, trying to block of the image of his lover dodging bullets. Suddenly he realized where the panic attacks were coming from, and they weren’t from his own personal insecurities or fears.

It was all about John.

Working on cases with him as a friend, as a flatmate, was hard enough. But as a lover? The amount of pressure he felt to keep them safe skyrocketed. The fear was harder to keep at bay, and emotion suddenly came into play. He wasn’t used to it, and he didn’t know what to think about it.

All he knew was that he needed to get away from it if he wanted this to work.

“I can’t believe I’m about to say this…” Sherlock took a deep breath as John eyed him with interested. He was doing this completely on a whim, but somehow he knew it was the right decision. “But I think we need a break.”

“What?” John’s eyes turned cold as he stood up straight. “Are you breaking up with me?”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to laugh as a sad smile crossed his face.

“No,” he said, shaking his head. “I think we need a break. From cases.”

“You think we need a break?” John repeated. “Mr.-I-don’t-have sex-because-I’m-married-to-my-work?”

Sherlock nodded, and he felt a bit helpless. He realized then how stupid the plan must have sounded.

“That’s exactly the point. It’s hard enough…it’s hard enough just doing this. But seeing you almost drown and get shot at…”

“Sherlock, I’m fine,” John said. He reached a hand out to his shoulder, and Sherlock realized he must have looked like he himself was about to faint. “You know that, right? I’m perfectly fine.”

“I know,” he admitted. “But it’s just…it’s a lot, you know?”

John studied him for a moment, like he was waiting for the punch line.

“Do you really want this?” John said. “What…do you think we should take a holiday?”

He let out a hoarse laugh.

“Don’t be ridiculous, John, we can’t afford a holiday.”

“We also can’t afford rent without the cases.”

“Mycroft can cover it.”
John’s eyes went wide, and Sherlock smirked.

“He owes us for traumatizing us,” Sherlock pointed out. “I’m not saying we should close up shop. We should just…not get shot at for a couple of weeks.”

“That would be nice,” John sighed. He closed his eyes and tilted his head back; clearly the hangover was still nagging him. “I’ve gotta say, my nerves are completely shot. No pun intended.”

“It’s settled then.”

Before John had time to protest, Sherlock brought a hand up to his chin. His lover’s eyes flew open just as he closed in the space between them. John’s hot, uneven, breaths were on his face before he captured him in a soft kiss.

John tasted of salt and sweat, but somehow it was intoxicating enough to make him take the kiss deeper. He pried his way into John’s mouth with his tongue and began roaming around, exploring as his hands rested on John’s arms. His love moaned softly as Sherlock’s tongue danced from inside his mouth, to his lips, his chin, his neck…

“Sherlock,” John whispered, squirming a bit as Sherlock pulled his collar back enough to kiss at the delicate skin.

Firm hands tightened around his elbows, and Sherlock gave in, agreeing to behave as his tongue dove back into the doctor’s mouth. Time seemed to standstill, and at last the adrenaline and emotion running through him eased up.

When they broke apart again their foreheads rests together. They allowed themselves a moment to breathe; their lips just barely touched and Sherlock couldn’t help but to go in for one last kiss.

As they parted again, John grinned.

“You’re not shagging me in an alley, if that’s what you’re thinking,” John warned.

“Just watch me!” Sherlock teased.

He had no intension of fucking John in public, but the opportunity to fuck with his mind was too good. Feeling his lover shiver beneath his kiss made the whole endeavor worthwhile. His hands shimmied around to John’s back, clawing at the skin there and doing his shirt up just a bit to make his partner squirm.

One final time they parted, and Sherlock left him with a soft, open-mouth, kiss on the cheek.

“Fuck,” John shuddered.

Catching their breath, they leaned back against the brick wall. The very tips of their fingertips touched, and that was all it took for Sherlock’s chest to tighten.

“Lestrade told us to take the rest of the day off,” John announced. “Because it’s fine with me because honestly, my heart hasn’t pounded this much since the war.”

Sherlock grinned.

“I don’t think that’s just because of the case.”

John laughed, and his face turned slightly pink. His fingers brushed against Sherlock’s, pushing their hands even closer.
“A break,” John contemplated out loud. “Yeah…a break could be good.”

“Not forever,” Sherlock said. “Don’t you just feel like…”

“We need to catch our breath?”

They looked at each other, and Sherlock nodded.

“Exactly,” he whispered.

This was hard for him. So unbelievably hard, and he hoped John could somehow understand that. The cases were what drove him to live. They were what made him want to wake up each morning and leave his flat every day. The cases, the deduction, the rewarding feeling of solving something and helping someone, was enough of a distraction to keep him away from drugs.

But now he had John, and suddenly all of that took on a much smaller role in his life.

Truthfully, he felt like all of this was happening too quickly. He felt like they needed to slow down…he felt like he just needed to breathe for a bit. This partnership- this relationship- changed his life and how every inch of his being felt so quickly it knocked the wind of out him.

For the first time, he didn’t want to shy away from that. He wanted to understand what he was going through and accept it.

Sherlock held his breath when he realized their hands were finally touching.

“God time off sounds nice right now,” John mused. “I just want to go back to sleep.”

John kicked off the alley wall and began to lead them back to the street. Sherlock placed a hand on the small of John’s back, guiding him until they reached public view.

“Did Lestrade say how he solved the case?” Sherlock asked.

“The suspect and the victim were sleeping together.” They both jumped at Lestrade’s voice and turned around. The D.I. stood before them, with his hands stuffed in his pockets and looking rather sheepish. “The suspect and the victim of your old case also slept together. Until she murdered her, of course. We’re going through records now, but I suspect it has to do with cheating.”

“And her new lover found out?” John said.

Lestrade nodded, and John whistled, in shock at how deep this case went.

“I was right,” Sherlock grinned. “Who knew?”

Lestrade rolled his eyes.

“Yes, you were bloody right,” Lestrade signed. “Honestly, you’re like a kid.”

He shook his head and then gazed at them both, obviously debating on rather to bring up the big reveal from earlier.

“Listen, Greg…” John finally attempted.

But Lestrade held up a hand.

“It’s none of my business,” Lestrade admitted. A sympathetic smile crossed his face. “Seriously
though? I’m happy for you two. All the teasing from the team aside…you two are good together.”

Hearing that from Lestrade sent a rush of emotion through him that even made his eyes go all watery. Sherlock blinked and looked away, determined to keep his cool in front of the D.I. he so admired…not that he would ever admit that, of course.

“Thanks,” he simply whispered instead.

John swallowed, glancing away nervously, before saying:

“We thought it might be good to have some time off. After all, we have been shot at three times in the past months.”

Lestrade laughed.

“Right, well you two are consultants. All you have to do is tell me you don’t want any cases.”

He looked directly into Sherlock’s eyes as he said it, as though testing him. Sherlock froze, caught in between who he used to be and who he was turning into. He could tell Lestrade was trying to figure them out, figure him out, and he didn’t like it.

Turning to John, Sherlock allowed their eyes to connect. They studied each other for a moment, sizing each other up to determine just how serious they were.

“We’ll get back with you,” John finally said.

Lestrade nodded. Sherlock could have sworn he looked a bit disappointed, and secretly he himself felt a bit disappointed. He wasn’t quite sure what John was playing at.

They each shook hands with Lestrade, and after one final “thank you” for their day of work, they finally parted ways.

The two didn’t get as far as the next block before Sherlock pulled out his mobile and texted both John and Lestrade:

No cases. I’m on holiday.

Chapter End Notes

It took forever, but this challenge is over with at last!!!!!!! Thank you SO much for all the support and kind comments! Honestly, I never would have dreamed this story would get anywhere near this much support!

Confession time? This was my first time writing smut and only my second time writing slash, besides one smut scene in my other story. It was my very first time writing Johnlock, which I was more nervous about than anything!! I’m so, so pleased that you all enjoyed this and stuck with it all the way through! Thank you for being so patient and kind to me!

Because of strong demand, and my inability to let go, this story WILL continue!! I haven't decided if I will make a second, separate, story or just continue this one...but I'm leaning toward just continuing this one since we're all here and you know where to
find the story! It will simply be a continuation of both the story and prompts from both challenges, following along the second month of their relationship. This new, second, part of this story will really focus on how both Sherlock and John have changed since being together and how their relationship is affecting their individual lives. Also, there will be opportunities for you to suggest prompts! PLEASE suggest prompts and what you would like to see happen, I would love that! (too an extent! I don't want this to get *too* kinky!)

JanniBunni, one of my many awesome readers!, suggested paying more attention to the domestic side of things as opposed to cases, and I love that idea! I tried to balance the two out in this story, but I think that's a great direction for this to go in, hence the ending. Like Sherlock said, though, they aren't going away forever! After all, they do have to pay rent. And that's not to say there won't be an interesting mystery to solve next time...I'm trying to decide if there should actually be a plot to this...or if it should just be a lot of smut. I suppose it could be both! What do you think?

I hope you will stick around for more! Thanks SO, SO much once again!! Seriously, without all of your support I probably would have never been able to finish this!
Chapter Notes

Please read this note before continuing! I promise you'll like it!

Here's how this will work. I'm extending this beyond the two 30 Day Challenges to make this even more fun. Aside from these prompts I will also do Reader's Choice prompts and Author's Choice prompts. These could basically be pretty much anything...to an extent because I don't want the story to get *too* kinky! There won't be any rhyme or reason as to which prompts will come up next, so feel free to let me know if there's a particular prompt you'd like to see!

I'm starting with an Author's Choice because I wanted to do something about nightmares.

There is a trigger warning here for traumatic nightmares about war.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John couldn’t breathe.

He was aware that he was trapped in a nightmare, and he couldn’t breathe.

In the dream he was in Afghanistan, hiding by himself in what was turned into an open battlefield. Only a large rock shielded him from the sound of gunfire- although it was odd because there was no one around him and no bullets were landing anywhere- and a voice in the back of his head kept telling him find Sherlock, you have to find Sherlock.

Even the sound of bullets couldn’t mask his frightened, raspy, breaths. He didn’t have his gun so he shielded his head with his arms. Why don’t I have my gun?

“Wake up,” he whispered to himself. “Wake up, wake up, wake up!

A violent gasp escaped him as his eyes flew open and he found himself in a dark, tight, space. Not knowing where he was became almost more horrifying than being in the nightmare. Someone was grabbing at his arms, trying to pull him down, and he didn’t want to go, he didn’t understand.

“John!”

Another gasp and everything suddenly came into focus. He took a moment to just breathe. Across from him moonlight fell on the ridiculous poster of the Periodic Table, and he realized he was in Sherlock’s bed. Sweat trickled up and down his bare arms and legs, and his fingers gripped the sheets, ignoring the hands running over his arms to calm him down.

“John,” Sherlock said again in a quiet, hollow, voice.

At last John searched for the hand holding onto him and held on tightly for support. His entire body shook as his eyes trailed up to Sherlock’s, and after a few deep breaths he finally managed:

“S-sorry.”
Running a hand through his hair he looked around, trying to regain his senses.

“Are you alright?” Sherlock whispered.

He nodded, but even as he did a single sob escaped. God I’m crying! John dragged his trembling hands over his face and brought back sweat and tears.

“I’m sorry,” he said again. “Oh god…”

And he did something he hadn’t done before. He buried his head into Sherlock’s shoulder, ignoring the fact that his lover was also naked. Sherlock awkwardly ran a hand over the back of his head, like he didn’t quite know what to do. He stayed quiet and John let him; he was just grateful someone was there, for once. Eyes closed tightly, he fought back the tears and tried to control his breathing.

He backed away, and their hands rested on each other’s arms.

“I’m sorry,” he repeated again. “Just a bad dream, that’s all.”

“Don’t be sorry,” Sherlock said. There was a long pause, like wasn’t sure what else he was supposed to say. “Do you want to talk about it?”

With a long sigh he sank back into the pillows and was thankful when Sherlock did the same. An arm snaked around his back, and John settled into it.

“It was the war,” John admitted. He drew in a deep breath. Save for a couple of therapy sessions, he hadn’t talked about his nightmares to anyone he knew. “I have these nightmares sometimes about being in Afghanistan, alone. I’m dodging gunfire, and I can’t tell where it’s coming from. It’s just me. I’m defenseless and I…I just wake up feeling so helpless.”

Suddenly he and Sherlock were pinned together, so that he was practically resting on his partner’s chest.

“It was probably just triggered by everything that happened at the club,” John said. “The dream was just very intense. I’m sorry I woke you up.”

“Don’t be sorry.”

Their heads rested together, and with a final sigh his breathing and heart rate returned to normal.

“I didn’t know you still had flashbacks,” Sherlock admitted.

John nodded.

“That’s a good way to put it,” he whispered. “Sometimes things trigger them. It used to be worse. When I first got back certain noises would set them off. It was horrible. I wasn’t able to sleep through the night for almost a year after coming home.”

He looked over at Sherlock’s alarm clock and groaned when he saw that it was two in the morning.

“Just when we finally got to sleep,” John sighed.

“It’s fine, I promise,” Sherlock said. He paused for a moment and then shocked John when he suddenly announced: “I used to have nightmares too…after Luke died.”

John turned to him. Sherlock had gone pale, and John reached up, brushing a hand over his face.
“It’s alright,” John encouraged. “You don’t have to tell me.”

“No, I…” Sherlock swallowed. His eyes were wide with horror, as though he might have regretted ever bringing this up. “There were so many of them, so many scenarios, so many what ifs. It was like torture every night. I never told anyone.”

His heart broke for Sherlock. Of course he wouldn’t be one for therapy, John thought. Before they got together it was nearly impossible to get any kind of emotion out of Sherlock, and he was beginning to understand why.

“How did you get over them?” John asked.

Sherlock shrugged.

“I started working cases and found other things to have nightmares about.”

John looked up at him, curious. He never considered how Sherlock dealt with cases. He always just seemed very…content with them. Although after hearing about Sherlock’s first case and his first meetings with Lestrade, John could see how that became traumatic.

“Wait!” He said suddenly, sitting up. Sherlock looked trapped beneath him as he accused: “Is that why you never sleep?”

Sherlock’s eyebrows furrowed and his nose scrunched up, as they always did whenever he didn’t want to admit something.

“I’m sleeping with you right now,” Sherlock pointed out.

John rolled his eyes.

“Before we got together, I mean,” John explained. “You never slept! I used to wake up to hearing you play Bach at one in the morning.”

“Mozart,” Sherlock corrected.

“Whatever.”

“There’s a big difference between the two!”

Sherlock shot up himself so that they were chest-to-chest, and John couldn’t help but to laugh at the ridiculous of the moment.

“And yes,” Sherlock breathed. His eyes connected with John’s, dancing with anxiety. “I find it easier to deal with murderers and serial killers if I don’t sleep.”

God if that wasn’t the most human thing he’d ever heard Sherlock say.

“What?” Sherlock said after a long, awkward, moment of John staring at him.

“Nothing,” John lied. A grin swept across his face and he admitted: “It’s just nice to know you’re one of us.”

“One of us?”

And just as the idea of _Sherlock’s human_ settled in, Sherlock never looked more out of place. John laughed.
“Human,” he explained.

Sherlock only looked even more confused.

“Of course I’m human,” Sherlock insisted.

Laughing, John leaned in and trapped Sherlock in a kiss before he could say anything else. The room fell silent and seemed to suddenly get hotter, and John backed away before he could get too excited.

“If you’re making fun of me then you must be okay,” Sherlock shot.

He threw himself back down into the bed, like a child. Instead of laughing, John slipped back into bed and leaned forward and let his lips brush across Sherlock’s back and shoulders until he had him grinning against the pillows. At last Sherlock turned back to him and they gazed at each other, heads rested in hands.

“Wake me up whenever you need to,” Sherlock said.

John nodded, appreciating how sincere he was.

“Only if you do the same,” he whispered.

Without answering Sherlock turned away to either sleep or perhaps pretend to sleep. John watched him and wondered if he should have told him the part of the dream where he was looking for him. But as he studied the gentle rise and fall of Sherlock’s body as he drifted away to rest, John decided not to worry him.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will *probably* be a Reader's Choice if I get enough prompts. So don't be shy! What would you like to see happen?
For our first reader's choice prompt, Iridescentkiss suggested seeing John giving Sherlock a haircut. It was super hard to choose which prompt to take on first, but I thought this was an excellent idea to kick off their holiday with!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Stop squirming!” John demanded.

Sherlock winced as his flatmate jerked his head to the side for a better angle. He sat in front of the bathroom mirror and watched, horrified, as locks of his hair fell to the ground.

“Have I mentioned I hate you?” He muttered.

John snipped a bit of hair just above his ear.

“You asked me to do this!” John protested.

“I did not!”

“Well you gave me no choice,” John said. “You’ve been complaining about your hair growing too long for weeks.”

“I haven’t complained about anything,” Sherlock shot. “You’re the one who said it was getting too unruly.”

“You don’t even wash it! I said if you don’t do anything about it I will.”

Crossing his arms, Sherlock sank a bit into the seat in defeat. He was immediately forced to sit back up again by John.

“How do you even know how to cut hair?” Sherlock said.

He watched with curiosity as a sad smile crossed John’s face. For a moment only the snipping of scissors could be heard as John worked on his bangs. At last he sighed and admitted:

“My grandpa used to cut hair for a living. My parents were always fighting and Harry was always...Harry...so during the summers and after school I hung out with him and watched him cut people’s hair. He gave me my first job, when I was sixteen.”

Sherlock didn’t reply as he studied John through the mirror. The precision and care John took with his hair was professional and, well, impressive. Somehow the fact that at one point in time Dr. John Watson- army doctor and his lover- cut hair for a living didn’t seem that odd.

“You never talk about your family,” Sherlock pointed out.

John simply shrugged.

“You never talk about yours,” he replied. “Hold still and close your eyes.”
He drew in a sharp breath and obeyed. He listened as John perfected the tiny curls hanging over the edges of his forehead.

“There,” John announced. “You can look.”

Sherlock’s eyes snapped open. John bit his lip as Sherlock stood to examine his new look. He was relieved to realize his hair wasn’t that different. His hair now sat a mere half an inch above where it did before, but other than that he simply looked a bit more…crisp. Sharp.

“Here,” John said, pulling him back down. Before Sherlock could stop him, John reached for the electric razor to finish the cut. Sherlock squirmed again. “Stop!”

With a groan, Sherlock went still. He made a point to flinch as the razor touched his skin, just to annoy John.

“Done!” John announced proudly a few moments later. “Go on, resume the complaining.”

John stood back so Sherlock could continue to admire the haircut. His mouth opened and shut a few times as he searched for something to tease John about it, and he was stunned when he couldn’t.

“You hate it,” John sighed.

He pushed the scissors and razor back onto the counter with a little too much force, but Sherlock grabbed his arm to stop him. When their eyes met he trembled slightly, still too in shock to truly find the right words.

So he grinned.

“You like it,” John said, smiling himself now.

“You can cut hair!” Sherlock said. “Brilliant. Now I know how we can make money when case flow is low.”

Grabbing a towel, he tore out of the bathroom and into the living room where he could pace around freely.

“No…Sherlock, stop!” John exclaimed. “That’s not going to happen. This was a one-time thing, alright? Come on, can’t we both agree that you look hot and go on with our lives?”

Sherlock’s heart jumped and John froze. His partner’s eyes went wide as he realized what he said out loud, and Sherlock’s heart began fluttering in his chest.

“You think I’m hot?” He said, grinning even wider.

John’s face turned red as he threw an accusing finger toward Sherlock.

“I hate you!” He moaned. With that he turned and storm out of the room. “And you can clean up!”


“Shut up!”

He kept grinning to himself as John slammed his bedroom door. Swirling on his heel, Sherlock faced the mirror and examined the cut even more closely. As he ran his fingers through his hair and around his face he could still feel John’s hands on him, handling him with care. His cheeks
flushed a bit as the idea of John shaping him to match how he wanted him to look hit him.

And if he could say so himself, he didn’t look half-bad.

Chapter End Notes

Have I mentioned how awesome you guys are?!!!! This fic would not have made it this far without you! Thanks so much for all of your lovely suggestions and wishes! Feel free to keep giving prompts, if you'd like!! If I didn't use yours this chapter there is plenty of room in the future! I already have plans for all of your amazing ideas!!!
He and Sherlock stopped just short of running straight into Mrs. Hudson when they entered their flat the next afternoon. They exchanged a quick hello, and Sherlock ushered them inside before things could get anymore awkward.

“Oh, and boys!”

John swallowed nervously as they turned around.

“You two received a package today, addressed to the both of you,” she said with a sweet smile. “I placed it in the kitchen.”

Turning to Sherlock, he noticed his partner go pale, and he knew this was a shenanigan of his. Instead of fighting about it now, John turned back to their landlady and replied:

“Thanks!”

They scurried into the flat like children.

“Addressed to both of us?” John said. The parcel came into view as they crossed into the kitchen. Sherlock was obviously very tense, and John knew he wouldn’t approve of whatever the gift was. “I wonder what that could be.”

“John, maybe you should let me-“

John practically dove for the package before Sherlock could get there. Sherlock swallowed as he tore off the tape and opened it-

He froze and cursed, ignoring the fact that Mrs. Hudson was probably still just outside.

“What the fuck?!”

The box fell to the table as soon as he picked it up.

“Sherlock, this-“

“Don’t freak out.”

“It’s a box full of-“

“Please don’t freak out!”

“Sex toys!”

Part of him wanted to throw one of the ridiculously large dildos at his boyfriend just to prove a point, but most of him was afraid to touch anything. The box had no return address, just their names- printed nice and large right on the front of the box.

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“They’re from the club,” Sherlock explained. “They wanted to thank us for our help and apologize for us getting shot at.”
“With dildos and…whatever this is?!”

With just the tips of his fingers he grabbed a smaller package that simply held what seemed to be a ring.

Now Sherlock’s face went red.

“Come on, you know what that is,” Sherlock teased.

He was obviously trying hard to not look completely ashamed.

“I don’t!”

“But you watch porn!”

Throwing his hands up, he closed the lids back on the box and pushed it out of sight.

“I can’t!” He exclaimed. “I can’t have this conversation!”

“Come on, John!” Sherlock pleaded again. “It’s not that bad. They were just being nice…in their own way.”

“Their version of being nice is very different from our version!”

“Doesn’t have to be.”

Sherlock’s eyes twinkled, and again John had to fight the urge to throw something at him. Smirking, Sherlock walked over to the box and began shifting through it himself. John turned to the fridge and stopped when he opened it to find a container full of…something. From one of Sherlock’s experiments, surely.

“Can’t anything in this flat be normal?” He groaned.

A sharp crack! made him jump. Swirling around, he froze when he found Sherlock standing with a riding crop in hand. The grin on his face could only be described as pure evil.

“No!” John warned, waving a hand at him. “No. We’re taking this stuff back- no, you’re taking this stuff back. Get it out of the flat.”

“Fine,” Sherlock shot, and under his breath muttered: “Wimp.”

“What was that?” He demanded. Sherlock looked away, feigning innocence. “I’m not a wimp, Sherlock, some of this stuff is really weird!”

“It’s not that weird,” Sherlock mumbled.

John threw his hands in the air and grabbed a bag of crisps.

“I give up,” he sighed. “Do whatever you want with that stuff just…make sure it stays hidden. I’ll be in my room.”

His blood boiled with embarrassment as he stormed out of the room. What would people think if they walked in and saw that stuff? Or God forbid someone walk in on them again while Sherlock used-

He stopped just before he could enter the hall and peered back into the kitchen. Sherlock shifting
through the box with interest when he stuck his head back into the room and casually asked:

“Were you planning on using that stuff on me or could I-?”

A half hour later…

“God!” John exclaimed, grinning to himself as he brought the riding crop down on Sherlock’s buttocks for the tenth time. Sherlock’s arse jumped a bit at the contact, but his lover remained perfectly still otherwise. His head rested gracefully in his arms, as though he were being massaged and not spanked. “You never told me how good this felt!”

“Yes I did!” Sherlock protested.

Crack!

Sherlock’s arse jumped again, and a tingling sensation raced through John’s body. A soft groan escaped his lover. He squirmed on the bed, leaving John to quickly reposition himself. Straddling Sherlock’s legs, John leaned forward against his back just enough cause friction between the two. He rocked once, twice, just to tease, before sitting up again and bringing the crop back down against the arse he practically sat on.

“You feel amazing,” John sighed.

He took run his hands down Sherlock’s back. The skin was red-hot with anticipation, and John’s heart fluttered at the sensation. Thin red bruises marked where the crop landed- just hard enough for some minor pain and pleasurable discomfort, but not enough to truly hurt. He let the crop brush down Sherlock’s back, bringing it all the way down to the cleft of his arse. Scooting backward, John gave himself room to work as he teased at the skin there with the crop. Sherlock sighed as the light brushed ran between his cheeks and danced against the sensitive skin.

Then he brought the crop up in a single, rough, move, and Sherlock gasped. He brought the crop down again in the same fashion while at the same time bringing a finger to Sherlock’s hole.

“This is what you wanted, wasn’t it?” He asked quietly.

The mood of the bedroom drastically changed as he leaned forward, creating that familiar friction between them while still working both his hands and the crop against Sherlock.

“I saw you looking through the box…you were positively transfixed by it,” he teased softly. His lips brushed across Sherlock’s ear, and his lover let out a low, shaky, sigh. “How does it feel, to be teased and played with?”

He left Sherlock’s naked body exposed in the sunlight as he rolled off him. Leaning over him, John continued to tease his arse with soft hits of the crop. When Sherlock sighed again he quickly brought the crop up and swung down again to let it rip lightly against his lower back.

“I told you you’d enjoy this,” Sherlock mumbled with a smile on his face. “You know they offered us a discounted door price on the club if you want-”

Before he could finish, John swept the crop across his arse.

Slowly and with great care he sat up to get undressed while Sherlock continued to squirm on the bed. When he climbed on the bed again he let the riding crop brush back and forth across Sherlock’s arse before reaching for the lube and condom laid out beside them. He rolled on the condom and snapped open the bottom of lube. Beneath him, Sherlock drew in a deep breath as
John rubbed a coated finger inside him. The anticipation building up to it was enough to bring the room around them to a complete standstill. Sherlock lay perfectly stiff beneath him, his breath coming in sharp and uneven as John gently pressed his further and further.

“Oh god!” Sherlock gasped, squirming again. John held him down against the bed to keep him still as he added in a second finger. To distract him, he picked up the crop with the other hand and let it run alongside the fingers. “Oh.”

The noises of sex with Sherlock turned him on just as much as the feeling of raw skin-against-skin and the mere thought of being inside him. Sherlock put on a show of gasps and cries of “oh!” as he adjusted to the feeling of having now one, two, three of John’s fingers inside him.

“I could get used to this,” John teased. “Maybe I’ll have to look through that box again.”

Sherlock gasped and shifted so that he could rest on his elbows, allowing John to see the pain and pleasure mixing so brilliantly on his face.

His heart raced as he withdrew his fingers and grabbed his cock. His hands trembled a bit- he could never get used to this part either. Lining himself up, John applied a bit more lube before pushing in gently.

He immediately withdrew, leaving them both gasping at the loss. Closing his eyes, he held onto Sherlock as he pushed himself back in. The crop lay beside him, forgotten as the night suddenly became just about them.

“Is that okay?” He rasped, sincere as he settled into Sherlock.

Sherlock nodded and grasped at the sheets.

“Yeah,” he whispered. “You can go a bit deeper.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.”

John swallowed nervously. Sweat rolled down his face, and he gripped Sherlock’s hips so tightly his knuckles were white. He pushed in further, and Sherlock gasped loudly.

“Oh fuck,” Sherlock whispered.

He fought to keep grip on the bed sheets, and John held onto him so that he didn’t fall forward as he rocked them lightly. Grunting, he forced himself not to cry out as he suddenly slipped further into Sherlock and their rhythm seemed to automatically loosen up. He realized Sherlock was helping him out, rocking forward roughly against the mattress as they both held on.

With a deep breath he began thrusting against him harder. Eyes closed tightly, he tried to not be intimidating by the sound of skin slapping against skin and instead concentrated on Sherlock’s shallow breaths and the electroshocks of pleasure rushing through his veins.

He stopped for a moment to adjust the angle. Sherlock whimpered as he took himself out of his arse only to plow back in a moment later, and they set off at a faster pace.

“Harder!” Sherlock whispered, so soft and quiet that John thought he might have imagined it.

But suddenly they were pounding into the mattress, and John was fighting just to hang on. His own
breaths came out in spurts of “oh!” and “ah!” Sherlock cried out in inaudible slurs as John drove harder and deeper into him.

“More!” Sherlock demanded.

Sherlock rutted against him, desperate for friction. He reached for his lover’s cock and began stroking it, giving him the more that he craved.

“You’re tight,” John whimpered.

Without warning he pulled out and pushed Sherlock back against the pillows. They were in John’s bed so a flash of uncertainty lit up in Sherlock’s eyes as he wondered what was next. John climbed on top of him, offering him a messy, wet, kiss before sliding his fingers back into him. Sherlock hissed and John grinned against his lips.

Sherlock was far more flexible than he was so he felt no shame in pushing his lover’s knees back so much he practically looked folded in half. John pushed in again and allowed Sherlock to rest one leg on his good shoulder while the other hung out in an awkward angle.

“Oh god!”

As Sherlock’s groans vibrated throughout the room, John grinned. Right move, then.

Without warning his orgasm burst through him, sending him tumbling over onto Sherlock. His partner hit the headboard with a groan and clung to John’s back as he pushed through, pumping his hips upward to meet John.

“Oh god!” Sherlock whimpered.

John kept pounding into him as he watched Sherlock pump his own cock. Eyes closed, Sherlock’s hands worked desperately until cum spurted onto them and he let out a loud whine.

When at last they stillled, John let out a sigh of relief. He pulled out gently and collapsed beside Sherlock. Face streaked with sweat and pupils blown wide they stared at each other, grinning.

“Forgive me now?” Sherlock asked.

John simply pressed his lips against his hard and kissed him. When they pulled away, Sherlock was still grinning.

“It’s nice to see you so enthusiastic about this,” Sherlock chimed. “Gives me loads of ideas for my turn.”

A pit fell in John’s stomach, and his heart skipped a beat as he replied:

“Your turn?”

Sherlock simply grinned and kissed him again.
John woke facing an alarm clock that read noon.

“Fucking shit!” He mumbled as he shot up. “Sherlock!”

His boyfriend lay beside him, snoring away without a care in the world. Letting out a frustrated sigh John shook him, forcing him awake. Sherlock simply shrugged an arm at him to push him out of the way.

“What?” Sherlock grumbled.

“It’s noon!” John snapped. “We slept through the morning.”

“So?”

He sighed. Of course. Sleeping through the morning wasn’t unusual for Sherlock lately. Since getting together John managed to get him to sleep for a change- the problem was that sleep became all Sherlock wanted to do. It was like all his years of insomnia were catching up to him, and he was using it as an excuse to be lazier than ever.

“So…maybe I didn’t want to waste most of today sleeping.”

Biting his lip, John refrained from going into too much detail. It wasn’t that he was afraid of Sherlock making a big deal about today- it was because John knew he wouldn’t even bother acknowledging it.

“Come on, Sherlock,” he sighed, shoving his partner again. Sherlock simply hugged his pillow tighter and snuggled deeper into the sheets. “Whatever. I’m making breakfast.”

As soon as he began peeling the sheets off his naked body Sherlock grabbed his arm.

“What day is it?” Sherlock asked.

John stared at him.

“June 9th.”

He told himself not to be disappointed, but his heart couldn’t help but to tear a little when Sherlock had to ask.
“Good, just wanted to make sure,” Sherlock replied.

John watched, curious, as Sherlock reached over and pulled something out of his nightstand. A half smile rested on Sherlock’s face as he handed him an envelope.

“What’s this?” John asked. His heart fluttered a bit. Somehow, did Sherlock know? He tore through the envelope to find two concert tickets. Eyes wide, his voice nearly broke as he exclaimed: “Tickets to see The Who? VIP tickets to The Who? Sherlock…this is next week! How did you-?”

Sherlock’s eyes twinkled in a way that said Mycroft, and a soft, honest, smile crossed his face.

“Did you really think I would not know it’s your birthday?” Sherlock said quietly.

Heart pounding, John leaned forward and planted a kiss on his lips.

“Mrs. Hudson told you, didn’t she?” John tease.

Sherlock’s cheeks reddened a bit.

“She reminded me about a half a dozen times last week,” he admitted. “Truth is I’ve stolen your wallet enough times to know when your birthday is.”

He sent a playful punch to Sherlock’s arm and let the VIP passes dangle in front of his face to examine them closer.

“Jesus Christ…VIP tickets to The Who,” he breathed. “How do you even know I like them? How do you even know who they are?!”

Laughing, Sherlock ran a hand through his untidy hair and settled back into his pillows.

“You own all their records,” he pointed out, “you’ve had at least two different concert posters on your wall since moving in, you’ve told me the story of how you and Harry snuck out to one of their shows for your sixteenth birthday at least five times, and you wrote on the blog how much you would have loved to see them next week.”

John’s cheeks reddened a bit. Maybe he had been a little obvious…but he was thoroughly impressed Sherlock caught on.

“You read the blog?” He teased.

Sherlock blushed himself and shrugged his shoulders casually.

“I like to check your spelling.”

Rolling his eyes, John settled back into bed as he kept gazing at the tickets. He worried that if he blinked they’d disappear. There was no way Sherlock was capable of being this…cool.

“Seriously though…VIP tickets!” He exclaimed, beaming from ear to ear. “And these are good seats! Tell me Mycroft doesn’t actually have contacts with The Who!”

Laughing, Sherlock replied:

“Apparently Mycroft has overseen some security work involving The O2. They like him so much that he can pretty much get backstage passes to anything.”
“And you’ve been holding out on me?!” John cried. “I can’t believe you endured Mycroft for me… for this! For my birthday. Sherlock, that’s… that’s… really cool.”

A sheepish grin crossed Sherlock’s face, as though he were secretly pleased someone was actually referring to him as cool.

“You’re happy, then?” Sherlock asked quietly.

Shifting around in bed, Sherlock positioned himself so that he was hovering just above John. One arm rests on the other side of him, so that John was trapped in place. The tickets lay awkwardly in the middle, suddenly seeming out of place as Sherlock kept closing in the gap between them.

“Yes,” he grinned. “Very happy.”

“Happy birthday, John.”

Sherlock lowered himself down so that he could kiss him properly. Soon his hands were roaming John’s arms, his chest, his hair. A soft, satisfied, moan escaped him as he returned the favour.

Then he stopped suddenly, remembering. Sherlock kept working him; trails of kisses crossed his chin and neck, and god did John hate to stop him now.

“My mum’s coming over tomorrow,” he announced.

As though someone pushed a pause but on the scene, Sherlock froze. Eyes blown wide his partner stared at him, and John worried it looked like that could have been possibly the worst thing he could have said at that moment.

“I think we need to make a ‘no talking about family during sex’ rule,” Sherlock shot. “What do you mean your mum’s coming over?”

John sat up a bit to ease up on the awkwardness of the situation.

“She’s my mum, I’m her son,” he shrugged, “it’s my birthday and she wants to see me. She couldn’t come today so I told her to stop by tomorrow.”

“But you’re on holiday!”

Wrapping his arms around himself for comfort, John admitted:

“She says in order to be on holiday you have to have a real job.”

With an overdramatic groan, Sherlock threw himself back against the pillows and crossed his arms as well.

“I suppose you want me here,” he muttered.

“I suppose,” John sighed. “Please behave for this, Sherlock. Please.”

“Can’t I just watch telly in the other room?”

“Christ, you’re not a kid!” John exclaimed. “My mother’s coming over, we’re cooking her dinner, it’s going to be lovely, and you’re going to look nice.”

A sly look draped over Sherlock’s face - because really, John should have seen this one coming.
“You mean I can’t come dressed like I am now?” He teased.

John slapped his arm.

“What?” Sherlock laughed. “You seem satisfied with how I look!”

“Shut up!” John snapped. “Just…please. For me, okay?

This time Sherlock sat up and they faced each other, breathing unevenly as they tried to catch up.

“Are we going to tell her about us?” Sherlock asked quietly.

John’s heart nearly broke at the use of ‘we’. It was something John had been worrying about since his mum suggested the idea a week ago. Should he keep hiding? Knowing Sherlock was already including himself in that scenario- in the fear of yet another person finding them out- was comforting.

“I don’t know,” he admitted. “My mum’s almost seventy, and I’m over forty now. How do I explain to her how I’ve changed so much in just over a year?”

“We could try telling her the same way we told Mycroft.”

John slapped him, hard, in the shoulder and shut his eyes tightly.

“No!” He exclaimed. “We are not! No sex tomorrow night, alright? No sex, no kissing, no hand holding, no-“

“No doing this?”

Before he could stop him Sherlock swooped down and ran his tongue down the length of John’s shaft. He shivered and grasped at Sherlock’s back and shoulders, bringing him to a halt.

“Definitely none of that,” he whispered, suddenly finding it a bit hard to form complete sentences.

Sherlock licked at him again, and John shuddered as the tongue skipped up and down his length.

“Then we should enjoy it while we can,” Sherlock muttered with a smile.

He looked absolutely erotica as his eyes batted up a John and his mouth hovered just next to hiscock.

“How about this?” He said. The tongue dashed out at him again, and John’s eyes closed. He wasn’t exactly sure what Sherlock meant until he continued: “First, I’m going to give you the second part of your birthday present. To give you a hint it involves me pounding you into the bed.”

Sherlock took him in quickly, just a tease, and John gasped as goose bumps appeared all over his arms and legs.

“Then I’m going cook your mum a nice lasagna, because we both know how rubbish you are in the kitchen,” Sherlock licked at him again even as he continued. “Then I’m going to take you to what is bound to be a ridiculously noisy, crowded, and long concert. And then…you’ll owe me one.”

His eyes danced up to meet his again, and John gulped. Sherlock kept sucking at him, taking him in even deeper as he let John contemplate.

“I’m…I’m not sure what that means,” John admitted.
He wasn’t sure if he wanted to. His mind flashed back to the box of… gifts… and his heart raced. Surely Sherlock didn’t mean—

“It means you’ll owe me one,” Sherlock growled.

Suddenly his dick hit the back of Sherlock’s throat, and John grasped the headboards above him for support. Closing his eyes, he let his nerves be overtaken by the sensations, the feelings going on down below.

“So what do you say?” Sherlock rasped. His voice was breaking a bit as his throat went raw from the effort of taking him in. “Is this a better birthday than the time you and Harry snuck out to see The Who?”

John’s eyes fluttered over his closed lids as Sherlock sucked at his balls. His own voice broke as he finally managed:

“What did you say about talking family during sex?”

Chapter End Notes

I'll respond to more prompts soon! Multiple people wanted to see "Sherlock's turn" after last chapter...you definitely will!
“What does it need?” Sherlock demanded.

His eyes bore into John’s as his partner accepted the small forkful of lasagna and bit into it. Grimacing, John shoved the fork back to Sherlock and admitted:

“Too salty.”

“Damn,” Sherlock swore beneath his breath.

He turned back to the stove to admire his work. What was supposed to be a simple vegetable lasagna (according to a recipe on Google) turned into a mess as he struggled with the measurements.

“I thought you were the cook in this relationship,” John teased. “Why don’t we just go out for dinner? We can still get reservations if we hurry.”

“No!” Sherlock exclaimed, reaching for the package of shredded cheese. “I can figure this out!”

John grabbed the cheese from him before any more could spill over the stove, and their eyes met. With sympathetic eyes John gazed at him, willing him to calm down but Sherlock felt awful. Of course he would screw this up—especially after being so obnoxious about it in the first place.

“It’s sweet of you, love, but I think this is beyond our help.”

His eyes went wide at the use of “love”. What was meant as a simple term of endearment had both of their hearts at a halt. John’s eyes dashed away and he swallowed, nervously, as their minds raced with the effort of finding a way to change the subject.

“It probably just needs more vegetables.”

They swirled around at the new voice, and Sherlock froze at the woman who stood in front of them.

“Mum!” John exclaimed.

A smile swept across his face as his boyfriend threw his arms around her mother. His eyes fell to a close as he hugged her tightly, as though escaping to the comfort of her arms. Sherlock stood awkwardly on the sidelines, waiting to be called on.

“This is Sherlock,” John announced immediately.

John beamed as he turned to him, and Sherlock offered a small nod.

“Good to meet you,” he said.
He managed to appear perfectly calm but his insides were trembling, like he was some teenager being taken home to meet someone’s parents.

Which is essentially what’s happening, he told himself.

As John turned to show his mother around the flat Sherlock’s eyes roamed over her, taking in everything. John already stated she was seventy, but Mrs. Watson looked good for her age. She wore too much make-up, despite the fact she was simply having dinner with her son, which suggested insecurity with her age, her marriage, and/or loneliness. Her wedding ring still sat on her left hand, almost appearing as though it were embedded into the bone.

She had the exact same shade of blonde hair as her son, and the cut sat just above her ears, revealing the worn skin of her neck and lower back. Frail fingers and a trembling right-wrist suggested years of work with her hand, most likely a desk job, as he walked with a weak step and a hunched back.

Yet her smile echoed that of her son’s as he finished telling her about the neighborhood and Mrs. Hudson. Her eyes were distant, and Sherlock realized she wasn’t taking anything in about the flat at all. She was too entranced with the simple idea of being with her son.

He never calls, he thought. Never visits. There’s something here I don’t know about. Why is he so unhappy with his parents? Why is he so afraid of what they think? And why, despite all of that, is he still so happy to see her?

“Which brings us back to Sherlock,” John said as he finished showing her the flat.

Sherlock snapped back into reality and managed to feign a smile as all eyes turned back on him.

“It’s possible I may have ruined dinner,” he admitted. “Unless you enjoy spoonful’s of sodium covered cheese.”

“Let me take a look,” she replied.

She casually side-stepped her son and leaned over the stove top.

“You don’t normally cook, do you?” She accused.

Sherlock swallowed nervously. He wasn’t actually used to being scolded by a mother.

“No,” he said, voice dry.

His lips fell into a frown as John leaned in as well.

“You don’t normally cook, do you?” She accused.

Sherlock swallowed nervously. He wasn’t actually used to being scolded by a mother.

“No,” he said, voice dry.

His lips fell into a frown as John leaned in as well.

“We did make a good pasta once,” John noted, glancing toward him. “Remember?”

“Once,” Sherlock teased. “I may have…overestimated my cooking abilities.”

“You realize you got mismatched nearly all the measurements with the wrong ingredients?”

His face went red as he nodded. His hands traveled to his hair, grasping at the curls as anxiety riddled him. This wasn’t his mother. Why was he so nervous?

“It’s alright,” she said sweetly. “I used to do the same thing all of the time. I had a bit of a reading problem for years.”

John’s eyes shot toward him, wide in horror at what was at its core, an insult. He shook his head,
warning him that it wasn’t a big deal.

“How about you two go out for a nice dinner?” He offered. “My treat!”

“No!” John exclaimed. He practically leapt at him, and his mother got out of the way in time for him to shuffle by Sherlock’s side. “No…I mean, you can come with us. You will…right?”

His boyfriend’s eyes narrowed in a dangerous way that suggested do this, or else, and as John was lately responsible for his emotional and physical happiness, he obliged.

“Sure.”

“Oh, there’s no need to make a fuss,” Mrs. Watson said, waving them off. “Just a pizza will be enough for me.”

John blinked, looking hurt.

“I thought you wanted to eat with us,” he stammered.

His mother’s face fell, as though she felt sorry for him for just not being able to catch on.

“John, I just want to see you,” she admitted. Her lower-lip quivered ever so slightly, and judging by her watery eyes she was on the verge of breaking. “You never call.”

“I know,” John whispered. “I’m sorry.”

Mother and son stared at each other, and even John looked like he was struggling to keep it together. He hadn’t mentioned just how long it had been since he last saw his parents, but when Sherlock considered everything his family had gone through the past couple of years- the army, getting shot, Harry’s drinking- he understood the tension.

“How are you?” John’s mum asked quietly.

John nodded and looked away, signaling that he was about to lie.

“Good,” he replied. “Very good.”

He stole a glance to Sherlock, who smirked.

“Staying out of trouble, then?” His mother asked, eyes twinkling.

She also looked to Sherlock, and he managed a smile once again just in time. He decided to not point out the ungodly amount of danger they’d been in lately…especially not the fact that just over a month ago he pulled her unconscious son out of the Thames.

“We keep to ourselves,” John said. “We’re around the flat a lot.”

Like a boring old married couple, he might as well have said.

“And you,” Mrs. Watson said, rounding on Sherlock. “You must be the one who turned my son onto this crime fighting. Consulting detectives?”

Sherlock smirked.

“Detective. John just—stands around and looks pretty, “helps keep me in line.”
A faint smile crossed Mrs. Watson’s face, and he knew she wasn’t too impressed with the explanation, but Sherlock knew there was no way they could tell her the truth about how much danger they put themselves in. Any decent mother would be horrified.

“Well it’s nice that you two get along so well—” he and John’s cheeks simultaneously turned red. “Do you have a girlfriend then, Sherlock?”

Shit.

“No,” he forced himself to say.

“With your looks?” Mrs. Watson laughed. “Even a woman of my age would be impressed.”

She winked, and he felt sick.

“Stop hitting on my flatmate, mum,” John teased. “How are you and dad?”

“We’re good,” her voice fell- a lie, then.

John confirmed the theory as his eyes darkened with worry.

“Last time we talked you said dad was having heart palpitations,” John said.

“Oh, that’s not for you to worry about! He’s just getting old, John.”

“He’s sixty-seven, and I’m a doctor!”

The room grew thick with tension. Sherlock’s ruined dinner lay forgotten on the stove, and he considered making a break to order food…but he knew he would get shot down for it later.

“It’s not for you to worry about!” His mother insisted. “We’re fine, John- something you would know if you bothered to call!”

“I’ve been busy!”

“You told me you were on holiday!” His mother snapped. “For goodness sake, John, we feel like our kids our abandoning us.”

John’s face fell again, and he looked absolutely shaken with disappointment and embarrassment.

“That’s because we’re not kids, I just turned forty-one!” Jesus, is he that old?

“That’s ridiculous, you know exactly what Harry’s problem is!”

“Really?” John crossed his arms over his chest, and Sherlock had a sickening feeling about where this was going. “Did you know she hasn’t had a drink in two months?”

“Talk to me when she’s been sober for a year, and I’ll be impressed.” Sherlock was shocked at the coldness in her voice, and he was beginning to understand why John was so nervous about her coming over. “You know we don’t approve of the choices she has made. And can’t you see why?”

“Because of the conservative, religious, crap you believe?”

A crack exploded as a hand smacked across John’s face. Sherlock’s heart stopped as he stared at his lover who stood, breathing hard with a hand hovering against his red cheek.
“We raised you better, John,” Mrs. Watson’s voice trembled as she dug in her pocketbook for a handkerchief. “You’ve spent your whole life angry, and upset, and depressed. You’re forty-one, John, and you still…you still don’t quite get it. Look at yourself: you have a flatshare and a job title that doesn’t actually exist.”

John pinched the bridge of his nose as he stared at the ceiling, fighting to not lose control.

“Excuse me for being shot in Afghanistan while in the bloody army!” He snapped. “It changes a person!”

“You’ve never been quite…right,” his mothered breathed. It was all Sherlock could do to not throw her out right then and there. “You and Harry both. It’s like you’re both so focused on making us angry.”

“You’re making this up!” John cried. “You’re making things up in your head. This is insane, mum!”

“From the day you started studying medicine it was like you thought you were too good for us!” She snapped. “You’ve found so many things to get onto us about ever since but look at you! I’m worried about you, John. I’m worried that you’re throwing your life away. That’s why I wanted to see you.”

She turned away from them, raising a trembling hand to her eyes. Sherlock stood, stunned into silence as he looked between the two. John was breathing so hard Sherlock worried he might hyperventilate. His veins stuck out against his neck, and his hands rested into fists by his sides.

“You wanted to come fix me?” John said, fighting to stay calm.

Shaking her head, she admitted:

“I wanted to talk some sense into you. Do you really think I don’t watch the news or read your blog? You throw yourself into danger like you’ve got some…death wish. You and Harry have no clue how to take care of yourselves. I’m worried about you.”

“And dad?” John whispered. “Is dad worried about me too?”

A hollow laugh said no, but she replied:

“Dad’s wondering how you both haven’t managed to end up on the streets.”

John’s face hardened, and Sherlock threw a look to him, warning not to turn this into something too.

“We take care of each other,” John said. “We try to, at least.”

“I just worry about you, knowing no one’s really looking out for you.”

Sherlock’s head perked up, and instinct he wanted to pop in. I am! But John bit his lips, closed his eyes, looked down and remained perfectly calm as he got there first:

“I’m gay.”

Mrs. Watson swirled on her feet, John’s eyes snapped open with shock of his own words, and Sherlock’s heart stopped again. John’s mother turned completely pale. His eyes trailed to John, who looked terrified. He wanted to grab onto him, support him, do something, but he found himself
only able to remain frozen.

“What?” Mrs. Watson finally whispered. Silence. Her eyes danced between the two of them, as though she were finally putting the pieces together. “What?”

“Sherlock and I are in a relationship,” he explained. “A romantic, sexual, relationship.”

Sherlock winced. Did he really have to add that part?

“What?” John’s mum exclaimed, the shrill of her voice shaking throughout the flat.

“We were friends for a while before we realized our feelings for each other,” John went on. The story sounded horribly rehearsed. “We take care of each other. Sherlock looks out for me, Mum.”

Suddenly all eyes were on him, and Sherlock felt very warm and very uncomfortable.

“Is this a joke?” She stated. Sherlock stayed still. “Is this…John, what are you saying?”

“I’m gay.”

“You’re forty-one!”

“I’m gay.”

“You wrote about a girlfriend in your Christmas letter last year!”

“I’m gay, mum!” John exclaimed. “There’s nothing wrong with me. I haven’t got a disease. I’m not dying. My life’s not over. I just…I found someone who makes me happy.”

Sherlock’s heart fluttered at the confession, and he made a note to praise John for it later.

Meanwhile the room was thick with tension, and Sherlock felt like if he didn’t break away soon he might faint.

“John—” he attempted.

Ignoring him, John stepped to his side and took Sherlock’s hand in his. Their fingers collapsed together, and when John held the jointed hands up to make his point, Sherlock feared he might throw up. Mrs. Watson looked absolutely disturbed.

“We’re happy,” John whispered. He planted a soft kiss on their knuckles, and Sherlock held his breath to keep from shuddering. “Very happy. And if you don’t like it, if you don’t approve…if you’re offended…then you can just get out.”

Sherlock clutched John’s hand to let him know he was there. A grateful smile peered from John’s lips, and Sherlock wasn’t sure he had ever been this desperate to kiss him.

“I…” Mrs. Watson began. “I…I just…have…have you always been this way?”

John barked with laughter, but it was Sherlock who suddenly found his place in the conversation.

“I don’t think it’s about gender,” he stated quietly. “I think you can go your whole life and not quite know what you’re looking for. It’s not being a certain way…it’s just…we’re just…happy. And that’s what you want, isn’t it? For John to be happy?”

Mrs. Watson’s face melted into empathy, and for that moment he thought he might have really gotten through to her.
“I couldn’t have got through the past year without Sherlock,” John announced.

His head whipped around to John at this new information, but John only offered him a soft smile.

A single tear drop from his mother’s eye, and she raised a hand to swipe at her face once again.

“Would you like to sit down?” Sherlock offered quietly.

He hoped to seem like he was truly welcoming her into their home, but she only shook her head and sighed. She stared at the ground a moment before whispering:

“I think I would like to go.”

She turned without waiting for their permission.

“Mum!” John cried in horror, chasing after her.

His hand landed on her shoulder, but she shrugged it off.

“Mum, please!” He pleaded. Watching John beg for his mother to stay, to understand him, broke his heart. He wanted nothing more than to wrap his arms around him, remind him that he was there. Knowing how afraid John was at the thought of losing his family made him feel like shit for suggesting they tell the truth. “Mum-“

“I just need time, John!” She shot. She gazed after her son, desperate for his understanding. “I don’t like what you’re doing to yourself. None of it. I’m worried about you, and I wish you’d turned your life around. I’m getting old, John…I want to see you happy for a change.”

John looked like he might burst into tears.

“I am happy!” His voice broke, and he had to clutch the nearby kitchen table for support. Everything was still set up in perfect order for the planned dinner, which only made the situation that much harder to witness.

With a sad smile on her face, his mother caressed the cheek she slapped as she replied:

“I just don’t think you realize what you’re doing to yourself.”

She turned again, walking straight to the door while John continued to call after her. He even took off, running to the street but Sherlock caught him just in time.

“John, leave her!” He warned. John fought his grip, and he had to pin him against the wall to keep him still. “She’s in shock, John!”

“She came here to lecture me!” John exclaimed. His face was blood-red as tears finally seeped from his eyes. His entire body shook as he held onto Sherlock’s shoulders, and suddenly John seemed more small and fragile than ever before. “She came here to tell me to stop, to stop all of it. Don’t you see? She can’t accept what I’ve done with me life!”

“John, she’s in shock-“

“She wants me to stop working with you!”

“John-“

“She doesn’t want me to be with you!”
“John, please listen to me!”

“She makes me feel like I’m fucking five years old!” John screamed.

“Well you’re acting like it!”

The world stopped, and for a moment he thought he might be slapped too. Instead John let out a choked sob and threw his arms around him.

“Maybe she’s right,” John whispered.

“No,” Sherlock said, shaking his head as he wrapped his arms around John’s trembling form. “No, she’s not right. She’s from a different generation. She has very…traditional…beliefs. They’ve always worked for her before so she doesn’t understand why her kids act so differently.”

“I want to talk to her, Sherlock,” John pleaded, peeking out from his shoulder enough to reveal a face stricken with tears. “I’ve got to talk to her, I’ve got explain-“

“No,” Sherlock insisted. “Leave her. She’s confused, she’s upset…there’s a million things running through her mind right now.”

“I’ve disappointed her.”

“You’ve confused her.”

“I don’t want to let her down,” John whispered. “I’ve never wanted to. She’s right: I’ve been depressed, I’ve been down and…everything just changed so much after the army but even before… I was always so proud to be a doctor because it made up for how bloody useless of a human being I was otherwise.”

Sherlock gripped his shoulders, and John stared at him, wide-eyed as he said:

“You’re not useless. Give her some time, John.”

John let out a hallow laugh.

“I can’t give her too much time. Christ, if dad finds out he might come over and punch me. He might punch you.”

“For being gay?”

Even he found that hard to believe. He wasn’t surprised that John’s extremely conservative parents would find his sexuality hard to deal with, but he was shocked to find that they would be threatening about it.

John laughed again and ran a hand over his worn face.

“My parents are impossible,” John sighed. “On the outside we’re a nice, sweet, average family but behind closed doors we’re royally fucked up. Are you starting to understand what I meant by my own demons?”

Sherlock laughed as well because he was too embarrassed to admit that yes, he did. Suddenly John’s arms were around him again, and Sherlock rubbed his boyfriend’s back as he allowed him to sob into his shoulder.

“It’s alright,” Sherlock whispered. “She’s just in a bit of shock. For her it’s like you’ve completely
changed who you are.”

“But I haven’t!” John mumbled into his shoulder.

He was aware that his own clothes were becoming wet with tears and snot, but he didn’t care. John breathed in harshly, and Sherlock said:

“I know. She’ll come around.”

“She didn’t with my sister.”

“You’re not your sister.”

John broke away gently and gazed up at him for a moment.

“If they knew about your past they’d never talk to me again,” he whispered.

Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat, and he had to convince himself not to freak out. Even he was upset with John’s parents now, and yet he was still left to be the supportive one.

“I don’t care.”

“They’re very strict in their ways,” John said. “They wanted us to be perfect because they had brothers and sisters who fucked up too. I’m serious, Sherlock, if they knew about the drugs, if they knew some of the details of the investigations we’ve done…if they knew what we do I’d be disowned.”

John’s eyes didn’t waver, and Sherlock knew he was telling the truth. He couldn’t think of anything to say, anything to justify it, so he let John rest his head on his shoulder again.

“I might have just ruined my relationship with my entire fucking family,” John whispered.

His eyes were still wide with fear, and Sherlock held him even closer. He cracked a soft smile against John’s face as he replied:

“Then you will always have me and Mycroft.”

John let out a hoarse laugh.

“Oh god!” He croaked with a choked sob.

“He does have a good credit card,” Sherlock pointed out.

John tilted his head so that he was leaning against Sherlock’s chest. His voice was muffled as he admitted:

“That’s true.”

At last they broke apart, letting out shaky breaths and gasps for air. Sherlock wanted to grab him again, to kiss him and let him really know how much he was there for him, but he knew John didn’t need that- he needed space.

Glancing around, he took note of the abandoned table and dinner.

He needed space and food.
“Want to go out?” He offered.

John shook his head and ran a hand through his hair. His body was wet with sweat and tears, and his voice was raw from yelling and crying.

“No,” John sighed. He bit his lip, looking almost child-like again. “Pizza sounds good, though.”

Sherlock laughed as he took out his mobile and led them back into the kitchen. He left John to pace the room as he dialed the number, and he just got the operator on the line when he heard a clatter of dishes. Swirling around, he saw John hovering by the stove, chest heaving and eyes wild as he stared at the fallen tray of lasagna. But it didn’t fall, Sherlock quickly gathered, John shoved it to the floor. They stared at each other while he placed their usual order, and he calmly waited until the operator was off the line before rounding on John.

“How old did you turn again?” He teased.

John simply grinned and shrugged.

“The lasagna had it coming.”

Chapter End Notes

I’m afraid John seemed a bit too emotional in this chapter...but in my opinion that was HUGE moment in his life and his world basically crashed down around him afterward. He has lots to be upset about...but in the end he still has Sherlock.

And Mycroft (ha!)

Thanks for all your kind reviews! You all are unbelievably awesome!!!!!!
I've had a few inquiries about Mycroft and Mystrade throughout the story. Honestly I hadn't planned for either to have much of a role in the story, but I figured...why not! So this chapter is for all of you Mycroft and/or Mystrade fans!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John snuck off to the pub by himself the next night after Sherlock fell asleep. The day following the fight with his mother had been trying. He sat up awake all night on the sofa, staring at the wall while Sherlock tried to talk him out of beating himself up, but he wasn’t thinking about coming out to his mum. He was thinking about being a kid, and all the stupid things he and Harry used to do for attention. He was thinking about family dinners and gatherings...Christmases and birthdays. And he was trying to figure out where it all went wrong. He kept to himself the next day, leaving Sherlock to loudly practice the violin in protest. After Sherlock finally retreated to his room around ten, he made his escape.

“So is the glass half empty or half full?”

He looked up for the first time since ordering his drink to find no other than Mycroft Holmes taking the seat next to him. His heart leapt at the sight of Sherlock’s brother- and no, not because The Incident still haunted him- but because Mycroft might be the very last person he would expect to run into at a pub.

“Is my brother with you?” Mycroft asked, without waiting for an answer to his question.

Swallowing nervously, John shook his head. With Mycroft, he could never be sure if that question was innocent or if it meant ‘is my brother with you because if not, I’ll have my people kidnap you now’. Just in case his eyes dashed around the crowded pub, searching for possible undercover agents. Noticing this, Mycroft laughed.

“I’m meeting someone here,” the elder Holmes explained.

This possibly made him feel even more uncomfortable than the thought of being kidnapped by Mycroft’s minions again.

“You?” John teased. “Forgive me, but I picture you as someone who just…”

“Works?”

“Doesn’t get out much,” he admitted.

Mycroft cracked a smile as he checked his mobile.

“It’s a rare night off for me,” Mycroft said.

“Whiskey?” The bartender asked Mycroft.

“Please.”
An awkward pause passed between them, and John wondered if Mycroft regretted taking the seat next to them. Neither one of them were one for small talk, and they never talked about anything other than Sherlock’s well-being. He knew so little about Mycroft that it was frightening, but what was even more frightening was how much Mycroft probably knew about him.

At last, John settled for:

“Are you a regular here, then? I’ve never seen you.”

With a sip of his whiskey, Mycroft replied:

“Oh I think the place is horrendous, but my…the person I’m meeting…insists I should get out more.”

Until that moment he wouldn’t have thought it possible for Mycroft Holmes to get embarrassed, but his cheeks turned pink and he hid his face in his glass.

“What are you with?” John inquired. “Is it that assistant of yours?”

Mycroft actually choked on his whiskey and laughed as he turned to John.

“The truth is, Dr. Watson, we come here because it’s the very type of place the people I work for would not come to,” he sighed.

“I can understand that,” John said. He took another swallow of the lager before continuing. “Sometimes you just need a break from the people you work with twelve hours a day.”

He noticed Mycroft’s hands suddenly gripped his glass a little too hard; fingerprints were left behind as he loosened his grip and his eyes turned dark.

“No. Higher ups in the government would not approve of one of their top leaders being gay.”

John’s heart skipped a beat as their eyes met. He knew Mycroft was trying to convey some secret message without speaking, maybe something along the lines of you’re not the only one struggling with this, but that was far too much for him to comprehend at the moment.

“You mean there are people in the government higher up than you?” He teased to break the ice.

Mycroft snorted and swallowed down more of the whiskey. John was impressed to see he had nearly drowned the glass and was already ordering another.

“I like keeping my private life private. My job provides no room for personal drama or conflict of any kind. I make decisions that can stop or start wars, Dr. Watson. My employers rely on me to not only portray a complete professional character at all times but to be a representative of the government body and citizens I represent. My personal opinions and lifestyle cannot interfere with my work.”

John blinked. This was going way over his head.

“Why would being gay interfere with your work?”

Mycroft let out a heavy, annoyed, sigh.

“I haven’t the faintest idea.”

He hid his embarrassment in another swallow of whiskey. John thought about what Sherlock said,
about not having a clue about his brother’s sexuality, and wondered if that were actually true. Now that he thought about it, he would have never even considered it himself if Mycroft hadn’t brought it up. Everything Mycroft did seemed to be revolved around this mysterious job position of his—even when it came to talking to his brother. It was almost comforting to know that Mycroft struggled with the same basic emotional conflicts as everyone else.

“My mum came by for dinner last night. I told her about me and Sherlock.”

Why he felt the need to tell Mycroft this, he had no idea, but somehow he hoped the man who had dealt with this for far longer than he had would have some kind of words of wisdom to share.

But Mycroft stayed silent, and John wondered if he was even paying attention.

“She slapped me in the face and walked out,” John breathed. He tugged at the collar of his shirt; suddenly the pub felt far too claustrophobic. “My own bloody mother.”

Mycroft’s only reply was taking the first sip of his new glass of whiskey.

“Sherlock stood up for me,” he admitted. “Which is strange because you two aren’t ones for sharing personal feelings. I suppose your parents must have been accepting of who you are.”

Mycroft froze, and in a soft, hurt, voice John didn’t even know he was capable of, replied:

“Sherlock doesn’t have parents.”

Eyes wide, John suddenly found it hard to breathe as he demanded:

“What? He’s adopted?”

It would make sense, he realized, with the age and hair color difference. Now that he thought about it, the two looked nothing alike.

“Our mother died when he was eleven and I was eighteen. Father left a couple of years after Sherlock was born.”

His heart tore in two and a pit fell in his stomach. No wonder Sherlock never talked about his family.

“Do you know what happened to your father?” He asked quietly.

Instead of looking angry, Mycroft was completely solemn when he turned back to John.

“He sells cars in upstate New York.”

John took in a sharp breath.

“Oh.”

“He cheated on Mother, lost his job, and ran off to America,” Mycroft explained. “He’s remarried now and has a daughter who is thirty-four.”

John stared into his drink, not daring to speak up after that. He almost expected the Holmes’ story to be a bit more climatic: perhaps their parents died in a car crash and the brothers were left to be raised by aunt and uncle, they were raised by adopted parents, or maybe they were living in some sort of international witness protection program.
He would have never expected this.

“Does Sherlock know?” John finally had to ask.

“I imagine he’s done the research,” Mycroft admitted.

If neither of Sherlock’s parents were around, and Mycroft was eighteen at the time, that must have meant-

“Did you raise Sherlock?”

He stared at Mycroft, wide-eyed and stunned by the realization.

“I left him with our grandmother while I went off to school. She was much more suited to raise him than I was. After a few years he went off to a boarding school, and when he was sixteen he finally began living with me.”

John snorted. He toyed with his empty glass as he pictured a sixteen year old Sherlock and twenty-two year old Mycroft sharing a flat in London.

“How did that work out?” John asked.

Mycroft was gripping his glass too tightly again.

“We fought quite a bit, but we managed,” Mycroft said. “It wasn’t until Sherlock went off to university that he really started having trouble.”

“He told me,” John whispered quietly.

Heaving a sigh, Mycroft finished off his second glass.

“Funny how a man so devoid of emotion could find himself so devoted to a damaging relationship,” Mycroft said. He paused for a moment, and as John watched him gaze into the empty glass he realized Mycroft’s mind was years in the past. He wondered if Mycroft had his own mind palace: somewhere were memories were stored and deleted, somewhere where he could hide whenever he needed to. “I was a rubbish guardian. I blame myself for those years. I suppose it’s part of why I became so protective of him. I wasn’t going to let him slip-up again. There were times when the police would bring him back to me, and we got into horrible fights…I was barely thirty by then. Didn’t have a clue what I was doing. In the meantime my career was taking off, and I was balancing Sherlock with running off on assignments. For the longest time we didn’t even speak. But then Sherlock overdosed…”

Mycroft stopped. John’s chest tightened, and part of him wanted to scream at Mycroft to stop with the horror stories. He hated being confronted with who Sherlock used to be. No matter how much he insisted that he could accept his lover’s past and accept that Sherlock move on, the thought of who he was back then terrified him.

“I can still remember being with him at the hospital that night,” Mycroft’s broken voice was nearly drowned by the rest of the pub. He was already on his third drink, while John sat back and watched him fall apart. “He looked so young and just…broken. I made it my mission to save him. It cost me my relationship with him, but I know deep down that it’s what saved his life.”

There was a long pause between them, and John had to fight to not think of a young Sherlock, wired to hospital tubes and machines, fighting for his life. He tried not to think of a young Mycroft, pacing the floor of the waiting area. He tried not to think about how that was the reason Sherlock
was so skinny and frail.

“But that doesn’t matter now,” Mycroft said with a half-smile, “he has you now.”

His eyes glowed, but it didn’t make John feel any better.

“I can’t replace his family,” John said.

“You are his family.”

John opened his mouth to speak but was interrupted by a familiar voice.

“Sorry to keep you waiting, I had to work overtime, as usual.”

His heart pounded as he realized then who Mycroft was meeting. Greg Lestrade slid into the seat next to Mycroft and leaned over to smile at John.

“Hey John,” Greg greeted casually. “How’s the holiday?”

All that his mind was capable of coming up with was *Mycroft and Greg*. Greg and Mycroft. Mycroft and Greg *together*. Possibly sexually.

Greg’s hand slid to Mycroft’s thigh, and the elder Holmes visibly stiffened.

Definitely sexually.

“Fine-“ John replied sharply. “I thought you were-”

Greg let out a harsh laugh, and Mycroft grinned himself.

“Straight?” Greg teased. “Sherlock’s not as clever as he thinks.”

He winked, and John felt like he might throw up.

*Mycroft and Greg. Greg and Mycroft.*

“Well…” he trailed off as he scurried to his feet. “I’ll leave you to your date.”

“You should come over sometime,” Greg grinned.

He winked too, and John didn’t even want to know what that meant.

“I should get home,” he blurted out.

There was only enough time for Greg to call out:

“Have a nice holiday!”

Before he escaped the pub.

*One thing is for sure, he decided, this is the worst holiday ever.*

Chapter End Notes
This story has become way more dramatic than I ever meant for it to! I hope you don't mind!! There will be more cute and funny moments too. Let me know if you liked the Mystrade, and I'll see what I can do about throwing more in. Honestly, I've been itching to try my hand at a Mystrade fic...

Thanks, as always, for all of the lovely comments!!!! You guys always make my day!
The flat was dark and quiet when John returned, and though he knew he should let Sherlock sleep he wondered into his room anyway. Moonlight fell over his sleeping lover as he propped the door open and leaned against the doorway. Sherlock lay on his side, hugging his pillow as he breathed in and out softly. John let the door close quietly, and he crept forward. Slipping into bed, he wrapped his arms around Sherlock and rested gently against his back.

Sherlock moaned as he woke up, and John was met with a disapproving look.

“John it’s one AM,” Sherlock mumbled. “I’m sleeping. You know…that thing you always accused me of not doing.”

“Yeah, sorry.”

His voice was muffled against Sherlock’s back as he pulled him closer. On the way back to the flat he debated about telling Sherlock what he knew, and two lagers, a lack of sleep, and a restless mind made him want to jump on the opportunity.

“I had drinks with Mycroft,” he announced.

Sherlock jumped up and turned to face him.

“What?!?”

“It was an accident!” He confessed. “I was at the pub and Mycroft sat down next to me. He talked to me. What was I supposed to do?”

Eyes wild, Sherlock gazed at him through the soft moonlight.

“Run away!” Sherlock shot. “Haven’t you learned anything?”

Rolling his eyes, John went on:

“I told him about my parents, and he…he told me about yours.”

Sherlock froze for a split second before turning his back to John with such a force he nearly tumbled back himself.

“Sherlock!” He exclaimed. Panicking a bit, he explained: “He was a bit tipsy already when he arrived, and he had a few drinks. It just came up, Sherlock. You were never going to tell me-“

“Because they’re gone, John!” Sherlock let the pillow muffle his shouts. John wrapped an arm around him again to let him know it was okay. “I haven’t had parents in twenty-five years. There’s no sense in dwelling over it.”

*He’s still hurting*, John thought, *like he drugs and Luke, he’s never talked about this to anyone either.*

“Sherlock…Mycroft told me about your father. He knows what happened to him.”
No response. He swore it felt like Sherlock stopped breathing, and he pulled him even closer just to make sure he was okay. His hand brushed against Sherlock’s cheeks and ran his fingers through his hair.

“Talk to me,” John whispered.

He could see that Sherlock’s eyes were closed tightly, and he knew he was risking Sherlock fleeing to his mind palace.

“I don’t care about my father, John,” Sherlock said quietly. “He left when I was two. He left my mother to raise two young kids by herself and never talked to us again. He can be dead for all I care.”

Swallowing nervously, John rested his chin against Sherlock’s shoulder as he admitted:

“He’s not dead.”

Sherlock went very still, and John held on, if not just in fear of being thrown off.

“This is a distraction, isn’t it?” Sherlock said suddenly. “You’re feeling bad about fucking up your relationship with your parents so you want to bother me about mine.”

“It’s not that!” John shot. “I just don’t see how you aren’t the least bit curious about your father!”

He attempted to grasp one of Sherlock’s hands and hold it, but his boyfriend only gripped the pillow tighter, ignoring him.

“He abandoned me.”

“Don’t you want to know why?” John asked.

“I don’t care!” Sherlock snapped. “John…family doesn’t mean the same thing to me as it does to you.”

John stayed silent; he was too embarrassed to admit he wasn’t sure what family meant to him anymore.

“I just thought it might give you some closure,” John said.

He spoke into Sherlock’s hair as his fingers danced up and down his arms. For the first time Sherlock’s hands wrapped around his arm, and Sherlock offered a light squeeze. John scooted up so that his chest was flat against Sherlock’s back.

“I don’t want closure with him,” Sherlock whispered. “I…I hated him for so long. I never even knew him. I don’t know anything about him except that I hate him, and when I was a kid I swore I would never do what he did. But I did. I became a drug addict. I was homeless. I pushed away the only family I had, and I nearly died. I was no better than him, John. So who am I to phone him thirty-two years later and accuse him of ruining my life?”

John breathed in sharply, a bit taken aback by Sherlock’s confession.

“I’m just as bad as he was,” Sherlock said softly. “Sometimes I wonder if I get it from him…this tendency to screw up and push people away. I don’t like to think about him, John. It hurts too much to think about my family.”

“Oh Sherlock,” John whispered, brushing his hair back a bit. “That’s crazy.”
He placed a gentle kiss just behind Sherlock’s ear, and as Sherlock shivered he wrapped his hands around John’s arm again.

“Please…” Sherlock said, voice strained. “If you care about me at all you won’t bring him up again. Ever.”

John hesitated for a moment—there was one last thing he wanted to mention before he let the conversation go. One last thing Sherlock had to know.

“You have a half-sister. He has a daughter who’s thirty-four.”

Bringing his hands up to Sherlock’s chest, he could feel his heart skip a beat. He knew what kind of thoughts were racing through Sherlock’s mind right now…he knew he just ripped Sherlock’s world apart.

“Don’t talk about again them, please,” Sherlock whispered. His eyes squeezed shut, and if he didn’t know any better it almost sounded like he was fighting back tears.

John nodded against Sherlock’s shoulders and lay still and quiet. They remained like that and he spent the night listening to the sharp, uneven, sounds of Sherlock’s breathing. For the longest time his boyfriend lay with his eyes wide in horror as he stared at the walls, letting the new information seep in. When at last he seemed to fall asleep John still didn’t let go and instead kept holding onto Sherlock as nightmares riddled him.

“That’s the last time I get Mycroft drunk,” John finally mumbled before falling asleep himself.

Chapter End Notes

After re-reading the last chapter, I don't know how the story became so depressing so quickly! I always enjoy focusing on backstory in my fics, but I didn't mean to go this deeply into backstory with this fic. It just happened naturally. Let me know what you think about it! This certainly doesn't have to be the end of Sherlock’s mysterious past...remember, it's up to YOU to let me know what you want to see! So if you'd rather me get back to cute, adorable, John and Sherlockness I'm all for it. In fact, I'd say there's some coming right up!

I'm still working through some of the prompts, but please let me know if you have any requests or suggestions about how you would like the story to develop!!

Thanks, as always, for the comments!!!!
Sherlock’s Nightmare

Chapter Notes

Haking17 and JanniBunni both wanting to see a reversal of the John's nightmare chapter, with John being the one to comfort Sherlock. This one is for you guys!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

That night, Sherlock had his first real nightmare since he and John started sleeping together. In the dream he was trying to fall asleep in his old flat, but as soon as he drifted away there was a knock on the door. His heart began racing- he recognized this dream. It was the most terrifying night of his life, and he told himself not to get out of bed even as his feet hit the floor.

Don’t go! He tried to warn himself. Don’t open the door…I can’t live through this again.

But he did.

It was winter, and his freezing flat sent shivers up and down his spine as he threw the door open. A rush of cold air hit him, and his heart leapt as he saw…


A girl. A girl who was only a couple of years younger than him, who looked almost exactly like him. She had long, black, curly hair and a pale face. Her eyes were wide with terror and her cheeks were tearstained.

“I've been pounding on the fucking door for five minutes!” The girl screamed.

She stormed into the flat without asking for his permission. Sherlock was so startled that he just watched her waltz through. Her whole body trembled, even as she wrapped her arms around herself.

But...

“You’re supposed to be my brother, Sherlock!” She exclaimed. “Every time I call you just ignore me. I really needed you this time, and-“

More pounding on the door.

Sherlock’s head snapped to the doorway as the girl kept talking. This wasn’t right- he didn’t even have a sister.

“Sherlock, you have to help me!” She cried, grabbing him by the arm.

She was using him as a shield. His heart was beating so hard he could hear it. The pounding on the door grew louder and louder…

His eyes snapped open, and he drew in a sharp, shaky breath when he realized he was staring right into John’s worried eyes.
“You were muttering your sleep,” John told him quietly.

A hand reached up to brush the hair dangling in front of his eyes, and Sherlock shrugged it away. Instead of replying he flipped to his other side so that he was facing away from John.

“Sherlock!” John pleaded.

John’s face rested awkwardly against his shoulders. Sherlock couldn’t catch his breath. He held an arm against his mouth as he wheezed and shut his eyes tightly to block out the intruding daylight.

“You can talk to me,” John whispered, rubbing a hand on his back. Though it was comforting, it made him feel like a child, and he buried his head deeper into the pillow to hide. “If anyone understands nightmares it’s me.”

That was true. Slowly he turned to John, with his face pale from fear and eyes bloodshot.

“I…I have a sister,” he stammered.

John offered him a small smile and nodded.

“Yeah,” John said. “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have told you like that. This is huge news.”

His eyes danced around the room, trying to catch up to reality. The dream sent all kinds of terrifying thoughts racing through his mind. He had a younger sister who spent her childhood being raised by his father. His awful excuse of a father.

Suddenly he sat up. Breathing deeply, Sherlock ran a hand through his hair to calm himself down. John’s hands lingered on his knee, and he let it stay there.

“In the dream it was her I was helping, not Luke,” he admitted.

“Brotherly instincts already?” John teased. “Sherlock, it was just a crazy nightmare. Your mind’s playing tricks on you. You’re distorting reality…partly because you haven’t actually dealt with any of this properly.”

Deep down he knew John was right, and if he knew if the situation was reversed and it was John having the nightmare that he would have said the same thing. He ran his hands up and down his arms, which were freezing like in the nightmare even though the flat was warm from the summer heat.

“Do you want to go to New York?” John asked suddenly.

Sherlock turned to him, stunned.

“What?”

John swallowed nervously, realizing his mistake.

“That’s where he lives,” he admitted. “He sells cars in upstate New York.”

Sherlock closed his eyes.

“God that’s dull.”

“We can look them up,” John suggested. “And I’m sure if you really wanted to know, Mycroft would-“
“No!” Sherlock exclaimed. John looked startled and hurt as he turned to him again, but he didn’t care. “Don’t you see, John? If he hasn’t told me about my father until now there’s a reason. What if he’s awful? I mean, I know he is…but what if he still is? For all I know, he could have abandoned her too. Or worse.”

“I think we should look her up,” John commented, reaching for the laptop on the table beside the bed. “What weird name would the sister of two brothers called Sherlock and Mycroft have?”

“Mum’s responsible for the weird names,” he mumbled.

“Maybe Wednesday, like the Adams Family…”

“This isn’t funny, John!” He snapped.

John froze.

“I know,” he whispered. “I know, I just…I don’t really know what to say.”

Their hands connected, and John squeezed Sherlock’s fingers tightly.

“I think you should talk to Mycroft,” John said quietly. “I really do. This isn’t some top secret government investigation, it’s family, and you two don’t have a lot of family.”

Sherlock stared at him, wondering how he could make sense of everything and still be so kind in all of this madness.

“I have a sister,” he announced, testing how the words sounded out loud. “A half-sister…but all the same. I wonder if she knows about me.”

“We could ask Mycroft,” John said again. “Maybe he was just waiting until you were ready.”

“I’m thirty-six.”

“Well…do you think you’re ready?”

Leaning back against the pillows, Sherlock pursed his lips and closed his eyes as he admitted:

“No.”

“We’re on holiday, it’s the perfect time to go to New York,” John pointed out.

He was right, but Sherlock didn’t care.

“Isn’t that Doctor Who thing in a couple of days?”

He opened his eyes to find John staring at him in horror.

“It’s The Who!” John shot. “The! We’ve gone over this like a dozen times! And you’re the one who bought the tickets!”

A small smile slipped from the corners of his lips as he closed his eyes again.

“I don’t want to go to bloody America,” Sherlock said. He drew in a deep breath and opened his eyes. Suddenly the world seemed a bit clearer, and he could breathe a little easier. “But if she wanted to come here I wouldn’t object…too much. Not now! Not this week. But sometime. Maybe.”
Before he could blink he found himself trapped by John’s lips and hands. He breathed into the kiss, ignoring the sour taste of alcohol lingering in John’s mouth and the smell of pub in his hair.

“God you need to shower,” Sherlock mumbled when they broke apart.

John grinned, and his eyes twinkled.

“Want to join me?”

Yes!

But before he could reply the door to the flat opened and closed in the distance, and the sound of Mrs. Hudson complaining about the state of their living room filled their ears. Horrified, Sherlock shuffled underneath the sheets and pulled the duvet over his head. Above him John sighed and slipped out of bed.

“John?” He muttered into the sheets.

“Yeah?”

He paused for a moment, contemplating exactly what he wanted to say.

“I’m not mad at you for telling me,” he admitted.

A hand rested on his arse, and he smirked beneath the sheets.

“How about we both blame Mycroft for this one?”

Sherlock grinned to himself as John’s hand brushed his arse before disappearing.

“Sounds good.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm noticing most of my 30 DAY stories take place at night so I'm on the look out for more daylight-friendly prompts! And yes, there are many prompts you guys have already suggested that I plan to use!

As always, thanks for your kind comments!

P.S.: I don't think car salesmen are dull! Only Sherlock does...because he's rude.
Lila and JanniBunni both supported seeing jealous!John when he finds Sherlock with another guy at a club. That prompt gave me this idea...

When it was Sherlock who asked him out to the pub the next night, he knew this couldn’t end well. Already he was having flashbacks to their last club-case, and John just couldn’t have a good feeling about the place as his eyes scanned the groups of young, Goth types smoking alongside the pavement. A girl with thin black hair and pink bangs stole a glance at him as he walked by and winked. The thought that she couldn’t have been more than twenty-four made him shudder. Every inch of his being begged him not to go inside as he threw open the front door, and his first step inside made him want to run away. Heavy music screamed against the walls, but even the ridiculously loud noise couldn’t drown out the shouting and excitement from the sea of people in the club. The crowd appeared to be swaying back and forth as everyone was forced to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, and though no one could do any real dancing here they were certainly trying.

He glanced down at his mobile to find a new text informing him that Sherlock was at the bar. Looking up, he could just barely make out a bar in the back of the building. Hoards of young people were shouting drink orders at the bartender while couples made out on the few remaining barstools. He glanced back down at his text, just to make sure he was getting this right, but when he looked up John finally saw him.

His heart stopped, his cock twitched, and his legs turned to jelly when he finally found Sherlock. He could see now why he didn’t recognize him at first. Sherlock was dressed...weird. His boyfriend wore dark skinny jeans, a tight red and black striped t-shirt, a leather jacket, and black knit gloves that were cut off at the fingertips. His hand was on the thigh of a young bloke with spiky bleach blonde hair, and John just felt sick.

Though he knew there had to be a reasonable explanation (why else would Sherlock invite him here?), John couldn’t help but to rush forward and confront Sherlock face to face. Both Sherlock and his new friend looked up at the abrupt confrontation, and his partner’s hand immediately slipped off the other man’s leg.

Without offering an explanation, Sherlock jumped up and grabbed John by the arm.

“What the fuck are you doing?” John screamed.

But he was drowned out by the music.

“Sherlock!” He exclaimed, to no avail.

Sherlock led him to a loo tucked away in the back hall. He threw open the door without checking to see if someone was inside, and John found himself shoved in before he could protest. The thin wood walls of the single-stall restroom did little to drown out the music, but at least John could hear himself think.
Breathing hard, Sherlock turned to him, holding up a hand for mercy before John could say anything.

“Don’t be so stupid, John!” Sherlock snapped. God he wanted to slap him. “You nearly blew my cover!”

As he yelled at him, Sherlock played with the knitting on the gloves, signaling that he was extremely uncomfortable in the clothes. They didn’t seem to fit him quite right- they were all too small and even the red Converse didn’t look exactly right.

“Cover?” John blinked. “You didn’t want to take cases!”

“Lestrade asked me to do it,” Sherlock sighed. “He offered to pay me double. That man you saw me with—”

“He looked about half your age!”

Sherlock looked like he wanted to sink to the floor.

“He’s thirty,” Sherlock admitted. “He’s the brother of one of Lestrade’s suspects in a new case. He’s not talking and claims to not have a relationship with his brother, but up until last month he had a flatshare with him. He doesn’t trust the police, so Lestrade hired me to follow him and find out more. I found out he hung around here so I decided to do some undercover work. I managed to get him to talk to me. I was texting Lestrade the whole time, the guy’s an idiot.”

John stared at him, mouth agape. This was one of those moments where he couldn’t understand what possible thought was going through Sherlock’s head that convinced him this was okay.

“And running your hand up and down his thigh? Was that was part of the plan too?” He shot coldly.

“It was resting on his thigh!” Sherlock exclaimed. “You’re so clingy sometimes!”

“Only when I see my boyfriend dressed like some punk and feeling up another guy!”

Sherlock burst out laughing, and it was all John could do to keep from hitting him. Then he noticed the twinkle in Sherlock’s eye and the fact that Sherlock was clearly sober, and he started laughing too.

“Are you sure the information he told you was even true?” John said.

Shrugging, Sherlock replied:

“I got him to admit he saw his brother yesterday. He didn’t say why, he was too drunk to even catch that he said it, but it was enough of a confession for Lestrade to bring him in again. In fact…” suddenly shouting erupted in the club, signaling the crowd was panicking. “Looks like the cavalry just arrived! Best wait it out in here. I can’t risk Lestrade getting a picture of me dressed like this.”

John grinned and immediately whipped out his mobile.

“Lestrade can’t…”

“John!” Sherlock exclaimed as the camera snapped.

“It’s a terrible picture anyway, the lighting’s all wrong,” John assured him as he examined the photo. “Where did you get those clothes anyway?”
Sherlock grimaced as he turned to the mirror and picked at the shirt clinging to his chest.

“Homeless Network.”

“…kids from the Homeless Network just gave you their clothes?”

“Of course not!” Sherlock said, turning back to him. “I traded them.”

“Traded them? Sherlock you own like three shirts!”

The twinkle was back in Sherlock’s eyes as he said the words John feared most:

“I didn’t say they were my clothes.”

John rounded on him, shoving him back against the sink.

“I hate you!” He spat.

“You’re a medical doctor and you’re complaining some homeless teenager is wearing your raggedy old jumper?” Sherlock shot. Their eyes met, and John’s breathing suddenly turned uneven as he realized Sherlock’s hands were on his hips and they were standing very close together.

“Admit it: you’ve never been so turned on in your life.”

He wasn’t going to argue. He threw himself forward onto Sherlock, forcing him back against the sink as he snogged him long and hard.

Sherlock gasped a bit as John’s hands traveled up his sides, tugging the jacket off. Even the pounding music couldn’t bring him back to reality, and it wasn’t until Sherlock whispered in his ear that he fully realized what he was doing.

“You’re trying to get me off in a public toilet!”

John pulled back and looked at him. Sherlock’s lips were already swollen from kissing, and his hair was already a mess from John’s hand. An obvious bulge stuck out of the front of his trousers, and John legs shook violently against Sherlock.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock whispered, brushing a hand gently through John’s hair. He paused before admitting, right into his ear: “Whatever you want.”

Their lips pressed together again, and John was already getting to work on his own trousers. They wouldn’t have much time before someone else would start banging on the door, and a thousand dirty thoughts raced through his mind on how to do this as quickly as possible.

Sherlock squirmed as John reached for the zipper on his trousers, and he was at least able to realize how filthy the place was.

“Against the wall,” he ordered, his voice low and sharp.

Obeying without question, Sherlock let John push him up against the nearest wall. John felt him up, hoping there was some small chance Sherlock might have something on him, but even when he turned up empty he still pressed against him. Quiet, desperate, moans escaped Sherlock as he rutted against him. Sherlock pushed back and John let out a soft groan at the friction.

“Do you really think we should do this here?” John whispered.

“I think you think too much.”
Sherlock tilted his head so he could kiss him. Breathing in deeply, he grabbed his boyfriend’s face and pulled him in. He let his tongue lapped against Sherlock’s ear before licking down his neck and planting kisses against his exposed neck and shoulder. He continued to rut against him, just to tease him, but as the music blared louder in his ears and chatter erupted outside the door he began to doubt his ability to do this here.

His own hands were shoved beneath Sherlock’s shirt, forcing him to run his fingers up the warm skin. Then Sherlock thrust forward against him, while at the same time pushing his trousers down, and John stopped thinking altogether. Taking John’s hand in his again, Sherlock allowed him to tease his cock through his pants. John sent a trail of kisses down his partner’s chin and jaw while lightly rocking against him.

“Have you ever done this before…in public?” John growled.

Sherlock grimaced.

“Do you really want to know the answer to that?”

He decided he really didn’t.

He realized how heavily Sherlock was breathing and how uncomfortable he looked, pinned against a filthy wall, and he finally showed mercy. They both tumbled against the wall as he forced Sherlock around and grabbed him for another kiss. Snaking his hand between them, John tugged Sherlock’s cock out of his pants and gave him a few strokes. Sherlock moaned. He grasped John’s back with one hand while his other was planted back against the wall.

The music from the club changed again, and John realized the clock was ticking. Hard and desperate, he took them both in hand and began rubbing their cocks together. Sherlock held onto his shoulder and rocked forward. Their foreheads collapsed together as they breathed heavy, hot, breaths in unison.

“John!” Sherlock gasped, pulling him close.

John moaned as he was forced right up against his lover. He held onto the wall beside Sherlock and inched his hand over until his palm rested over the fingers beneath him. They rocked back in forth in rhythm with John’s strokes.

Suddenly Sherlock reached to grab himself, and John whimpered a bit as they each took their own cock in and began stroking vigorously. Sherlock managed to muffle his groans as he worked himself harder, faster. As his orgasm gripped him, John held onto his shoulders, keeping him still as Sherlock jerked and whimpered. His face was beautiful: pale with shock and eyes closed as pleasure flowed through him. When Sherlock finally came it was enough to set him off, and his own orgasm thundered through him.

Breathless, they leaned back against the wall and rested in each other’s arms. John leaned up to trap Sherlock in one last kiss before they both began straightening their clothes.

“You should keep the clothes,” he rasped.

Sherlock looked up at him, and practically said “you really mean it?” with his eyes wide and pupils blown. Then a sly grin snuck across his face.

“You’ve shown some serious progress, Dr. Watson,” Sherlock teased. Leaning forward, he whispered in his ear: “But I don’t think the night is over yet. You owe me. It’s my turn.”
John froze, so transfixed by Sherlock’s low, sexy, warning that he already felt himself getting excited again.

All he could do was shiver and nod.
Sex Toys: Sherlock's Turn

Multiple people wanted to see "Sherlock's turn" after the sex toys chapter, and sighing_selkie suggested that maybe John would accept taking a dildo. So therefore I give you...

The lights were turned down low as he laid John across his bed. He was surprised that his lover remained relatively calm during the drive home, though with each stoplight the cabbie hit John’s leg twitched. John stayed perfectly still as he allowed Sherlock to remove his shirt. Looking up, he watched his boyfriend watch him plant a trail of kisses down his chest. He let his hand graze down John’s skin as he moved toward his zipper, and wasted no time with his trousers.

“You’re awfully quiet,” Sherlock whispered. He mouthed at John’s cock through his pants. His eyes trailed up and he grinned, but John didn’t budge. With his hands rested behind his head, John replied:

“Whenever I say something during sex you accuse me of freaking out. So this is me, not freaking out.”

“Well you’re doing a very good job of it.”

Sliding off the bed, he hung upside down long enough to fish the box from the club. When he reached inside and pulled out a small, blue, dildo, John suddenly shot up.

“Sherlock!” He whined.


He pushed John back with one hand and pried his legs open with another. Sherlock sucked one last time through John’s pants before tugging them down past his lips and down his legs.

“Relax,” he whispered.

The toy dangled in his hand as he took John in his mouth. Moaning, John arched up again and closed his eyes as Sherlock licked his shaft and took him in again.

“Stay perfectly still,” Sherlock mumbled against his cock. “Still and quiet. Okay?”

John nodded, running his hand through his hair. He threw himself back against the bed as Sherlock sucked him harder. A single, soft gasp escaped him as he pushed John’s legs apart further.

“Stop me if it gets to be too much, alright?” Sherlock said.

“Alright,” John whispered.

He shut his eyes tightly, like Sherlock was preparing to give him a shot.
“This might feel weird at first,” Sherlock said in his most doctor-ish voice.

“I’m a doctor, Sherlock, I know that’s code for this will- oh!”

John pressed himself deeply against the mattress and grabbed at his hair as he screamed.

“I’ve only been sleeping with a man for a month and a half, Sherlock! For Christ’s sake, be gentle!”

He gently kissed the tip of John’s cock before slowly experimenting with pumping the dildo a few times. John whimpered, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk.

“Have you never done this before?”

“No, I generally don’t make a habit of sticking plastic toys up my arse.”

Laughing, Sherlock sucked John gently again while he pushed the dildo in and out of his arse. At last John opened his eyes to watching him. He held his breath and tensed as the toy went deeper, and it wasn’t long before-

“Oh!”

“That’s the spot,” Sherlock grinned. He teased the spot with the dildo a few times, soaking in John’s moans.

“Oh! Sherlock!”

John reached down, grabbing at his cock as Sherlock pressed in deeper, faster.

When he suddenly pulled out, John howled. Quickly, he reached down and grabbed another dildo. This one was noticeably larger, and John’s eyes went wide. Breathing hard, John’s eyes danced with anxiety as Sherlock pressed the larger dildo against his hole.

“Oh! Oh shit!”

“You’re doing a good job of not freaking out,” Sherlock murmured.

He sucked on John’s cock again before licking at the skin, all the way down to his balls.

“Feels good, doesn’t it?” He asked quietly. He pressed the dildo in further, making John squirm against the duvet. At the same time he reached down, licking at the cock again.

“Oh god!” John whimpered, grabbing his head.

His fingers danced around John on the bed until he reached the back of John.

“Up,” Sherlock whispered. John whimpered again but stuck his butt in the air enough for Sherlock to slide his hand underneath. While he kept pumping the dildo with his right hand he teased at John’s cheeks with the other. He squeezed them, rubbed against them, and patted them before gently wigging them apart with a finger.

“You’re very…thorough…about this,” John gasped.

“I’ve had lots of practice.”

John swallowed.
“Luke?”

Sherlock was relieved to have his face hidden between John’s arse and the bed. Any mention of his former lover still set him off, but he was honest as he replied:

“Myself.”

“Oh god.”

He pressed the dildo in further, reaching that sweet spot again. He could feel John tense up, but as he buried his finger into his arse he seemed to relax. Pulling out, he gave himself a moment to suck on his own fingers in absence of lube. John groaned loudly when he stuck his fingers back in—two this time.

Sherlock kept his fingers firm in his arse while slowly teasing him with the dildo at the same time. Then he leaned down, and ever so gently, guided John’s cock back into his mouth with his tongue and lips.

“Oh god!” John gasped. “Oh. Oh- Sherlock! Oh fuck! You’re trying to kill me! Sherlock!”

He rutted against the sheets through his own ridiculously tight denims while playing John at all three angles. He sucked his fingers again before burying in a third. John’s back arched off the bed again, and as it did his cock hit the back of Sherlock’s throat.

Sucking harder, Sherlock tried his best to fill John the most he could. Adrenaline pumped through him at a maddening pace, but he couldn’t imagine what John was going through. He looked so perfect, so tense and wanting as his body twitched.

“Oh god Sherlock!”

The warning was too late as John came down his throat. Sherlock swallowed quickly but ultimately had to pull off as John kept coming and-

“Oh! Oh shit!”

Sherlock licked at his cock even as John grabbed at it, pumping it and tugging desperately through is orgasm. He kept fingering his lover as he came, ruining Sherlock’s clothes and the duvet beneath them.

“Oh god,” John breathed.

At last his body still, and Sherlock paused a moment before slipping his hand out of his arse. John moaned, and Sherlock decided to give him a minute before slipping the dildo out as well. As he did a few more trickles of cum spilled out of him, and Sherlock nearly broke.

“Oh god,” he moaned himself.

His face turned pale, and John watched, confused, as he stuck a hand down his trousers. He had mainly ignored his own cock, but the rubbing against the sheets was enough to set him off for good. He fingered himself as he forced his trousers down and ripped his pants of his hips. Sherlock knew he looked awkward wearing half of his “punk” clothes while sitting on his own bed and pumping himself desperately. He closed his eyes, grateful for the light teasing and friction the knit gloves provided.

“Yes!” He cried as he came.
Collapsing, he fell beside John. They both turned to each other with grins on their face.

“How was that?” He asked.

John reached down and played with some of the mess that was still trying to seep out of him.

“Fucking disgusting,” John teased. “But brilliant!”

He leaned over and kissed Sherlock firmly on his lips. Sherlock tensed when John’s hands fell over the fingerless-gloves, and they were both left gasping when they broke apart.
Sherlock wasn’t sure why he never thought to go on holiday before. Maybe it was because he had never actually had a job to go on holiday from, but even he had to admit being in John’s arms instead of the butt of jokes from Lestrade’s team was nice. If you asked him at any other point in his recent life to sit around a flat doing nothing for two weeks he would have gone mad, but this felt more like making up for lost time.

And John didn’t seem to mind…considering it was three in the morning and they were still cuddled in bed, lips dancing together and arms roaming each other’s body.

“Now you smell,” John teased. “That club was awful. How long were you there?”

Rolling over, Sherlock climbed on top of John so that they were faced-to-face.

“Long enough to make you jealous.”

His hand snaked down toward John’s cock just as someone began pounding on the front door. They both jumped up, eyes flashing toward each other.

“Gun?” Sherlock whispered.

John’s face went pale.

“My room.”

John pulled on a pair of trousers while he reached in his side drawer. When his hands landed on a knife he hadn’t touched in years, he froze up.

“You sleep with a bloody knife by your side?” John hissed.

His own trousers were thrown at him, and Sherlock caught them as he explained:
“In the past decade I’ve had a boyfriend who was a drug dealer and a job stalking murderers, I like to be prepared!”

John grabbed him by the arm a little too roughly as he led him out of the bedroom.

“I’ll answer the door,” Sherlock whispered as they crept through the darkness. His heart pounded as adrenaline rushed through him, and John was completely stiff beside him. “You can go back from the gun.”

“What? So some crazy person can grab you and pull you onto the street? I’m not leaving you, Sherlock!”

“Stop trying to be noble!”

“Be quiet!”

They glared at each other as they reached the door. John lingered behind him as Sherlock’s eyes narrowed, warning him to stay calm and silent. Taking in a deep breath, he threw the door open in one hand and held the knife closely to his body with the other. He completely froze when he saw…

A kid.

A little boy. No more than ten, at least.

“I’m glad you were prepared,” John chuckled.

He didn’t have the heart to laugh with him when he saw the state the kid was in. The kid had dark brown hair cut just below his ears, with just the hint of curls forming around his neck. His skin was a ghostly white, and obviously not just from the shock. His dark brown eyes were wide with horror, and he was breathing heavily.

“Sherlock,” John whispered slowly, stunned.

The kid was dressed like he had just run straight from a wedding. His tiny suit pants dragged the ground as his jacket clung to his sweaty body. He reached into his pocket with a trembling hand and withdrew what looked like a business card. He handed it to Sherlock, who turned to John, uncertain.

His heart skipped a beat as he read:

*Sherlock Holmes*

*221B Baker Street*

A familiar number was scribbled across the back of the card.

“That’s-“

“Mycroft’s number,” Sherlock interrupted.

He collapsed a bit against the doorframe, forgetting entirely about the kid for a moment. He was more interested in the fact that someone out there had written his name and address down on a card and put Mycroft’s number on it.

“Sherlock!” John cried softly. “Sherlock…I think he’s going into shock.”
His eyes flashed back to the kid, who was nearly in tears by now. His stiff exterior softened into shakes and trembles as he wrapped his arms around himself and looked to the ground.

“Call 999, now!” John exclaimed.

As his boyfriend fell to his knee beside the kid to comfort him, Sherlock simply stood in shock.

Why did this kid have a card with his address and his brother’s number?

“It’s okay,” John was assuring the kid, “I’m a doctor, I can help you, it’s okay. Did someone hurt you? Sherlock, call 999 or Lestrade or someone!”

Shaking his head, he forced himself to snap out of it as he stepped inside and reached for his mobile. But just as he was about to dial the number Lestrade called him.

“Lestrade, I need your help—”

“No, I need yours!” Lestrade interrupted. “Are you not watching the news?!”

“It’s the middle of the night!” Sherlock exclaimed as he stumbled back into the living room.

As he turned on the morning news his eyes immediately flashed over the headlines of:

Dream wedding turned tragedy…bride and son snatched out of the groom’s hands.

His eyes glowered, horrified by how sensationalized the incident already was, but then he stopped when a picture flashed on the screen.

It was a picture of the kid.

“I think I can help,” Sherlock announced.

“You bet your arse you’re helping!” Lestrade shouted. “Get John and get down here now. This is a complete mess. I have the press chewing me out already over this. We have three dozen wedding guests in complete shock and a groom who is so wrecked he collapsed on the floor of the interrogation room.”

“Shut up, Lestrade, that’s not important!” Sherlock snapped. “He’s here, the kid’s here. He pounded on our door at three in the morning. John’s outside with him, trying to keep him from breaking down in the middle of the street. He’s in shock—”

“Is he hurt? Can you get me a confirmation on his description?”

“I’m looking at him on the telly!” Sherlock groaned. “Here—”

He stormed back to John and the kid, snapped a picture, and sent it to Lestrade.

“Happy?” He mumbled. “Are you on your way yet?”

He hung up as Lestrade began shouting on the other line. John’s footsteps scraped across the floor of the foyer, and he immediately turned off the news, deciding to not traumatize the kid further by showing him his face on the telly.

“Was that Lestrade?”

John sounded far more exhausted than he had just a half hour ago. Looking up, Sherlock was
startled to find John slowly making his way toward him, the little kid in his arms.

“You got him to listen to you?” Sherlock inquired, unconvinced that John was capable of defying the powers of a terrified, crying, little kid.

“Doctor, soldier, remember?” John said with a soft smile. “He shook his head when I asked him if he was hurt. He won’t tell me his name or where he’s from, but I think I got him to calm down a bit.” He turned to the kid, offering him the same reassuring smile. “The police are on their way. Would you like to sit with me on the sofa until then?”

Sherlock smirked at John’s effort, though deep inside his stomach turned to knots. He would only admit to himself how impressed he was that John was so good with kids. He was good with people all around- resulting from years of medical and army experience, of course- but he never knew he could connect with kids as well. There was something comforting about it that he just couldn’t name…

“I’m going to make him some tea,” John announced.

“I’ll take some too,” Sherlock replied.

Rolling his eyes, John reached out to offer a gentle, subtle, brush of his hand against Sherlock’s arm.

“Stay with him, alright?” John said quietly. “He’s afraid, and he probably won’t talk to you, but he just needs to know that he’s safe.”

He nodded, feeling a bit child-like himself as John slipped away. He didn’t want him to go, not even for five minutes. Sherlock didn’t have the first clue what to do with a little kid- let alone a little kid who had been through some kind of serious trauma. He looked down at the card again and had to fight the urge to immediately begin researching on his phone.

When he instead took a seat at the end of the sofa, the kid curled up into a ball and faced the cushions. Head buried into a pillow, he looked like he might sink away into the depths of the furniture. His eyes flickered from the kid to the card in his hand, and it him…maybe he knows who I am.

Clearing his throat, Sherlock spoke up:

“My name’s Sherlock Holmes. Were you looking for me?”

*Of course he was, you twat. He showed up at your doorstep.*

“Did someone tell you to look for me?” He asked.

No reply. In fact, the kid buried himself deeper into the sofa.

“Sherlock, you’re probably scaring him,” John sighed as he appeared next to him.

He was handed a cuppa before John knelt down next to the kid.

“Would you like some tea?” John asked softly. “Tea always makes me feel better.”

The kid offered one violent jerk of his head before hugging the pillow even tighter.

“He’s completely traumatized, John,” Sherlock said.
John threw him a *look* that he didn’t understand, though he had the feeling it was meant to shut him up.

“You must be thirsty,” John continued, turning back to the kid. “Were you walking all night?”

“I don’t think he walked,” Sherlock realized. “Look at his shoes, they’re perfectly fine. He’s sweaty, but probably more from crying, screaming, and trying to escape. Plus you’re forgetting the biggest clue.”

Frowning, John stared at the child before him as he tried to figure it out.

“What?”

“He’s five, John! He probably can’t read the card, let alone follow street signs in the middle of the night.”

“Oh,” John replied. He reached out, brushing a gentle hand along the kid’s arm in attempts to draw his attention. The kid jerked around and glared at him.

“I’m four and a half!” He announced hotly.

He and John glanced at each other, not only stunned by suddenly hearing the kid talk but the fact that the child was speaking with an American accent.

“Four and a half?” John said. “That’s…quite the age. Almost forty years younger than me!”

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“The kid’s scared enough without knowing how much of an old man you are,” he shot with a smirk.

At last the kid threw himself around so that he was on his back, facing him with his arms rested around his body.

“I turn five in…in…”

“December?” Sherlock offered.

“Yeah! That one. I think.”

A kind, sincere, smile crossed John’s face, and Sherlock realized he was seeing the side of him that was used to getting people to trust him.

“What’s your name?” John asked.

“Unimportant,” Sherlock snapped. He received two unamused, offended, glares but he ignored them. “Why were you at my door?”

John’s mouth fell agape, and it wasn’t two seconds later that he was grabbed by the arm and dragged out of the room.

“What the hell are you doing?” John hissed. “He’s not your bloody suspect!”

“No, but he’s a witness to a kidnapping and possible other crimes!”

“He’s four and a half!”
“And kids are smarter than you think!” Sherlock exclaimed, not caring how loud he was.

“I know! But this one has been through a trauma. We don’t know what happen to him, we don’t know what madmen took him, we don’t know what happened to his parents, and you know media from at least across England- if not internationally- will be all over this. We don’t know how big this is. We-“

“You’ve made your point! I’ll shut up, alright? You can talk to him.”

“Hey!” John cried after him before he could leave. “Don’t be hateful. I’m just trying to look after him.”

“And I’m just trying to solve this case!”

“Don’t say that like it’s some puzzle that was handed down to you to figure out. People’s lives are at stake, Sherlock. Other people are affected by the things you say. This kid has emotions- very raw, very human emotions and he doesn’t need some stuck-up Brit scaring him even more.”

John’s rant left him breathless, while Sherlock’s eyes glowed.

“Right,” he breathed, trying to not sound too strained. “Human emotions. I wouldn’t know anything about those.”

He turned to storm out, and John grabbed him again. John’s thumb and finger circled his arm as he lingered close, hesitating for a moment before saying:

“I didn’t mean it like that.”

“You did.”

“I didn’t!”

“You did, and it’s fine. I don’t care.”

_I do care, and I don’t understand why you would say that._

“Let’s just take care of him,” John sighed, “Lestrade will be here soon to ask him all the questions.”

Sherlock nodded, deciding this was a good compromise- for now.

For the second time that night someone knocked on the door, and from the other room the kid screamed. They dashed into the room to find the kid hiding himself on the floor, using the sofa to conceal him.

“Is it him?” The kid asked.

He was absolutely trembling from head to toe, and Sherlock frowned.

“Him?” He asked as John crossed over to the door.

His heart leapt as his mobile rang, and he answered it.

“It’s me, Sherlock,” Lestrade sighed. “I’m at the door. Was that the kid screaming?”

“Yeah,” Sherlock nodded. “He’s pretty shaken up.”
“I bet. I’m shaken up after tonight. It’s a rough case, and you haven’t even heard the half of it.”

“It’s Lestrade,” Sherlock explained to John. He hung up the phone without saying goodbye.

John turned to the kid and knelt down in front of him.

“It’s a policeman,” John said. “He’s a nice policeman, and he can help. But just in case I’ll stay here with you.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“Right, let me deal with him,” Sherlock mumbled.

As soon as he threw opened the door a young man he didn’t recognized rushed past him and went straight for the kid. On instinct John placed a hand on the child’s shoulder, but they both noticed when the kid’s face lit up.

“Daniel!” The man shouted, in a sort of half-sigh of relief, half-sob.

“Dad!”

Oh.

John let the kid go as the father and son reunited. He exchanged glances with his boyfriend and then let his eyes roam over the father. The father couldn’t have been younger than himself. He had the same brown hair and dark eyes at the kid. He was quite good-looking, dressed in the same tux he wore to what was obviously his own wedding, but there was a fresh, thick, cut running down his forehead and his right eye was blackened. He walked with a slight limp, but possibly from sheer exhaustion and not an injury.

“Dad,” the kid sobbed as he hugged his father.

Even Lestrade blinked rapidly, as though it were too much for him to take in. The D.I. stepped up beside Sherlock.

“The dad was dropped off at the Yard,” he explained. “So the kid showed up here?”

“Yeah,” Sherlock nodded. “And the mum?”

Lestrade turned to him so that only he could see him. John was introducing himself to the father, who embraced him as well, grateful for his help.

“We haven’t heard or seen any sign of her,” Lestrade said quietly. “The family was kidnapped after their wedding ceremony by someone who was supposed to be their limo driver. They were originally supposed to head back to their hotel, and they were due to sightsee tomorrow before heading out of town on holiday. They were knocked out and drugged, except for the kid- or so the father thinks. Next thing the husband knows he’s waking up on the steps of the Yard in the middle of the night. The city’s on high alert. We’re getting security cameras, sending out cars, signing off on undercover missions. So far nothing’s turned up. I think we’re dealing with a pro. This was a pre-meditated crime, and the guy knew exactly what he had to do to defy police.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk:

“Well if it’s the Yard he’s dealing with that wouldn’t take much.”

Lestrade looked like he either wanted to punch him or yell at him or both.
“Can you two come down and help us out with this one?” Lestrade asked.

His eyes roamed Lestrade this time, taking in the lines of exhaustion etched into his face. His clothes were wrinkled, his lips were dry and cracked, and his eyes were threatening to droop closed. Clearly this had been an all-nighter for him, starting sometime right after they left the club for the other case. A long, non-stop, day of running around town, then.

“Of course,” he offered.

“Also-” Lestrade said, stopping him. A sloppy grin slipped across his face. “I like the skinny jeans.”

Sherlock looked down and was horrified to realize which trousers he had grabbed. Lestrade winked, and his own face went red with embarrassment. He went to join John and the family while Sherlock fumed, but he didn’t have long before his mobile went off again.

“Up with the sun or climbing into bed?” Sherlock teased as he answered. “After all, as they say, it is the early bird who-“

“I don’t have time for your jokes!” His brother snapped. Sherlock fell silent, and he had to tell himself not to take the shot personally. Something was obviously wrong. Very wrong. “I assume Greg has you on the Carter case?”

Greg?

“Carter?” Sherlock said, wrinkling his nose as he turned back to the father and son.

“The kidnapping at the wedding,” Mycroft shot, clearly not amused by his confusion. “The Carter family-“

“I got it!” He hissed. “Yes, we’re on it. The kid and the father are in the flat. Kid showed up here just after three and the father was left unconscious at the Yard. Why? What’s it to you?”

“I know where the mother is,” Mycroft said. Suddenly he didn’t sound angry. Suddenly he sounded very tired, very helpless, and even a bit afraid. She was dropped off at my front door. I just admitted her into the hospital. Lestrade should be getting my text now.”

Sherlock looked up to see Lestrade studying his mobile. Funny thing was, he picked the text from a contact at the top of his listings…he then motioned to John and the father, who broke down in tears of joy at the news.

“We’re on our way,” Sherlock said.

“Sherlock, there’s something you should know,” Mycroft said quickly.

His heart skipped beats: hearing that kind of thing from his older brother was never a good sign.

“The woman’s name is Laura Carter, as of yesterday,” Mycroft explained.

Sherlock paused, wondering if he should be as confused as he was.

“So?”

Mycroft heaved a heavy sigh before replying:

“Her maiden name is Holmes.”
His eyes fell on John, who stared back at him, confused and curious about what was going on.

“She’s-“


Mycroft paused, and for a moment he worried his brother would get angry. His eyes trailed down to the card the kid gave him, and suddenly everything made perfect sense.

Almost.

“She held her wedding in London so she could find you,” Mycroft said. “She didn’t tell her husband this, but it was a part of her plan.”


His nephew.

Sort of.

“Is she alright?” Sherlock asked.

He didn’t know what was it was that snapped alive inside of him at that moment, but suddenly he was so worried about this stranger he’d never met that it almost made him ill. He could hear Mycroft’s appreciation for that as he replied:

“She will be. She was drugged, and her arm is broken. I imagine they’re all a bit shaken.”

“They are.”

“Are you taking care of her?” He asked. “The hospital and…and everything?”

“Of course.”

*She had a card with Mycroft’s number on it, he thought, Mycroft must know far more than he’s letting on.*

“I’m sure Lestrade will have you on the case throughout the morning,” Mycroft said. He noted the change to the use of *Lestrade.* “But if you would like to come question her, I’m sure she would like to talk to you.”

Question her. Mycroft’s confession took his mind completely off the case for that moment, and he was again forced to consider how he was actually going to solve this one.

“Yes,” he said quietly. “We’ll be there.”

He hung up without saying goodbye. The mobile sort of magically seemed to fall back into his pocket as he turned to John, who approached him as soon as he stopped talking.

“What’s wrong?” John asked quietly.

Sherlock led him back to the kitchen and made sure no could listen in as he admitted:

“The half-sister you told me about?” He asked. “This is her family.”
“Jesus,” John gasped, bring a hand to his mouth in shock. “Oh god. Does Mycroft know anything new?”

He nodded.

“She’s in the hospital. He’s with her.”

“Thank god,” John whispered.

Sherlock bit his lip. He wasn’t so sure he was ready to be relieved.

“Are you okay?” John asked.

Sighing, he hesitated a moment before admitting:

“I’m not sure.”

John raised a hand to his arm and squeezed him there in a silent *I’m here for you kind* of way.

“I’ll go with you,” he offered. “If there’s anything you need, Sherlock, just tell me.”

He blinked, shocked by how quickly John went from jumping down his throat to being sweet and comforting.

“Can you stay with the family?” He asked. “I’ll go talk with Mycroft and…and her.”

“Sure, of course,” John nodded. “Anything.” His eyes dashed over to the kid, and as Sherlock studied him a little more he could almost see it- a little bit of *Holmes* in his eyes, in the slight curl of his hair. “I guess he’s like your nephew, then? You’re an uncle!”

“Sort of,” Sherlock said. “Half-uncle. Is that even a thing?”

John shrugged.

“Family’s family, in my opinion,” he said. A soft smile fell on his face. “And it looks like yours is finally growing.”

Chapter End Notes

Please excuse the cheesy ending!

I'd really appreciate any and all feedback on how the story is going! Like said, I tend to like to delve into the backstory of characters, but if you want to see more of just pure Johnlock messing around, solving cases, doing whatever...let me know! Thanks for reading!
A sickening pit fell in his stomach as soon as Sherlock walked through the doors of the A&E, and he immediately regretted asking John to stay behind. On instinct his hands fell to his mobile, and he almost sent his boyfriend a desperate plea for support when his eyes fell on Mycroft. He stopped short as he watched his brother pace the waiting room, talking rapidly to someone on his mobile. Taking in a deep breath, Sherlock forced himself to keep walking. When he stopped again in front of Mycroft, his brother immediately stopped and hung up the phone.

“Come with me,” Mycroft announced.

Sherlock nodded and followed his brother down the hall. They came to the stop at the end, at a room labeled 112. The brothers stared at the door for a moment, and for the first time Sherlock considered how hard this was for Mycroft as well. Even if he had possibly known about their sister for longer, it must have been just as difficult for him to find out- especially considering that Mycroft actually grew up with their father for at least some time.

“I’m trying to move her somewhere more secluded,” Mycroft said quietly. “The media thinks she’s at a different hospital.”

He nodded again, pretending like he was comprehending all of this.

“Is she awake?” Sherlock asked.

His voice sounded far more strained than he would have liked. His older brother glanced at him, with a hint of sympathy in his eyes, and Sherlock willed himself to be stronger.

“She just woke up,” Mycroft said. “I haven’t seen her yet. Her doctors suggested giving her a moment first.”

“Her son gave me this,” Sherlock said.

He slipped Mycroft the card with his address and his brother’s number. Mycroft stared at it, but he looked more like he was riddled with regret instead of shock.

“She’s been trying to find us for some time,” Mycroft admitted. “She found me through a former employer from way back. He still had my old number, and her voicemail was forwarded to my new mobile.”

Sherlock frowned.

“Old employer?” Sherlock wondered out loud.

Smirking, Mycroft explained:
“I did do something before having tea with the Queen and having shouting matches with the Prime Minister.”

The thought of Mycroft shouting at the PM made him grin, but it did little to ease his nerves. He froze up in shock when a hand felt on his shoulder, and he realized Mycroft was trying to comfort him.

“The important thing is that they’re all safe, for now,” Mycroft continued. “She will also want to see her husband and son.”

“Is this your way of saying don’t feel hurt if the circumstances overshadow meeting my sister for the first time?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft’s eyes narrowed, but they refused to look at each other.

“I’m fine, Mycroft,” he shot. “I’m not fragile, and I’m not a child.”

The hand on his shoulder squeezed him gently before falling. Rarely in the past few years had Mycroft been genuinely kind, and he had to admit it was a bit comforting to see that in him again. Maybe he would stop being so cold and judgemental once they had a sister in tow.

Mycroft let out a tired sigh before raising his hand and rapping his knuckles on the door.

“I’ll go in first,” Mycroft offered.

Sherlock nodded.

The door opened and Mycroft disappeared. For a moment he couldn’t feel anything, and anxiety shook him to the core as he stood helpless in the hall. He glanced down at his mobile and sighed when he saw it was nearly five AM, but a text from John informed him everyone was on their way to the hospital as well. He looked back up at the door, hoping they could hurry this along before everyone else showed up.

At last the door opened again, and Mycroft nodded.

Holding his breath, he slipped into the room, and he stopped as he laid eyes on his sister for the first time. The first thought racing through his mind was she’s really pretty. Even under a layer of tears, grime, and hospital wires her pale skin glowed. She had Mycroft’s skin tone, but shared his own eyes and hair. Natural dark brown curls fell beyond her shoulders, and her dark brown eyes beamed up at him.

“First time we meet and my family has you up at all hours in the middle of the night,” she teased. Her accent would take some getting used to, but he actually found it oddly calming. “I promise we’re not usually this intrusive.”

She offered Sherlock a kind smile, and he felt horrible that she was the one trying to make him feel better.

“It’s fine,” he said quietly, “and they’re alright, by the way. Your son was at my doorstep, I don’t know if Mycroft told you.”

Her eyes blinked away tears as her smile spread a bit more brightly.

“He gave me this,” Sherlock said, handing her the card.
“Oh god,” she said, choking on tears as her hand flew to her mouth. She gazed at the card for a moment, as though she couldn’t quite believe this was real. “I’ve always been obsessed with my family history. My father was always…and my mom was always…she tried, but I always just thought there has to be more. I once found a bunch of letters that my father wrote and never sent right after I was born. From his writing style and spelling I realized he must be English. He changed, you know, his accent and everything.”

Sherlock’s eyes went dark as he tried to read deeper into the meaning of her words. He glanced to Mycroft, who remained stiff and silent. His brother never spoke about the time he spent with their father. Mycroft was nine when he left, old enough to realize what was happening and old enough to be effected by it.

“I wanted to have my wedding in London,” Laura explained, “my husband thought it was just a dream wedding type of thing, but honestly I could have married him on our front porch and would be just as happy. No…I wanted an excuse to get to England so I could look for the only two people left in my family. I love my son and my husband, I was just…curious, you know?”

That’s when Sherlock realized for their first time that the math didn’t add up.

“Is he your son? Or stepson?” He asked.

“Sherlock!” Mycroft scrowled.

But Laura only grinned.

“No, I was wondering how long it would take you,” she admitted. “He’s my son, thanks to my ex. He’s a blessing, really, but his father was a bastard. I only slept with him once and…there you have it. It started this huge fight with my mom because she kept warning me about him. I never listened because, well, look at her track record. No offense.”

“None taken,” he and Mycroft replied at the same time.

Laura offered them a sweet smile before continuing:

“Jason, my husband, has just been great with him. My life comes with a long history of horrible men, and god I just feel awful with this whole kidnapping fiasco. I just don’t understand why it happened to me.”

“I think I have an idea,” Mycroft said. “Laura, I suppose it’s time to tell you what I actually do.”

“You mean you no longer do consulting work for a law firm?” Laura teased.

Sherlock snorted. That’s one he’d never heard before. Mycroft’s cheeks actually turned a shade of pink, a rare feat for his brother.

“That was quite some time ago,” Mycroft admitted. “We all start somewhere. No, now I work for a firm quite larger than that.”

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock decided to save them both from the overdramatic stories.

“He works for the government,” Sherlock sighed.

“Sherlock!” Mycroft roared. Pulling up a chair, he took a seat so that he was inches from their sister. “What I’m about to tell you needs to be taken with the upmost secrecy. You can’t tell anyone, not your son, not Jason, no one.”
Laura’s eyes danced from one of her brother’s to another, and when Sherlock could see that she looked more afraid than intrigued he knew she could be trusted.

“John doesn’t even know the full truth,” Sherlock admitted quietly.

“John-?”

“His boyfriend,” Mycroft interrupted.

“Hey!”

Mycroft glared at him in a way that said “we’re even”, and Sherlock shut up. Laura only grinned.

“It’s okay,” she said. “It’s really cool that you’re gay. Oh shit…did that sound as offensive as I think it did?”

Turning pale, Sherlock’s eyes fell to the floor and he stayed silent. Guilt flashed over her face, but even so Laura turned to Mycroft.

“So do I have to sign confidentiality papers or something?”

Mycroft stiffened, and Sherlock had no doubt the thought had crossed his mind.

“Laura, Sherlock is a consulting detective. It means he consults with the police, whenever they’re in over their heads—“

“Which is almost always,” Sherlock mumbled.

Rolling his eyes, Mycroft continued:

“I have the same type of responsibilities, but with the government.”


When Sherlock looked up he saw how apprehensive she looked, and he couldn’t help but to worry maybe she was regretting ever coming to London. Maybe she won’t like us.

“The government,” Mycroft emphasized. “Any government, of any country. Any form of government. I help out with whatever is needed- if a war is needed, I’ll wage one. If the war needs to end, I’ll end it. If weapons, money, personell- anything- is needed, I can do it.”

Laura’s eyes went wide, and even Sherlock’s heart skipped beats as usual whenever Mycroft talked about his work.

“So you basically commit treasons for a living?” Laura stated. She paused for a moment and looked away, trying to piece it altogether. “Are you the reason there’s so much election fraud?”

Sherlock grinned, but Mycroft only smirked and replied:

“I assure you, the Prime Minister has more eyes on me than I could ever dream of having on anyone else. It’s all for Queen and country.”

“And as an American, that will make me sleep much easier at night.”

I like her already!
Mycroft’s eyes narrowed, clearly not amused by the back-talking.

“Last week I was proposed a…mission…by a country I typically do not work with. And yes, when I say “I” I mean England. I reported the request to my employer, and we have kept our eyes open ever since for any kind of retaliation. I’m afraid we may not have been looking closely enough.”

Laura paled; she almost looked ill, and Sherlock felt even more terrible for her. As if meeting estranged siblings wasn’t hard enough…she had to meet Mycroft. And meeting Mycroft was never easy.

“And that’s what I am?” She shot. “Retaliation?”

Instead of replying, Mycroft pierced his lips and made to leave.

“I assure you, from here on out your family will have the highest level of protection available. You have nothing to worry about. There will be a D.I. here to question you soon, don’t talk to him. This case is in my hands now.”

Before he could leave the room, Mycroft stopped, feigned a smile, and added:

“It was a pleasure to meet you.”

He fled the room before either could say another word to him. Sherlock leaned awkwardly against the counter next to Laura’s bed. He hadn’t a clue what to say to her, so he simply waited, letting it all sink in.

“Is he always like that?” Laura finally stammered.

Sherlock grinned, but the door flew open before he had another chance to talk.

A high squeal of “Mom!” pierced his ears, and a something flashed across the room before he registered the form as Daniel, jumping into his mother’s arms.

“Dan,” Laura sobbed, tears already forming in her eyes.

As they hugged each other tightly the father approached him, extending a hand.

“Jason,” he greeted. “Thank you, thank you so much.”

Sherlock cleared his throat, feeling a bit awkward as eyes fell on him.

“It was nothing,” he replied. “John was the helpful one.”

He looked around, hoping to catch sight of his lover but was disappointed when he realized John wasn’t there.

“Regardless, we owe you everything,” Jason said. “Seriously, a complete stranger helping out like that…”

“Jason,” Laura called suddenly. In a flash, Jason was by his bride. “He’s…not exactly a stranger. He’s my brother. Half-brother. So is the grumpy red-headed guy you probably saw fleeing down the hallway.”

Sherlock snorted, but instead of interrupting he let the family take it all in. Laura smiled sweetly and offered her dubious husband a kiss on the cheek.
“There’s a lot I need to fill you in on,” she admitted.

“I’ll come back,” Sherlock said. “You should…rest. And Mycroft’s right, you’re safe now. Probably safer than you ever wanted to be.”

Laura gazed up at him and reached out, gripping his hand.

“Don’t disappear, please,” she pleaded quietly.

He took out the card, wrote his number down, and labeled Mycroft’s information as well.

“I won’t,” he promised. He glanced to each of them in turn, and stated softly: “Welcome to the family.”

Chapter End Notes

I was tempted to really turn the kidnapping plot into something, but I know that’s not what a lot of you are looking for in this fic. Understandably so! They say goodbye to Laura (for now), next chapter, and then back to Johnlock. I’m afraid you guys are getting tired of this plot! So if you’re not...just say so.

Also...I’m planning the use of requested plots, but I’m also ready for more, so if you have any ideas speak now! They can be anything...cute ideas, cases, smut, single-word prompts, anything!
Thanks for the reassurance, guys! Makes me feel a lot better about where this story is going. When my fics take on a mind of their own I get nervous sometimes!

A Mo commented last chapter and simply said "Honey!". I honestly wasn't sure if that was meant as a prompt or a "oh honey don't be ridiculous!". Either way, I decided honey was an excellent prompt! I decided to take a break from the sister plot for a chapter, for the sake of Johnlock, biscuits, and honey.

John was the first to arrive back at the flat that morning. He was shocked when Lestrade didn’t want to question him about the night, but the D.I. simply mumbled “Mycroft” and something about going to bed. Deciding that sounded wonderful himself, John stumbled back into the flat five hours after the kid arrived on their doorstep. He hadn’t slept all night; in fact he wasn’t quite sure he had a full night’s sleep since the concert a few days ago.

Yet coming home reminded him of Sherlock, and his mind wanted to do nothing but worry about what his lover was going through. His boyfriend hadn’t called or texted, and he had to keep reassuring himself that Sherlock must be okay.

To put himself at ease, he popped on an old record of Who’s Next and flickered on the kitchen lights. As he began to hum along he scoured the kitchen for anything edible. He cleaned the countertops as he picked out the few ingredients left, and after sniffing at the fridge he decided to avoid that venture altogether.

When the door opened and closed nearly an hour later his eyes snapped up, and he was startled to find Sherlock leaning against the kitchen doorway.

“Alright?” Sherlock asked, stifling a yawn.

He looked ridiculous, standing in those stupid skinny jeans and a light blue V-neck t-shirt (clearly the first he grabbed off the floor earlier that morning). Wonder if he knows that’s mine, he mused. Sherlock also looked drained, emotionally and physically, and he looked like he might possibly collapse where he stood.

Eyes dashing around the room, John wondered where the time went. It was almost like he blacked out…god I’m tired.

“You were singing,” Sherlock teased. John swallowed nervously as Sherlock waltzed into the room. “I didn’t know you could sing. You’re very good.”

John blushed and reached into the oven.

“You must be even more tired than I am,” he said. “I’m rubbish.”

“No, you’re good. You could beat that Township guy any day.”

“Townshend!” John groaned. “Honestly. Mycroft raised you on classical music, didn’t he?”
Rolling his eyes, Sherlock replied:

“I raised me on classical music,” he slipped his arms around John and let his chin rest on his neck. John stiffened a bit but then relaxed as Sherlock murmured: “And I play it brilliantly.”

Swallowing, John tried focusing on the hot pan in hand to avoid his stirring arousal.

“Yes you do,” he whispered.

Sherlock reached over his shoulder for one of the biscuits he just pulled out of the oven, and John had to slap his hand out of the way to keep him from burning himself.

“God you’re like a bloody child, Sherlock, those biscuits are hot!” He cried. “Hang on a minute, alright. Tell me what happened at the hospital.”

He sat the biscuits aside to cool, but Sherlock didn’t seem interested in talking about himself.

“Why are you baking?” He snapped. “You don’t bake.”

John shrugged.

“Had the urge to,” he admitted. “Also it was about all we had left. Once we get some rest we’re going to do some proper shopping. Now if you don’t mind, I’m going to pass out on my own bed. You hog the covers when you’re this exhausted.”

Instead of sighing or groaning, Sherlock simply stayed perfectly quiet and gazed at the biscuits. John stepped in front of him, stealing his eyesight.

“Hey,” John said quietly. “Are you okay? You can’t be that desperate for biscuits.”

Sherlock hesitated, and John wrapped an arm around him, pulling him close. Easing into the embrace, Sherlock buried his head in John’s shoulder.

“It’s okay,” John whispered, combing his fingers through his boyfriend’s unruly curls. “It’s okay. What happened? You can talk to me. Is everything okay? Is it your sister?”

Nodding, Sherlock heaved a heavy sigh, one that almost escaped into a sob.

“She’s fine,” he muttered. “It’s just…she has a family, John. She has a life, a good life, and she’s…she’s too good for us. God, she looked at me and Mycroft like we were from another planet.”

John’s eyes went wide.

“Mycroft was there?” He shot. “No wonder, he probably terrified her.”

“He did.”

He squeezed Sherlock tighter before pulling away so that their foreheads connected.

“I’ll sleep in your room, yeah?” He offered quietly. “Whatever you need, I’m here.”

Sherlock let out a long, shaky, breath as he pulled away.

“I can’t. Laura’s being discharged from the hospital, and she’s coming over.”

John stared after him as Sherlock poured himself some water.
“That’s great then. I can’t wait to meet her! Save some biscuits for her, and we can make up some tea. Got to get her started on traditional English eating, eh?”

The shadow of a smirk peered from Sherlock’s lips, and when he reached for a biscuit again John didn’t have the heart to stop him. Sherlock popped one into his mouth and after squirming a bit at the warmth, his face melted.

“Jesus Christ that’s brilliant!” Sherlock exclaimed through mouthfuls of biscuit.

He immediately reached for another one, and John grinned. He handed Sherlock a plate and poured some honey on it. Without needing to be told to, Sherlock dunked the biscuit into the honey and threw it into his mouth. His eyes closed in ecstasy, and arousal stirred within John once again.

“We may never eat anything other than biscuits and honey ever again,” Sherlock said, sighing happily.

He reached for a third, and John found himself grinning from ear to ear.

“It’s my grandmother’s recipe,” he admitted. “Aren’t they gorgeous with honey?”

Once he devoured the third biscuit Sherlock grabbed the plate and dragged his finger through the honey.

“One minute you’re forgetting to eat and the next you’re like a bloody teenager,” John teased.

He reached for the honey as well and dabbed some on his finger. When Sherlock grabbed the finger and sucked it off for him, John froze. Blood rushed to his head while his cock twitched.

“Sherlock-” he warned.

Sherlock only grinned as he took John’s finger in hand and ran it across the honey. He took a biscuit and popped it into John’s mouth. As soon as he swallowed his finger was forced inside, and he moaned.

“Sherlock,” he whispered.

He pressed Sherlock against the counter and captured him as in a sweet kiss. Grabbing another biscuit, John dragged it slowly through the honey, rubbed it across Sherlock’s mouth- and then ate it himself, just to tease him. When Sherlock glared at him, hurt, he laughed.

“We’re trying to get off on biscuits and honey,” John teased. “We may need help. Let these cool some more. And I’m serious, I’m going to sleep. Follow me, if you want.”

“I’m showering,” Sherlock replied.

Running a hand through Sherlock’s hair, John grimaced.

“Wash your hair,” he smirked.

He kissed Sherlock again, and when they broke apart John murmured into his ear:

“I’ll be in your bed.”
This is me and my mom at the beach, when I was twelve.”

Sherlock simply sat back and listened as Laura went through every single Facebook photo she had. He sat with her on the sofa, where she was nuzzled beneath a blanket. She didn’t complain about any pain or discomfort- she just seemed perfectly content to be there with him. She seemed like she felt safe, which made him happy. Her husband and son were talking to Mycroft in the other room, and although she kept glancing toward them she appeared to trust her brothers completely.

He still wasn’t sure how he managed that.

As she flipped through more pictures of old vacations with her mom, one thing he noticed was that someone was absent from them.

Their father.

“Do you have any pictures of your dad?”

Laura looked up at him. Her eyes turned dark and she pulled the blanket closer to her. Her hair fell into her face but she didn’t move it, much like he would do whenever he got upset.

“I don’t,” she replied quietly. “But I can show you what he looks like.”

In a fury, her fingers danced across the keyboard. An American news website from Syracuse, New York popped up. Laura went to the search bar and typed in the name “Desmond Holmes”.

A mug shot immediately popped up in response.

Sherlock held his breath as he looked at the most recent picture he had ever seen of his father. Besides an old photo from the early seventies he had no idea what his father looked like- until now.

And his father looked like he did.

There was the same dark hair, the same disheveled curls and pale, smooth, skin. His eyes were the same. Everything was the same. It was like looking into some horribly distorted carnival mirror.

Multiple articles were linked underneath the photograph, dating back to 1985. Sherlock grabbed the laptop from Laura’s hands, a little more roughly than he meant to, but she didn’t argue as he picked the first article and began reading.

“Petty theft,” he mumbled to himself, “armed robbery.”

He clicked on the next article.
“Robbery…assault.”

She watched him with concern as he whispered under his breath, but she still didn’t interrupt.

“Assault again,” his voice shook when he clicked on the next article. “Drunk and disorderly.”

His heart raced as he jumped to the most recent article, dated May 2009.

“Vehicular theft…and possession?”

“Yes,” Laura whispered. Her face had gone grey; he jumped when her hand brushed against his arm. “It was heroin, Sherlock. Apparently he was addicted to it for a long time before this incident.”

Sherlock’s eyes flashed to his brother, who was now on the phone with someone while Jason and Dan awkwardly sat at the table across from him. His hands shook as he grasped the computer, remembering to not let it fall.

“Mycroft told me he sold cars,” Sherlock said.

Laura nodded.

“In his defense he did sell cars,” she said slowly. “He just stole one of them.”

“He’s a criminal,” he breathed. “My father’s a criminal. And he’s just been raising you all this time?”

Laura sank into the sofa and curled her knees to her chest, as though feeling the need to protect herself.

“He’s in prison, Sherlock.” Their eyes met, and Sherlock’s world stopped. “And he will be for a long time.”

“He’s in prison,” Sherlock echoed. “My father’s in prison.”

Then a realization hit him.

Without asking for permission he exited out of the news website and went to Google.

“What are you doing?” She demanded.

“I have to know,” he rasped. “I have to know if he was like this when he was with us. With my mother.”

She grabbed his arm, and he glared at her.

“Can I talk to you outside?” She asked him quietly.

He nodded, and they stood up together and left quietly. Despite the heat, she kept the blanket wrapped around herself. Taking a seat on the steps, she took a moment to look around Baker Street. He imagined her comparing Baker Street to her home in New York, and he couldn’t even begin to consider how strange it must be for her to be here.

“My father is a terrible man, Sherlock,” Laura said quietly. She turned to him with pleading eyes, begging for him to listen. “He was uncomfortable to be around when I was little. My mother didn’t leave him until I was thirteen. For thirteen years I endured his ranting, and yelling, and shoving
and-“

“Shoving?”

It felt like all the blood left his body. Their eyes connected again, and it was such a strong connection that it nearly knocked him down.

“He drank a lot,” Laura admitted. “He shoved my mother around quite a bit. He was just rougher with her than he should have been.”

Was he like that with my mother?

“There’s no excuse for that,” he muttered under his breath.

Her eyes drifted to the street as she nodded. He watched her focus in on a man getting out of a cab on the other end of Baker Street, and she remained perfectly stiff as she continued.

“The first time he hit me my mother left him. I was thirteen. It took him thirteen years. It always made me wonder what I didn’t see. My mother was so quiet, when she was married to him. She was so reserved. I didn’t realize until I was older how strong she was.”

Sherlock stayed quiet, mainly because he was finding it a bit hard to breathe at the moment. His mind was suffocating from the idea of his father being this abusive monster who terrified his sister and her mother—and possibly his mother and brother.

“Bastard,” Sherlock whispered.

“You’re catching on,” Laura joked. Her smile quickly faded. “I’m sorry to have to be the one to tell you all of this.”

Shaking his head, Sherlock admitted.

“I can’t believe Mycroft never did. I mean, I can believe that, but all the same.”

She nodded quietly but didn’t respond. They sat like that, in silence, for a long time. People glanced toward them as they past, recognizing that something was wrong but not daring to interfere. He didn’t want to stay out here, but he wanted to have some understanding of what all this meant before he went back inside.

My father was a drug addict…like me. He was a criminal. I’m a detective.

He was a drug addict.

Like me.

I was a drug addict…like him.

Once the thought registered in his mind he couldn’t get rid of it. Jumping up, he left Laura staring after him as he fled back inside. He didn’t stop until he reached John’s room. Although he wanted to be with his sister, and he wanted to understand what she went through, it didn’t change what he needed.

He needed John.
Johnlock is on the way ;)

Thanks for all of your awesomeness. The comments, the support this fic is still getting, is simply amazing!
“Sherlock?” He mumbled, sitting up straight when the door opened and closed.

Sherlock paced the floor madly while running his hands through his hair and breathing hard. John simply watched him for a moment, trying to decipher what was going on with him. From the sound of the voices downstairs Sherlock’s sister’s family was here, as well as Mycroft.

Must be something Mycroft said, he decided.

“Are you okay?” He asked.

He reached out for him as Sherlock past the bed, and his lover froze.

“John,” he whimpered.

“What happened?”

John pulled him down to the bed, and Sherlock silently slipped in next to him. His boyfriend waited until they were on their sides, facing each other, before he finally confessed:

“I asked Laura to tell me about our father,” Sherlock said quietly, “and she did. He’s a criminal, John. He’s in jail. His record is horrible…assault, robbery, auto theft…and possession.”

Oh god.

Suddenly he understood what was going on in Sherlock’s head.

“He did drugs,” John said.

Sherlock nodded before sinking down into the pillows and wrapping his arms around them, burying his head into the bed. Reaching up, he carefully raised a hand to massage Sherlock’s shoulders.

“Whatever you’re thinking right now, it’s not true,” John said quietly. “Your father is clearly a monster. He left you when you were two.”

“He did heroin,” Sherlock mumbled into the pillow.

Shit.

He knew exactly what was going on in Sherlock’s head. He just needed to find a way to get Sherlock to admit it. Running his hands across Sherlock’s back, he tried his best to at least calm his nerves. John settled down beside him so that their faces were just inches apart.

“Sherlock, look at me,” he said softly.

Sherlock squirmed when he tried to turn him around, and John sighed.

“You’re nothing like him,” John murmured.

He spoke almost directly into Sherlock’s hair. His lover squirmed again but then flipped himself around so that they were facing again. Sherlock stared at him, eyes red from the strain of trying to not losing control, as though he couldn’t bring himself to believe him.
“I’m exactly like him,” Sherlock replied, letting out a shaky breath. “I *look* like him, John. What if my habits came from him? It’s in my blood to be a bad person.”

John’s face melted. Sherlock looked so helpless and defeated that he knew it would take a lot of damage control to turn him around again. He reached up to brush his hand across Sherlock’s face. His eyes fluttered against John’s touch, but he didn’t look any less at ease.

“He didn’t raise you,” John said. “You didn’t know anything about him until five minutes ago. This line of thinking is ridiculous, Sherlock. Yes, you’ve made your share of mistakes. You did drugs. But you accepted help and you *changed*. You’re a better person now. The decisions you made were yours, based on the situations you found yourself in and the people you were around. Now you’re a *good man* because of what you do and the people you’re around.”

When Sherlock didn’t look convinced he nudged forward enough to kiss him gently on the lips. Sherlock didn’t respond, but he let John wrap his arms around him. His head rest on John’s shoulders as they sank back into the mattress.

“You think I’m a good man?” Sherlock asked softly.

A sad smile crossed John’s face.

“I think you always have been. Yes, you’ve been manipulated by some of the people in your life. You haven’t had a lot of people who truly want to look out for you, but that’s *not your fault*. It’s not in your blood. You have the ability to change what happens to you, and the mistakes you make, and you did. It sounds like your father never changed, and that’s unfortunate, but it makes him very different from his kids.”

By the desperate look in Sherlock’s eyes, John knew he wanted nothing more than for him to be right, and the thought made him smile again.

“I’m sorry that your father hurt you,” he continued, choosing his words carefully. “You have every right to feel upset and disappointed, but don’t let it change who you are.”

Sherlock opened his mouth and then closed it again, speechless, and John knew he got through to him. He raised his hands again and traced the shadows of exhaustion beneath Sherlock’s eyes.

“You’re exhausted, Sherlock, get some rest,” he said. “I’ll stay here with you.”

Sherlock stared at him for a moment before stating bluntly:

“There are too many people in the flat.”

John smirked.

“Want me to kick them out?” He teased.

At last, a grin spread across Sherlock’s face.

“Just Mycroft.”

He leaned over to kiss Sherlock one last time before slipping out of bed.

“Stay here and rest,” John instructed, “we can talk again later if you want to.”

But when he looked down at the bed again, Sherlock was already fast asleep.
Cluedo

Chapter Notes

Bre and PresidentWeasel both wanted to see Sherlock temporarily have to deal with a child, including a bit of Confused!Sherlock. A-Cumberbatch-of-cookies suggested seeing my take on a game of Cluedo. Prodigaldaughter13 also wanted to see Sherlock have custody of Dan (though I know you probably meant on a long term basis!), with John being helpful. JanniBunni also wanted to see more of Dan and Sherlock.

I think that's all of you! If I left someone out, just know this chapter is for you too!

So by high demand I give you...Sherlock babysitting a kid. And playing Cluedo!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I think I know who the murderer is,” Sherlock announced proudly.

His eyes twinkled over his hand of cards, only to meet John’s horrified look. They sat on the living room floor with Dan, who was sitting in John’s lap with his own deck of cards from Cluedo.

“What?” Sherlock shot.

He tried to peer over John and Dan’s deck of cards to see what the big deal was, but the little boy quickly held the cards close to his chest.

“He’s taught you well,” Sherlock mumbled.

Rolling his eyes, John snapped:

“You’re being a bad influence!”

“Why?” He insisted, clueless. “Because I know who the killer is? That’s how you play, John.”

John nodded his head toward the kid in his lap.

“What? Am I supposed to let him win because he’s three?”

“Four and a half!” Dan cried.

Sherlock grinned. That was the third time he made the joke, and John knew he was doing it on purpose. His boyfriend grinned at him behind his nephew before taking the kid’s hands in his to help him with the cards.

“Is Sirlock letting me win?” Dan demanded.

He turned around to glare at John, who looked like he might burst out laughing. During the single day of watching his nephew while Laura and her husband stayed with Mycroft, it didn’t take Sherlock long to realize his name was not exactly kid friendly.

“No,” John said. “Sirlock’s being a grumpy, no-fun, old man like he always is.”
“Am not!” He cried.

John exploded into laughter as Dan turned back to his cards. The kid’s eyes flashed from the deck in his hand, to the pieces on the board, to the mystery pack of cards in the center of the board.

“I know who did it,” Dan sang, but his face immediately fell. “But I can’t remember their names.” Sherlock and John exchanged glances, and he let out a sigh of defeat. John was right, this was silly.

“How about we solve it together?” He offered. “Kind of like what me and John do in real-life.”

John glared at him.

“You never let me help you announce who the killer is.”

“I wanna help!” Dan pleaded.

He looked up at him with the fakest, yet sweetest smile, anyone had ever offered. Sherlock grinned at John, who rolled his eyes.

He leaned forward so that he was whispering directly into his nephew’s ear.

“Miss Scarlett,” Dan repeated, with a slight lisps that made John smile across from him. “In the library…with a…a…revolver.”

John reached for the hidden deck of cards in the center of board and slipped them out of the packet. He glanced from the cards, to Sherlock and Dan, and then grinned.

“You got it!” John announced.

“Yay!”

Sherlock nearly fell back as his nephew threw his arms around him, and it took him a moment to realize the kid was hugging him. He hugged Dan back, but his nephew was already squirming out of his arms so that he could pick the pieces off the board. His little eyes squinted at the tiny revolver piece in his hands, and he stopped.

“What’s a revolver?” Dan asked.

John looked up at him, eyes wide, but by the time Sherlock cleared his throat to answer Dan seemed more interested in the other pieces instead.

“Do you think this game’s too intense for kids?” John asked him.

Shrugging, Sherlock pointed out:

“It has secret passageways!”

Dan suddenly stopped playing with the pieces and yawned, stretching his arms out like he was trying to make a point. He and John looked at each other again. They had been trying to read Dan’s hints all afternoon- when he was hungry, when he wanted to play, when he wanted to go outside, and now…maybe when he wanted to sleep? Sherlock glanced at his mobile. It was already eight o’clock.

“What time do kids go to bed?” He asked John.
Maybe I should Google it.

John shrugged.

“How would I know?”

“You’re a doctor!”

They both glared at each other before turning their eyes back down to the kid. Dan had successfully thrown each piece back into the box and was trying to figure out how to stick the board in when he gave up and jumped up onto the couch behind them instead.

He and John looked back to each other.

“Are you tired?” John asked, hopefully.

Dan shrugged and threw himself down onto the cushions. Getting to his feet, Sherlock reached for a blanket, but Dan stopped him.

“Can I sleep with you?” Dan asked suddenly.

Sherlock stared at him, so taken aback that he wondered if he misunderstood. Dan looked up at him hopefully, and Sherlock realized that this was real: his nephew liked him.

“Yeah,” he stammered. “Yeah, of course. Are you tired?”

Nodding, the kid reached his arms up to him.

“I think he wants you to pick him up,” John said.

He swallowed nervously. No one ever asked him to pick their kids up. In fact, he usually heard more along the lines of “get the hell away from my kid!” He was so afraid of doing something wrong that he considered asking John to do it, but John simply nodded at him, as though silently letting him know it was okay.

“Come on,” Sherlock said.

Sherlock carefully lifted the kid in his arms. Dan instantly eased into the embrace and rested his head on his uncle’s shoulders- like it took no effort at all. Relief sank through him as he turned to John, who was clearly holding by laughter again.

“Will you be okay?” He asked.

“Me?” John smirked. “Sherlock you look like he asked you to climb Mt. Everest with him. He just wants to be with you because he wants you to protect him.”

His eyes trailed down to the kid in his arms. Dan’s eyes were already drifting shut as he yawned again, completely oblivious to the conversation happening around him.

“You’ll be fine,” John promised, patting his arm. “I’ll be in my room if you need me.”

“Night John!” Dan called after him with another yawn.

“Goodnight,” John sang back.

He disappeared, and Sherlock never felt more alone. He was still trying to wrap his mind around
the fact that this kid in his arms was family- and then he could move onto figuring out how to take care of him.

For now, getting some sleep sounded easy enough.

Dan was already in a set of pajamas, so Sherlock figured all he really had to do was get the kid comfortable and convince him to stay still. That would prove to be harder than thought, as Dan shot off around the room as soon as he sat him on the floor.

*Mistake,* he thought, *should have immediately put him in bed.*

“Dan,” he sighed.

“This is your room?” Dan asked. “It’s boring.”

“I thought you wanted to sleep.”

Dan shrugged and skipped over to the window. His eyes gazed at the twinkling streetlights outside and the brand new city that lay before him, and Sherlock realized for the first time how strange London must seem from a little kid from America.

“Are you from here?” Dan asked.

Sherlock knelt on the door beside him and let Dan rest in his arms.

“Yeah,” he offered, “but I lived in the other side of the city.”

“Mommy said we could see the city tomorrow,” Dan announced eagerly. “I want to see the Big Eyeball.”

He looked from the kid to the view outside his window, wondering what the hell that was supposed to mean.

“Big Ben?” He asked. “The clock?”

“No, the Eyeball!”

*Oh! Duh.*

“The London Eye,” he realized. “Yeah…it goes really high.”

“I like being up high!” Dan exclaimed. “It’s like being on a plane.”

He made airplane motions with his arms, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin.

“I thought you were tired,” he pointed out. “How about we sleep, and you can see the Eye tomorrow?”

“Will you come?” Dan asked.

His tiny hands were around Sherlock’s neck, and he felt trapped into nodding yes. Dan grinned and leaned forward, planting a sloppy kiss on his cheek.


He stood up with the kid still in his arms, and Dan sank right into the sheets when he placed him in
the bed. Quickly, Sherlock crossed to the other side, hoping Dan wouldn’t jump out before he could settle in. To his surprise his nephew turned on his side, waiting for him to slip in. They soon faced each other, and Dan scooted closer so that he was practically engulfed by Sherlock’s body. Sherlock slipped his arms around him, holding him so that he would feel safe enough to stay.

“I don’t want to go to sleep,” Dan whispered, gazing up at him. “I have bad dreams.”

Sherlock frowned, and his heart skipped beats when he realized Dan must be talking about the kidnapping.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock said quietly. He felt so sick because of how traumatized the kid was that he found it hard to make himself stay calm. “I have bad dreams sometimes too.”

“Really?” Dan asked, wide-eyed. “What do you do to scare them away?”

_Usually I just don’t sleep_, he thought. _Or go to John._

“I close my eyes,” he said. He tried to think this through, but he quickly realized closing his eyes was probably the opposite of what he did after nightmares. There was one thing that did always help him, though. “And in my mind, I go to somewhere safe.”

Dan studying him, as though he wasn’t sure if he wanted to believe him.

“What does that mean?”

“Think of somewhere you feel safe,” Sherlock instructed softly. Dan closed his eyes, and he could tell the kid was truly putting a lot of thought into this. “For me, it’s a big palace, with lots of rooms to hide in. Where do you feel safe?”

“At home,” Dan said. “On my swing!”

Sherlock stared at the ceiling for a moment, resisting the urge to grin. Of course, he was just a little older than four years old, after all.

“Okay,” Sherlock said. “No one can hurt you there. Whenever you feel scared, just think of being at home on the swing, and know that you’re safe.”

A small smile crossed Dan’s face, and he opened his eyes to meet Sherlock’s.

“If I have bad dream tonight, will you be here?” Dan asked.

Sherlock nodded; he felt ill, knowing that this was what such a young child had to worry about. Yet it made him realize even more how important it was to just be there for him, and he realized now why Mycroft was taking extra precautions to keep Dan safe.

“Yeah,” Sherlock said quietly. “I’ll be right here.”

Dan’s arms squeezed him tightly, and Sherlock breathed a sigh of relief. He closed his eyes briefly, letting exhaustion wash over him for a split second, and when he opened them again he was ready to face any question Dan had coming for him.

But the kid was already curled up in his arms, fast asleep.

Sherlock started to reach over and turn the lights off, but he remembered how horrible it was to sleep in pitch darkness as a kid. Instead, he left the light on and pulled Dan closer. He listened carefully to the soft, steady, rhythm of his nephew’s breathing, and his mind seemed to lock in on
it, like it was his sign that everything was alright.

With his nephew in his arms, sleeping with the fear of a nightmare and the memories of a monster, Sherlock didn’t sleep a wink that night.

Chapter End Notes

I've gotta admit, this was a fun chapter to write! I usually despite writing kid characters because they're so hard to write, but I'm really enjoying writing Dan. I worry about Sherlock staying in character, though. Everyone seems to enjoy the extended family so I may just keep them around, or at least have them pop back in later! Since their home is still in New York they will eventually have to leave, so if you have any family-related prompts, speak now!

Thanks SO much for your continued support!!!!!!!
Riding A Bike

Chapter Notes

This chapter is for kelark59, who just finished reading all 45 chapters and would love to see John teaching Sherlock how to ride a bike!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Sherlock, stop being such a baby about this!”

“I’m not!” He whined, glaring at John. “I don’t understand why you’re upset! I just don’t want to do this.”

“It was your idea!”

“It was my idea to take them around the city. This was not my idea.”

Sighing, John turned to the bike hire shop behind them. Laura and her family were inside, picking out the perfect bikes to take around the city for the afternoon. As soon as Sherlock found out this was Laura’s idea of seeing the city he pulled John aside to freak out.

“It’s just a bike ride!” John exclaimed. Crossing his arms, John couldn’t help but to grin at his boyfriend. “What’s the big deal? You do know how to ride a bike, right?”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide with horror before they flashed around the street, as though trying to make sure there was no way they could be overheard.

“You’re kidding!” John cried. “You never learned how to ride a bike?”

A light shade of pink popped up on Sherlock’s cheeks, and John felt guilty when he saw how truly embarrassed he was about this.

“Who would have taught me, John?” Sherlock spat. “My father, who ran away before I could even talk? Or my mother, who was too busy working fifty hours a week until the day she died? Or maybe Mycroft, my brother? Do you think Mycroft would have taken precious time out of his life to teach me?”

Sherlock breathed heavily when he finished his rant, and John felt truly awful for teasing him.

“I’m sorry, Sherlock,” he offered honestly. “I didn’t think.”

“No,” Sherlock sighed. “No, you didn’t, but it’s not your fault. Everyone should know how to ride a bloody bicycle by the time they’re my age.”

John’s eyes averted back to the shop, where Sherlock’s newly discovered family was finishing up talking to the salesman. Over the past couple of days John had seen how desperate Sherlock was to fit in, and he wanted nothing more than to help him feel as comfortable as possible around them.

“I’ll teach you,” he announced. Sherlock stared at him like he grew an extra head. “Yeah, seriously, I can do it. I’ll teach you how to ride a bike.”
This time Sherlock studied him, like he wasn’t sure he could trust him.

“You can’t teach me how to ride a bike,” Sherlock mumbled, “we’re too old. But thanks. You’re the first person in my whole, pathetic, life who has ever offered. I’ll just watch.”

Rolling his eyes, John replied:

“You’re not watching! Come on.”

Ten minutes later he had Sherlock seated on his very first bicycle, and John had to admit he had to fight hard to not burst out laughing at the sight. Sherlock was like a big kid, gripping the bike handles tightly while his long legs awkwardly dangled to the ground.

“The important thing is to not panic,” John instructed. He hovered behind Sherlock so that he was speaking directly into his ear. His hands rested on the handlebars beside Sherlock to hold him steady. “Just try peddling a few feet at first.”

Sherlock turned to him. By the wild look in his eyes John could tell he was already having an anxiety attack. He inched his hands so they just barely brushed against Sherlock’s.

“It’s okay, you’ll be fine,” he promised.

He stepped back, and Sherlock let out a shaky breath. One foot rest on one pedal while one hovered on the ground, trembling. Sherlock took one final breath before kicking the other foot off the ground and planting it on the second pedal.

John couldn’t help but to grin with pride as Sherlock managed to go the first few feet and-

“Shit!” John cursed, chasing after him. “Sherlock, wait!”

It wasn’t until Sherlock was tumbling over, hitting the pavement hard, and rolling to avoid another biker before he realized:

He never taught him how to use the brakes.

Chapter End Notes

Remember, if you have a prompt, don't be shy! And if I haven't used yours it's because I'm planning to in the future!

Thanks SO much for being awesome! You guys seriously have no idea how much you make my day!
Fixing His Wounds

Chapter Notes

This chapter is for Sarah, who also just read the whole story in one day and would love to see John acknowledge that Sherlock would make a good father. With that, I came up with...this!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“John!” Sherlock exclaimed, swatting his arm away. “Christ that hurts!”

John bit his lip and tried to not snap at him as he carefully stitched up Sherlock’s arm. The rest of Sherlock’s family was still out in the city while they slipped back to Baker Street so that John could take care of his boyfriend’s injuries. His boyfriend kept throwing pitiful glances at the mixture of blood and dirt that now made up his elbow, and he wasn’t sure he had ever seen someone look so helpless while he fixed up their wounds.

“It’s not that bad!” John hissed.

“That fall nearly took my arm off!” Sherlock pouted. “All because someone didn’t mention there were brakes!”

They glared at each other, and John was tempted to shove Sherlock back into the bathtub. The more he stared at him the more Sherlock’s face melted with guilt, because he would have realized John would take the comment to heart.

“I almost got my fucking arm blown off by a bullet in Afghanistan, Sherlock,” John snapped under his breath. “Don’t bitch at me about this.”

“I’m sorry.”

Sherlock’s voice fell, and it might have been the most sincere apology he had ever received from him. His boyfriend finally stayed silent as he wrapped the arm in gauze. Grateful for the silence, John took advantage of Sherlock’s guilt and worked as quickly as he could to finish up.

“There,” he sighed a few moments later. Sherlock admired his new bandage and tested out how much it hurt as he stretched his arm out. “How is that?”

“Good.”

His eyes trailed up to meet John, and they both froze.

“Sorry I snapped at you,” John said quietly. His body suddenly became very warm as Sherlock inched closer and wrapped a hand around his arm.

“Thanks for stitching me up,” Sherlock whispered.

“All time.”

Their lips brushed together for a single, soft kiss. John licked his lips when they broke apart, and
he realized how silly it was to get mad at Sherlock when in reality he had never been prouder of him.

“You’re so good with Dan,” John said. “I think he might like you.”

He grinned as Sherlock got to his feet. Face crestfallen and shoulders drooped forward, Sherlock almost looked like he had shrunken. He clearly wasn’t as impressed with himself.

“What’s wrong?”

Sherlock was slipping his shirt back on when he stopped him, and John admitted only to himself he didn’t half mind when his boyfriend left the shirt behind to lean against the wall and wrap his arms around his bare chest.

“Do you really think I’m doing a good job with him?”

He spoke so quietly it was almost childlike, and John couldn’t help it when a frustrated sigh escaped him. It annoyed him to no end how Sherlock would jump from being an over-the-top, hyperactive, egotistical jerk to a sensitive, caring, self-conscious man in seconds.

His hands crept up to Sherlock’s sides, and he felt his lover shiver as his fingertips danced up and down his body.

“I do,” John replied. He kissed Sherlock again. “Sherlock, look at me.”

John’s eyes fought for Sherlock’s attention, and when those soft, desperate, dark brown orbs met his he couldn’t breathe for a moment.

“The way you’ve grown in the past few months is just amazing,” John said. “It lets me see how much you want to protect people, and some days I think that’s all you know to do. Now you have a family, a real family, and honestly when I found out about it I was a bit worried. I thought you would freak out and just…go back into your shell. But you didn’t. You faced what happened. You accepted them, and you’re finding ways to fit them into your life. You want them to like you. You’re amazing, and honestly I think you’d make a great father.”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide, and John immediately realized his mistake.

NO no no no no! I did not just say that!

His boyfriend stared at him, pitiful and terrified, and John jumped into damage control without fully thinking it through.

“I didn’t mean it like that!” He cried. Sherlock actually looked hurt, and John panicked. “I mean… I’m just saying that you’re great. I don’t think you’ll ever realize how great you are. Don’t worry about your past or your father. You’re amazing with them and…have I said enough because seriously, I felt like an idiot.”

The same wide pupils stared back at him, and god he just looked so childlike.

“You want to raise kids of your own, don’t you?” Sherlock asked quietly.

John’s heart pounded, and he felt like his world was ripping apart at the seams from this one stupid mistake.

“Sherlock I—“
“Come on, John,” Sherlock spat. He backed away from him, and John’s blood turned cold. “You’ve been in relationships. Real relationships. You must want something…more.”

A lump formed and his throat and a pit fell in his stomach as John forced out:

“Real relationships?” This time Sherlock looked guilty again, but once John began he couldn’t stop: “I guess I haven’t told you a lot about my real relationships. I’ve been back from Afghanistan for about a year. Since then I have had three relationships all lasting about two weeks a piece, and only one of which I got further than an awkward kiss on her doorstep. During the war I had…oh, nothing, because I was too busy sewing bodies back together and getting shot at. Before then I was in training for the army. Before then I was working at the hospital and…well there was one one night stand, and just so we’re clear she ran out on me before the sun even came up. Before I was busy working fifty hour weeks at the surgery I was busy trying to finish med school. So, Sherlock, just when exactly have I had time to be in real relationships? If I’m completely honest, this is the closest thing I’ve had to a real relationship in…in…in longer than one man in his forties should care to admit. And honestly I don’t even really like kids. They’re okay. They’re cute and they’re fun, but they’re expensive and—”

“Exhausting!” Sherlock’s eyes lit up, and John couldn’t help but to chuckle. “They’re bloody exhausting! God, I haven’t slept in two days, and it’s not like with cases. My entire body aches. My brain is filled with Cluedo, and telly, and toys, and songs.”

John raised a hand to Sherlock’s face, noticing for the first time how dark the bags under his eyes had become.

“You haven’t slept?” John asked. “Dan was with you last night.”

“He’s afraid of nightmares, John,” Sherlock said. “That bastard who took them scarred him for life. He clung to me all night.”

“Yeah,” John sighed. “Laura asked me for my thoughts on therapy.”

“What did you tell her?”

“I told her the most important thing right now is to make sure Dan feels safe and loved. I told her about some signs she should look for but until then, he just needs someone to be there for him. What she’s doing is good- keeping him around people who love him and trying to keep him busy. But eventually he might have a nightmare. He might have a lot of nightmares. It’s just what happens. What you, your sister, and even Mycroft are doing is brilliant.”

“Thanks,” Sherlock replied with a sheepish smile. “And I’m sorry…I didn’t mean anything by what I said. This is a real relationship to me.”

“Yeah, me too.”

They stared at each other quietly, and he knew that was the most honesty he was going to get out of Sherlock for the moment. So instead he kissed him again, while purposefully pinning him back against the wall to keep him in place.

“I’ll go back out and take care of her family,” he offered. “Get some rest, Sherlock, seriously.”

Sherlock nodded and slipped away without saying anything else. As soon as he was gone John let out a shaky sigh and ran a hand through his hair, feeling like he just dodged a major crisis. Kids. Where the fuck had that come from?
Whipping out his mobile, John didn’t hesitate to jump straight to Greg’s contact information.

*Can I talk to you? –JW*

*Definitely. Drinks? –GL*

*Definitely. –JW*

Chapter End Notes

You guys are just SO AMAZING AND AWESOME!!! Thank you SO much for your support!!!!!! :)
HAVE I MENTIONED HOW AMAZING YOU GUYS ARE?!?!?! Your support just makes me smile. It brightens my day and makes this story so much fun to write! Trust me, criticism won't bring me down. Constructive criticism might even make me think. At my old job I had a boss who would greet us every morning by shouting and insulting us via email. If comments get hurtful, it doesn't hurt me. Everyone's entitled to their opinion, and I would never expect everyone to like everything that happens in this story. The response to the last chapter, and the support you guys gave me was just so overwhelming to read that I almost cried...tears of happiness! And it makes me feel really bad that it took me extra time to get this chapter out, but I rewrote it a couple of times.

Multiple people have been asking for more Mystrade, so if you have requested it, this chapter is for you! It's not pure Mystrade (yet!), but Lestrade finally confesses to John about their relationship...and how it all began. I thought it might make for interesting conversation!

“And then…he fell. And when I say fell I mean tumbled. He literally almost went right over the bloody handle bars and rolled down the sidewalk!”

So far Lestrade had done a fine job of not laughing during his story of Sherlock and the bike, but apparently the D.I. just could not hold it any longer. He exploded into a fit of laughter and tried to cover it up by sipping on more of his lager.

“Sherlock Holmes on a bicycle!” Lestrade exclaimed. “Now that’s one I would have never imagined. He must really be getting along with this nephew.”

“Yeah,” John admitted, downing the remainder of his first glass. “He really has. He’s worn himself out. He’s amazing. I told him that earlier, after I actually snapped at him for whining about his injuries.”

“That’s just Sherlock being Sherlock!” Lestrade snorted. “Sometimes I think he’s braver than the rest of us, but sometimes he acts like he’s the four year old. You two bickered like an old married couple before you were a couple.”

“It’s been quite the experience,” John replied. He studied his empty glass and thought back on his conversation with Sherlock. “I almost screwed up, Greg, majorly.”

“How so?”

“I brought up kids.”

“Why the fuck would you do that?!”

Greg stared at him, incredulous, and John couldn’t help but to wonder why he never even considered that would be such a stupid thing to talk about with Sherlock.
“It just slipped out!” John cried. “I told him he would make a great father, and he freaked out a bit.”

“A bit?” Lestrade laughed. “I’m surprised you didn’t break him!”

John groaned and rubbed his eyes.

“I know;” he mumbled.

“What did he say?” Lestrade said, grinning like an idiot.

“He asked me if I wanted kids, and he accused me of wanting a real relationship.”

“Ouch.”

“Yeah,” John sighed. “So I tried to tell him how real this relationship is to me, and he said it was real to him too.”

“That’s sweet.”

“Yeah. He’s just changed so much, you know? It’s strange.”

“He’s changed even more since I first met him,” Greg said. “He was a punk, believe it or not.”

John grinned and tried not to think about Sherlock leaning against that wall with his skinny jeans and knit gloves with the fingertips cut off.

“I can believe it,” John admitted.

“He was so pissed at the world,” Greg continued. “He never really got angry, but he just moped around and just seemed to helpless. I think he was secretly angry with himself, at everything he had done. He never wanted to talk about it, not that he does now, but I know he was hurting. Instead he just kept quiet. When I first hired him for cases he would solve entire murders without speaking to anyone.”

“Damn,” John breathed. “He’s only told me a little about it, but from what he did say it sounds like he went through some trauma.”

“He did,” Greg nodded. “God it was awful. It took me weeks to get him to really talk to me.”

John thought back to their game of questions, when Sherlock admitted just how important Greg was to him.

“He told me you were the one that talked him into rehab. Sherlock told me you gave him a lot of chances.”

“I did,” Greg replied. “I saw potential in him. I knew he was a good kid, at heart. I knew he had a rough upbringing, and I knew-“

“His brother,” John realized suddenly. A grin swept across his face as he turned to Greg and teased: “You bastard! You were with Mycroft back then, weren’t you?”

“No!” Greg exclaimed. “God no, Mycroft terrified me back then. He kept coming to me to check on his brother, and when I say coming to me I mean having me kidnapped off the street. I thought he was a lunatic.”
“What changed your mind?” John asked with a sly grin. “Did his eyes twinkle just the right way in the moonlight?”

“I hate you,” Greg mumbled. He downed more of his drink, ordered another, and ran his hands over his face with a heavy sigh. “He really did want to talk about Sherlock. He told me he wanted to let me know how much he appreciated me helping Sherlock. His brother wasn’t talking to him, so he just wanted to know how he was doing. When he left after the third incident he told me I could phone him any time and let him know if Sherlock started acting strange again.”

“‘Let him know’?”

“I updated him nearly every week about Sherlock after that, and things seemed to be going pretty well for all of us. A couple of months later I got a call about a murder at Sherlock’s flat. It was horrible, John. I thought the first night I met him was scary, but it was nothing compared to this. When I came over he was seated at the end of the ambulance, just absolutely traumatized. The police were already going through the flat. The coroner was there. Sherlock’s face was practically bashed in where the bastard hit him. I wanted to take him to the A&E myself, but god he fought me about it. He didn’t want to leave. That was the first time I realized that Sherlock really cared for this guy, drug dealer or not. Eventually the crime scene calmed down, and Sherlock let me take him in for questioning. I took him down to the hospital afterward, and Mycroft was there.”

“Of course he was,” John mumbled. “I’m sure he had been planning his lecture for months.”

“I phoned him,” Greg admitted. John’s eyes went wide, and it took him a moment to remember that Greg had to do what was best for Sherlock, and that meant reaching out to the only family he (supposedly) had left. I would have done the same thing, he realized. “Mycroft told me he could take it from here. I was reluctant to leave Sherlock, but where else was he going to go? So I let him take him. I got a call from Sherlock the next day, asking if I could help him. Apparently he and Mycroft nearly destroyed that flat too with their fighting. I went over and found them both there. They looked like shit. I couldn’t believe Sherlock actually got a few hits on the guy, but his eye was black. From my understanding, that was the last time they spoke until Sherlock’s next overdose. Well, near-overdose, as Sherlock would say, but it was bad.”

“And that’s when you and Mycroft got together, right?” John said.

Around them the pub was getting crowded as the night drew on, and they both ordered a third drink.

“That’s all you care about, isn’t it?” Greg snorted. “Fine, I’ll speed the story up. Four years ago my wife and I had our first major row. I’m talking she went to stay with her sister for a few days. She was pissed at me for working too much. I was pissed at her for not caring enough about my job—“

“I thought this was the short version of the story,” John teased.

“It’s relevant, I promise!” Greg said. “The first night she was gone Sherlock woke me in the middle of the night, pounding on my door. He was high. Like said, he nearly overdosed. I don’t even know how he managed to find his way to my flat, but I was glad he did. I talked to him the next morning and convinced him to go back to rehab. Mycroft kidnapped me the next night to thank me—“

“And that’s when you hooked up!”

He wasn’t sure he had ever seen Greg look so embarrassed.
“No,” Greg said. His voice fell as he admitted: “That’s when we first kissed.”

John stared at him, wondering if he was following him correctly. Maybe it was the first effects of the drinks hitting him, but in his mind the story jumped from Sherlock, to drugs, to marriage, to snogging Mycroft Holmes. And that just couldn’t be right.

“No,” John breathed.

“Yes,” Greg groaned. “I regretted it immediately. Mycroft apologized and didn’t speak to me for weeks. It was the most awkward kiss I’ve ever had, and that’s completely beside the point that I was still married.”

“Did you tell your wife?” John asked.

“No,” Greg said. “Tell my wife that another man kissed me?” Greg said. “No way! I was in shock myself. I’ve never admitted that to anyone, and don’t you dare go around telling people about it.”

“Come on, not even to Sherlock?” He teased.

“Especially not Sherlock!” Greg looked horrified, and John knew he was right. “That was four years ago, alright? After he got out of rehab, I helped Sherlock get a flat and let him help me on cases again. We kept it as quiet as possible. As you can imagine the team wasn’t too happy with me letting someone help on cases fresh out of rehab. That’s part of why they treat him like they do. About three ago Sherlock had his first high-profile case. Word got out that I had a consultant working on the case, but Sherlock never let any of the press bother him. We caught the suspect and the trial was a huge success, but most importantly to Sherlock, Mycroft was there. You should have seen them. Sherlock will never admit it, but it was the equivalent of a son being happy that his father finally came to his football match. Mycroft cornered me later and-“

“Snogged you in the staircase?”

“Stop it!” Greg shot. “Thanked me for helping Sherlock out, again. He told me this mysterious job of his allowed him to put security detail on his brother, and he told me he planned to start watching him a bit closer. I had no idea he meant he would literally watch him. About six months later I was at the office late, and Mycroft came to see me. The department was clear. It was after midnight, and I spent the entire day working on a case. I still had a stack of paperwork to do, Mycroft wanted updates on his brother, and frankly I was grateful for company that wasn’t asking me to analyze blood samples and evidence, so we began talking. I don’t know if it was the exhaustion kicking in, but somehow we ended up erm…close…and leaning back against the desk, and-“

John closed his eyes, desperate to block out everything he was hearing. Especially after the incident at Baker Street, he did not want to think about the words Mycroft and sex in the same sentence. It must have been the alcohol talking when he demanded to know the story because picturing the two of them together like that made him feel sick. Why did I feel the need to ask about this?!

“What?” Greg teased. “You wanted to know!”

“So two and a half years,” John said, “you two have been secretly dating for two and a half years. I’m not sure if that’s disturbing or incredible.”

“It’s been hard,” Greg admitted, “but I’ve really come to know him quite well, and I can understand where he’s coming from on a lot of things. You see, the Mycroft Holmes that you know, and the Mycroft Holmes that he lets everyone see, is not actually the real Mycroft Holmes.
Behind closed doors he’s truly kind, he’s caring, and I have to say, he even has his romantic moments. And he’s strong. He’s so strong. You have to be, in a position like his, but also with an upbringing like his. He raised his brother, John. Sherlock might have run away and made his own mistakes, but Mycroft tried with him, he really did, and he never stopped loving him. Not even after the fights or the rehab. It’s truly amazing to witness. I admire him so much.”

“Do you love him?”

John studied Greg, who stared at his empty glass, mind trapped deep in years of memories.

“Yeah, I do,” Greg replied quietly. “Ours is a quiet relationship, but it’s strong. It has to be. Imagine how hard it is to be Mycroft. When we first got together it took weeks before he really began to open up to me. When he did, I realized just how much he had kept to himself over the years. He needs someone to be there for him, and he’s never had that- not since his mother passed away.”

“So underneath the multiple layers of suits, the constant umbrella carrying, the security cameras, and the black sedans he’s just a normal bloke?”

“Yeah,” Greg shrugged, “and so is Sherlock, as you have found out. I admit it took some getting used to. Sometimes I still can’t believe how far we’ve come. You probably wouldn’t believe half the things I could tell you about us.”

“Probably not.”

“But it’s just like with Sherlock,” Greg said, “admit it, how shocked were you when you two first got together?”

John thought back to that first night, on the Thames, when Sherlock stole a kiss from him. He could still feel the cold water drenching them both. He could feel the anxiety shaking him to the core, he could feel Sherlock’s hands on his skin and the shock of being brought back to life with his lips.

“It was shocking,” John said quietly, “but god knows he probably thinks I’m strange too. I think we’re really starting to work well together.”

“They’re a strange species, the Holmes family,” Greg said, finishing the last of his drink. He stared at the bar for a moment before shaking his head and sighing: “You should have seen Mycroft when he found out about his sister. He went completely silent for days. He didn’t come home, John. Of course, knowing him he could have just been on some top secret mission and no- before you ask I do not get to hear about those. Some weeks I hardly know when he’s in the country and when he’s not. Anyway, the night of the kidnapping Mycroft came home. He was white as a ghost and he still wasn’t talking. I asked him what was wrong, and he just said he needed to get to Sherlock. At that very moment someone began pounding on the door, and when we opened it he got to meet his sister for the first time. She had passed out, there on his doorstep.”

“Shit,” John whispered. The wheels began turning in his head, and something inside him reminded him that he never considered Mycroft’s role in all of this. If all of this was about Mycroft, and if all of this was for the purpose of getting something out of him, at some point there had to have been a threat. He had to have known something. “Do you think he knew it was going to happen?”

“I think he thought it would happen to Sherlock,” Greg said. “He got his sister to the A&E and asked me to take care of his brother. Not too long afterward I got a message that the husband was dropped off at the Yard, and I got Sherlock’s message about the kid.”
Greg suddenly became very interested in a spare napkin lying on the bar, and he began to ignore John completely. Over the past two months John had been so focused on just making it day to day in this relationship that he hadn’t considered what other people go through. His confession to Sherlock was absolutely correct— he didn’t know how these real relationships worked. Some days he felt like Sherlock knew more than he did, and he was just hanging on for dear life.

But hearing Greg talk about his relationship with Mycroft almost made him feel like he was lucky. If he really studied Greg he could see it now: the struggle he must go through every day, just dealing with the stress of a job like his own and being with someone who had a job like Mycroft’s. The pure amount of patience he would have to have to handle Mycroft disappearing like that and going off to other countries, completely unannounced.

“I have to admit, I’m impressed,” John said. “But eventually, Sherlock has to know. He’s your friend, Greg. Well, sort of.”

“I’ve told Mycroft this dozens of times,” Greg replied. “Honestly I think he likes having something that’s his. Yeah, I’m afraid of what Sherlock will think. I don’t want to lose his trust…or disgust him, for that matter. But I like being a part of his life. Sherlock is…one of a kind. You have no idea how much it bothers me that he and his brother still treat each other like they do, and trust me, what we’ve seen recently is improvement. I would love to meet this estranged family of theirs, though.”

“How about this? We’ll all do dinner. I can invite you as a friend.”

Greg stared at the bar for a moment, contemplating how that would work.

“It would be too awkward,” he sighed, “Sherlock will suspect something’s up.”

“Sherlock will be so obsessed over how to act around his sister and nephew that he won’t notice. It’s a good idea, Greg. They’re not going to be in England forever. You should meet them, they’re pretty amazing.”

Eyes shifting to him, Greg studied him, searching for a way to trust him. At last he sighed again.

“Fine, but if Sherlock says anything I’m blaming this on you.”

“Deal.”
Family Dinner

Chapter Notes

a-cumberbatch-of-cookies (tishy19) wanted to see both Laura meeting Mrs. Hudson and a Holmes family dinner. This chapter is for you!

Family dinners can be the worst sometimes, especially when secrets are revealed...because seriously, like Sherlock was ever not going to figure this out within five minutes of this dinner!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sherlock scanned the house they were parked beside and drew in a deep breath.

“I can’t do this.”

“Yes, you can.”

Shaking his head, Sherlock sank down into his seat and crossed his arms.

“I can’t do this, John!” He shot. “And I won’t.”

“It’s a family dinner, Sherlock!” John said, rolling his eyes. “I think the great Sherlock Holmes can handle one family dinner.”

Just the word ‘family’ was enough to make his stomach churn. He went through the whole second half of his life without worrying about the formalities of traditional families. He didn’t know family dinners and birthdays and Christmases. He didn’t understand them.

“You like most of this family now, remember?” John said. Sherlock only turned to him when a hand was suddenly on his shoulder, squeezing him there. “It won’t be that bad. Everyone has to suffer through these. Isn’t that right, Anthea?”

They both turned to not-Anthea, who was sitting across from them, texting like usual. Texting Mycroft, Sherlock thought to himself. After picking them up from Baker Street a half-hour ago, she escorted them to his brother’s estate, which sat hidden in the grounds of what used to be a respectable 19th century property. Now it sat, forgotten, taken care of by grounds workers who never saw the master that wondered through its halls alone, like some pathetic fairytale beast.

Not-Anthea didn’t turn away from her as she replied:

“Oh I don’t talk to my family.”

“Of course not,” John mumbled.

“Remember the last time we tried to have dinner with someone from your family?” Sherlock pointed out.

John stopped for a moment, and Sherlock grinned a bit, knowing he made his point.
“This will be different,” John promised. “Laura and the others are leaving in a couple of days, and who knows when you will get to see her again.”

Sherlock was too embarrassed to admit that was part of the problem. He did like Laura, Dan, and even the husband though he rarely saw him. Most importantly, they liked him. He felt like he hardly got to know her at all, and now she was due to be back and New York in a few days.

It was a text from Laura that finally encouraged him to get out of the car:

*Mycroft is scaring my son. Please get in here!*

“What?” John asked.

“Apparently we need to rescue my nephew.”

As they walked to the front door he noticed John’s eyes admiring the grounds, and he realized this was the first time his boyfriend had been over to Mycroft’s.

“It’s just all so very…Holmes-ish,” John said. “Is this a family home?”

“My grandmother’s, from my mum’s side.”

John turned to him, and they both stopped.

“So you grew up here?” John grinned.

Sherlock looked around, remembering the first day Mycroft dropped him off here. He was so distraught over his mother’s death that he refused to speak to his grandmother for weeks. She would spend hours talking to him, and he just sat there, thinking that surely this wasn’t his life now.

“Sort of,” Sherlock admitted. “Mycroft inherited the house when our grandmother died, after I started university.”

“Do you have a bedroom here?”

Their eyes met, and the twinkle in John’s told him what he was thinking.

John only grinned.

Sherlock reached up to knock on the door but it flew open, revealing Laura. She leaped for him, throwing her arms around him with a force that nearly sent him tumbling into John.

“Thank god you’re here!” Laura exclaimed. “Mycroft has never actually hosted a family dinner, has he?”

He blinked.

“No, not quite,” he replied.

John looked between the two, obviously searching for ways he could help out, and Sherlock was grateful when he offered:

“Can we see Dan?”

“Of course!”
They didn’t have to wait long. As soon as they stepped inside the foyer tiny arms threw themselves around his legs, and Sherlock looked down to find the four year old clinging to him for life.

“Hey,” Sherlock greeted awkwardly.

“Uncle Mycroft’s house is scary,” Dan said. “I saw a ghost!”

Laura looked at him and crossed her arms.

“Mycroft told him you used to think this house was haunted,” she explained.

John burst out laughing, but Sherlock turned pale and pushed his way through the house.

“That’s ridiculous,” Sherlock mumbled.

Even as he stepped into the main family room he swore he felt a cold air sweep through him. He only used to think that because Mycroft would tell him horrible stories about past members of their family…he even told him some of them were buried in unmarked graves under his room.

“Mycroft was an arse,” he spat when John turned to him.

“Is that food cooking?” John asked, sniffing at what was definitely the smell of roast chicken and a buffet of vegetables.

“I helped,” Laura replied. “Mycroft’s not half bad, though.”

“Mum taught him,” Sherlock admitted, “it’s one of the few things he was always useful for.”

He decided not to mention the part where Mycroft turned his anger and pain from their mother’s death to food and desserts. While Mycroft gained weight at an ungodly pace, Sherlock only got skinnier as he refused the meals just to spite his brother. It was no surprise when he slipped into the kitchen and met his brother’s glaring eyes.

“You don’t have to eat it,” Mycroft said as he finished seasoning the chicken.

“It smells good,” he offered. Mycroft looked up at him, in shock. “I’m starved.”

The doorbell rang, and their heads both jerked up a little too quickly. Just as there was something he wasn’t telling Mycroft, he realized there must be something Mycroft wasn’t telling him.

“Must be him,” Mycroft said under his breath.

“‘Him’?”

Clearing his throat, Mycroft quickly explained:

“John invited Lestrade.”

“Why in God’s name would he do that?”

“I honestly have no idea.”

“Who did you invite?” Mycroft asked.

“Mrs. Hudson.”

Mycroft froze and stared at him, like he was supposed to immediately know what was wrong with
that statement.

“Why in God’s name would you invite her?” Mycroft demanded.

Crossing his arms, Sherlock straightened up and glared at his brother. Trust Mycroft to ruin everything.

“She’s been out of town, and she wants to meet Laura!” Sherlock said. “She’s practically family-more so than Lestrade, anyway.”

His brother turned pale, and it was the second sign that something was going on.

“In case you have forgotten, Lestrade picked you off the street and saved your life.”

Sherlock stared at him, taken aback. After his second time in rehab Mycroft rarely mentioned Lestrade, not even to say thanks. He always ignored that part of his past himself; it was too painful to think about sitting in that ambulance that night, shut out of his own flat, watching them bring Luke out…

“What’s wrong?” Mycroft asked suddenly.

“I remember,” he shot, “and I’m repaying Lestrade by solving every bloody murder case that comes across his desk.”

Mycroft smirked and went back to finishing off the chicken. When Lestrade’s voice bounced off the walls, Sherlock decided that at least talking to him would be more interesting than hiding in the kitchen with his brother.

Lestrade was seated in one of the armchairs when he entered, with Dan at his feet.

“Have you ever shot anybody?” Dan asked.

His eyes were wide with curiosity, and Lestrade looked like he was rather enjoying the attention.

“I’ve seen him shoot someone,” Sherlock announced. “Right in the-“

Laura suddenly appeared beside him and grabbed his arm tightly: warning him, he realized.

“Actually, he missed,” he lied.

“Oh,” Dan said, pouting. “Then you’re bad at being a policeman?”

“It was a warning shot,” Lestrade mumbled, “I’m going to wait in the kitchen.”

Everyone turned to him, like they all were beginning to realize something was off.”

“Why?” Sherlock asked.

“Because the kitchen doesn’t insult my livelihood.”

Laura burst out laughing and grabbed Dan, who was oblivious that he said anything wrong.

The doorbell rang again, and Sherlock’s heart leapt.

“Who is that?” Laura wondered.

“Sherlock?” John asked.
Sherlock grinned.

“A special guest.”

Everyone watched as he waltzed over the door and threw it open to the smiling figure of Mrs. Hudson. She threw her arms around him before he had a chance to speak, and it even sounded like she was already crying.

“Oh Sherlock!” Mrs. Hudson cried. “I’m so sorry I wasn’t here!”

“No one died,” he replied. He breathed in the familiar smell of her perfume and smiled. He never understood what it was about Mrs. Hudson that made him feel so safe, but as soon as she wrapped his arms around him he had finally felt like maybe this whole family dinner thing wasn’t so bad after all. “But I would like you to meet someone.”

Mrs. Hudson was beaming with tears in her eyes when she turned and laid eyes on his sister and nephew for the first time.

“Oh you two look just alike!” Mrs. Hudson said. Laura was trapped in a Mrs. Hudson-hug of her own before she could even introduce herself. Dan tried to squirm away but failed as his landlady held a hand to his tiny face. “And look at you! Oh Sherlock, he’s adorable.”

“I’m Laura,” Laura offered when they broke apart.

Mrs. Hudson went for Jason next, who was still remaining as quiet as possible. Sherlock couldn’t blame him.

“Do sit down!” Mrs. Hudson squealed, ignoring the fact she had never set foot in the house, let alone had any power there. Laura followed her anyway and allowed Dan to escape into his stepfather’s arms. “Another Holmes, then?”

“Well I just married, so I’ve changed my name, but yes,” Laura replied. “I found Sherlock and Mycroft through some family heritage research…and I met them through a kidnapping.”

“I saw it on the news,” Mrs. Hudson admitted, “I was so terrified—”

“She always worries too much,” John chimed.

“I worry just enough, thank you very much!” Mrs. Hudson shot. John grinned and offered her a hug anyway. “You should have seen Sherlock when he first moved into my building. Hardly knew how to fold a shirt!”

“He still doesn’t,” John muttered.

“And there’s the experiments and the suspicious bunch of clients he gets,” Mrs. Hudson said, “thank goodness there’s finally a woman in the Holmes family to talk to. Maybe you can knock some sense into the both of them.”

“I can try,” Laura smiled.

At that moment Mycroft slipped into the room and leaned against the wall, keeping as close to the kitchen as possible. Sherlock couldn’t help but to notice when Greg slipped out after him and the two stayed suspiciously close together. All this time, he thought, and John hasn’t said a word to his ‘guest’.
“Mrs. Hudson,” Mycroft greeted quietly.

The two glared at each other, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to wonder if there was some kind of unspoken feud between his brother and his landlady that he never knew about.

“Perhaps having a girl in the family will keep you in line as well, Mycroft Holmes,” Mrs. Hudson said coolly.

Even Mycroft had to smirk a little at that one. His brother gazed around at his crowd of visitors, and Sherlock realized this must be the most people this house had seen in possibly decades.

“The table is prepared,” Mycroft announced. He looked completely uncomfortable, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to relish in his brother’s misery. “Feel free to eat.”

Sherlock and John exchanged glances, and he was glad to see he wasn’t the only one amused with how terrible Mycroft was at this.

But at that moment he noticed Lestrade eyeing Mycroft, as though waiting for his lead, and he noticed something was off about his brother’s wardrobe.

And John still hasn’t talked to Lestrade, he thought bitterly.

Something was going on here.

Something was wrong, and the ideas popping into his head made him sick to his stomach. He made a beeline for the kitchen, where he easily cornered his brother against the counter.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft sighed. “This is hard enough without you following me around like a child. Must you be so clingy?”

“Why is Lestrade here?” He demanded. “You hate Lestrade.”

Mycroft blinked, and Sherlock recognized that he actually looked offended.

“I’ve never said that I hate Lestrade,” Mycroft replied sharply. “I told you, John invited him. Now please get out of my way. Half of these people hate me, and that won’t get any better if I can’t get the rest of the food out.”

“Forget the food!” Sherlock said, fighting to keep his voice down to a whisper. “You’re hiding something from me. You don’t host dinner parties. You don’t invite family over. You don’t cook for people. And you certainly don’t hang around with the likes of Lestrade. I know John didn’t invite him, John hasn’t said a word to him!”

A loud clang echoed in the old, galley-style, kitchen as Mycroft shoved the pot of vegetables he was holding onto the counter. Pinching his nose, his brother actually tempted to calm himself for a moment- another sign that something was very not right.

“Aren’t you really this bored already, Sherlock?” Mycroft spat. “You’re like a child: if someone else can’t keep you entertained for more than five minutes then you make up stories. May I remind you, this idea belongs to you and John. I only offered up my home because my kitchen is not filled with body parts!”

“Is it?” Sherlock uttered under his breath.

Mycroft glared at him and grabbed the pot of vegetables.
“I think I’m going to see how our nephew is doing,” his brother announced. “At least he doesn’t bounce around like some…lunatic.”

“Right,” Sherlock snorted. “Have fun talking about trains, airplanes, and ‘why is the sky blue’?”

“At least I can answer that question.”

His brother slipped away before he could slap him, and Sherlock reluctantly stormed after him.

“Good, the children are here,” John mumbled as Sherlock slumped into an empty seat beside his boyfriend. “We can eat now.”

“Shut up.” Sherlock shot. He looked from John to Lestrade, who sat at the opposite end of the table, by Mrs. Hudson. “Did you invite Lestrade?”

John nearly choked on his salad.

“Of course I did!” He replied, a little too quickly. “He wanted to meet Dan and Laura. He’s our friend, Sherlock. Why, did you not want him here?”

He stole a glance to the D.I. who had been there for him so many times in life, and suddenly he felt guilty for being so judgmental…

But then he noticed the way Mycroft was pouring Lestrade’s wine, and something was just not right!

“It’s fine that he’s here,” he lied, “but don’t you just think it’s strange?”

He knew John was more focused on which vegetables he wanted on his plate than his concerns about Lestrade, but he didn’t care.

“I think you’re strange,” John teased. “What are you on about?”

His eyes danced around the table, and he was shocked to find that everyone actually seemed to be enjoying themselves. Mycroft was trying to get Dan to speak to him again, Laura and Mrs. Hudson were chatting about British novelist, and Lestrade and Jason were deep into some conversation about a recent case.

“Nothing,” Sherlock muttered.

“Mrs. Hudson tells me you play violin very well,” Laura announced suddenly. He looked up at her, startled, and simply stared. “I think that’s pretty cool, since I play piano.”

“I play the drums!” Dan exclaimed proudly.

His stepfather ran a hand through his hair and explained, with a grin:

“It’s a play drum kit, and he usually just settles for pots and pans.”

“I’m sure you play very well,” John offered.

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“I do like to play,” he admitted.

“‘Like to play?’” John echoed through a mouthful of potatoes. “I’ve woken up to Bach screeching
in the flat at three in the morning more than I used to wake up to pages from the surgery.”

Sherlock’s eyes fell to his own plate as he replied:

“I’m not bad.”

“Oh, he’s brilliant,” John said. “I’m sure Bach himself would be jealous, though the man probably never stayed up at all hours of the night playing his own music.”

“Sherlock studied music as a child, and well into university,” Mycroft chimed in, “until he suddenly switched his studies to organic chemistry.”

John’s eyes twinkled as he turned to him.

“I never knew that!”

“That was a long time ago,” Sherlock said, “I learned from my mum.”

The room fell silent, and he knew the awkward mention of his mother was just what he needed to take the attention away from himself. Lestrade began texting on his mobile, and Sherlock was going to welcome the distraction until a buzzing filled the room. He looked up to see if anyone else noticed his brother twitch as soon as the unmistakable sound of a phone going off while on silent erupted. When no one did, he whipped out his own mobile and sent a message to his brother:

*I want to talk to you* - SH.

Mycroft looked up at him, and when their eyes met it was obvious his brother knew he was caught. Nevertheless, Mycroft carefully gathered his napkin, dabbed at his mouth and quietly excused himself out of the room. Sherlock drew in a deep breath and, after waiting a few respectable seconds, followed.

Chapter End Notes

I've got to admit, this chapter was a challenge to write...but the good kind of challenge! This fic is starting to have way more fluff to it than I'm used to writing, so I hope it isn't complete shit. It makes me want to crawl back into my writer's shell and return to the angst of it all. But there is a major secret a certain Holmes brother needs to come clean on...so for that this family dinner will continue into at least one other chapter.

For those of you who are wanting the story to move on from the family plot, keep in mind John's comment about the family leaving for New York soon.
I'm sorry for the slow turnaround on these last couple of chapters. They've been hard to write, and I'm hoping they haven't turned out to be complete shit. This story's gone far deeper than I ever expected it to! It's incredibly hard to make characters who are in "canon" very protective of their emotions be open about those same emotions.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sherlock stayed quiet as he followed Mycroft up a dim staircase to the master suite. Mycroft threw open the double doors to reveal a room that was slightly smaller than Sherlock remembered it, but perhaps that was just the magic of the house wearing off as he got older. The room was dark and cozy, with simple antique furniture and a poster bed that sat directly in front of the door. Sherlock lingered near the doorway as Mycroft rested a hand on one of the bedpost.

"Look around this room," Mycroft instructed. "What do you see?"

For a brief moment Sherlock closed his eyes and tried to recall exactly what the room looked like the last time he was here. It was right before he moved into Baker Street, after one of his relapses. He spent nearly his whole recovery locked in his own bedroom, until two weeks of no sleep, vivid flashbacks, nausea, and starving himself sent him stumbling into Mycroft’s room in the middle of the night. Mycroft allowed him to stay there for the night, and though he mainly remembered spending most of the time throwing up in the master suite bathroom, his brother claimed it was one of the only times he openly asked for help. Apparently it was what convinced Mycroft that he was ready to truly get back on his feet.

He could remember the walls were painted a darker shade of blue back then. There was less furniture and no pictures on the wall. Even the carpet looked newer.

"You’ve updated," Sherlock announced. He spun around, taking in everything- the new mirror over the dresser, “there’s new…everything. And two end tables. You didn’t have two end tables before. There are books, stacked here on a shelf that doesn’t match the rest of the furniture. It’s all contemporary novels, and you don’t have the patience for anything written after World War II. Someone else is living here.”

Mycroft didn’t say no. He looked uncharacteristically distant and lost, but even though a small part of him felt guilty he was even angrier that Mycroft was still lying to him.

"You’re sleeping with Lestrade,” Sherlock stammered. “With Lestrade!"

"Sherlock-"

“No!” He exclaimed. “No! Just tell me one thing, Mycroft, just one thing: how long?”

Mycroft raised his eyes, and as his brother’s face hardened, Sherlock knew he wasn’t amused by his outburst. And he didn’t care.

"Is this why I’m allowed to work on cases?” He asked. His heart pounded as realization after
realization danced through his mind: cases, the drugs, his constant ‘bending’ of rules and laws. No respectable D.I. would ever put up with that…unless they were sleeping with your brother. His stomach churned, and he felt like he might be sick. “I don’t believe you. I can’t even- Lestrade. That’s disgusting, Mycroft!”

“This isn’t why you’re allowed on cases,” Mycroft said softly. “He admires you. He thinks you’re quite the detective, and he wishes you would join his team officially.”

“I won’t become a copper,” Sherlock spat.

“He knows that.”


“Does anyone know?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft simply replied:

“No.”

A twinge of guilt hit him. As perturbed as he was by this new information, he couldn’t even begin to imagine what protecting this relationship must be like for his brother.

A burst of laughter echoed from downstairs, and he remembered that Lestrade was right beneath their feet, clueless as to what was going on. He couldn’t help but to laugh himself.

“Wait,” he said suddenly, “you mean Lestrade left the house, pretended like he was traveling in from the city, knocked on his own door, and acted like he’s never been here before? Even John and I aren’t that pathetic!”

Mycroft smirked.

“Yes, well you aren’t the only one in the family who can keep a secret. Lestrade and I must keep our relationship private for the sake of my-“

“Don’t say it!” Sherlock snapped. “Don’t you dare use your job as an excuse to lie about this!”

“I’m gay, Sherlock.” The world stopped as he heard Mycroft say it for the first time ever. Their eyes met, and he knew- he knew- what his brother was going through right now. He went through it with John, John went through it with his mum, and now his own brother was going through the same anxiety. “I’m gay, and I don’t know if anyone can properly understand how difficult it is being who I am in a position like mine. You know how important my job is. You know the people I communicate with daily, and you know the kinds of decisions I make.”

“I fail to see how being gay has anything to do with this.”

Mycroft let out a heavy, tired, sigh, and Sherlock realized this wasn’t a new concept for his brother.

“Neither do I,” Mycroft admitted, “but the fact is, it does. I know this from watching predecessors suffer, and I know this from hearing first-hand the personal views of the people I take orders from and give orders to. It’s not just my job: can you imagine how Greg’s team, how his superiors would react?”
“‘Greg’,” Sherlock mumbled. “This is just disturbing.”

“It’s his name,” Mycroft smiled. “I promise, this relationship has far less to do with you than you think. In fact you would probably be disappointed to see how little of an affect you have on it.”

“I doubt it.”

Silence fell between them, and Sherlock found himself sitting beside his brother at the end of the bed. It felt as though someone else were controlling him- probably because otherwise he might collapse right there on the floor.

*Lestrade and Mycroft…together.*

“I thought love isn’t an advantage,” Sherlock said.

“I’m not using love as an advantage,” Mycroft replied. Their eyes met again, and his breath hitched when he realized his brother was being serious.

“You love him?”

Mycroft sighed again.

“It’s very complicated,” he admitted, “and it’s by no means conventional.”

“You can say that again.”

“It’s just something that happened,” Mycroft said, “just like you and John.”

Jumping to his feet, Sherlock’s blood boiled as he launched into defense.

“Just like me and John? No. John and I were friends. We knew each other. We respected each other. It wasn’t just some fling-“

“You’re very naive, you know that?” Mycroft said. “You don’t know what it was like, Sherlock. Lestrade was my only link to you back then.”

“Gross.”

Mycroft snickered.

“That’s not what I mean. I’m trying to tell you how we met.”

He ran his hands feverishly through his hair and debated fleeing the room. How had he never considered that Mycroft would have followed Lestrade around like he did with John at first? He couldn’t remember the two ever being together, but then again his memories of those days were foggy. Just thinking about being in such a pathetic state made him sick with guilt, and lately he tried to pretend like most of that never happened.

Apparently Mycroft hadn’t forgotten anything.

“It was hard, raising you,” Mycroft went on, “and it was even harder after you ran off. Lestrade made the decision to let you work on cases, and I agreed to let him as long as he kept me updated.”

He certainly didn’t remember Mycroft having *anything* to do with his first cases.

“You let him?” He shot. “I was an adult! Lestrade and I worked out a deal.”
“Yes,” Mycroft nodded, “and I wanted to know how you were doing. So we met, and we talked.”

“I really don’t need to know the actual story,” Sherlock said, “just…how long? That was years ago, Mycroft.”

“Two and a half years.”

Their eyes met again.

“Two and a half years?” Sherlock echoed.

A pit settled in his stomach. Then he pictured John and himself, hiding behind closed doors in Baker Street, and he realized he could understand this relationship. He could understand it very well. Suddenly he wasn’t sure if he should hate his brother or admire him.

“You should have told me,” he said.

“How could I?” Mycroft said. “When you weren’t talking to me? When you were going out, ruining your life and refusing to have anything to do with me? What would you have said?”

He would have run away again- just like he wanted to now. It just wasn’t fair that Mycroft would take this one stable part of his life and manipulate it for himself. Lestrade, of all people…

“I would have said the rules just don’t apply to you, do they?” Sherlock shot under his breath.

Mycroft just stared at him, like he truly couldn’t comprehend what was going on in his mind.

“What rules?”

“Your rules!” He exclaimed. “Love is not an advantage. Don’t let your emotions get in the way. Handle friendships with care and don’t let them get too close. I’ve been lectured on these rules since I was sixteen, and here you are fraternizing with my friends and sleeping with my supervisors.”

Mycroft roared with laughed, and it only made his blood boil even hotter, and his hands clenched into fist at his sides.

“You don’t think you have friends!” Mycroft said. “And don’t pretend like you consider Lestrade a supervisor. You’re angry, Sherlock, because you’re beginning to see the world as something more than an endless routine of sleeping and drugs and solving cases. I had to give you those rules because you were playing with fire. You didn’t understand love. You thought love was someone merely giving you attention and pretending like they cared you were around. You let yourself be taken advantage of. Your friends used you. Your emotions got the better of you because you were so desperate to be liked and to be useful for something. You had to have rules.”

“I’m not a child! You can’t just tell me-“

“I said had!” Mycroft shouted, and Sherlock stopped. His brother held his breath for a moment and lowered his voice. “I can see how much you’ve changed. It started with the cases, and then when you met John it was like you became a new person. Greg says it’s like we’re seeing who you really are for the first time, and I felt that way about myself when I first met him. We haven’t had it easy, Sherlock. Did you ever feel like we only half-existed?”

That was exactly what he felt like while growing up, and his silence seemed to be a good enough of an answer for Mycroft.
One thing that was finally beginning to click inside his head was how much his brother had changed. Mycroft could have never said something so heartfelt and sincere five years ago. It was true that just as life hadn’t been very fair to him it hadn’t been very fair to Mycroft either. The only person who had ever shown Mycroft any kind of love was his mother. God knows he had been an awful younger brother, and it wasn’t like he had anywhere else to find emotional support. They had only half-existed, with only themselves to care about each other, until he found Luke and broke all ties with his brother. Sherlock could still remember the exact words Luke said to make him fall for him. At that moment he felt like a person again- Luke had given him a purpose, for better or for worse.

“Lestrade made you feel that way?” Sherlock asked.

When his brother nodded he stayed quiet for another moment, contemplating. That was good then, wasn’t it? As his brother he should want the best for Mycroft, shouldn’t he? Then why did he feel like he had been robbed of something? Why did he feel so selfish?

“I’m not trying to take your life away from you,” Mycroft said, as though reading his mind.

“I still think it’s gross,” Sherlock mumbled.

Mycroft grinned as he stood and let his eyes roam over his little brother.

“At least you didn’t have to walk in on us in order to find out.”

Sherlock blushed and looked away, trying not to think back to that horrible, awful, moment.

“We’re not going to start doing this family dinner thing all the time now, are we?” He said. “It’s fine with Laura, but you and Mycroft-“

“You never even have to see us.”

“Good.”

“Though he wants nothing more than to be a part of your life again,” his brother replied, “but he respects your wish for privacy. I would say talk to him, if you can find it in yourself to do so. But I’m not going to tell you how to feel about this.”

Sherlock slowly got to his feet and began shuffling his way back to the door. He couldn’t ever remember his brother offering to let him feel one way or another about something. How had he not seen this change in Mycroft, over the past two and a half years?

I didn’t allow myself to see it.

“I should go back,” he said quietly.

Mycroft merely nodded as he let him finally flee the room.

Chapter End Notes

As always, thanks for your support!
Inappropriate Location: Ancestral Home

Chapter Notes

This seemed like the perfect time to fill this prompt. Also, I gave Sherlock a middle name. Hope you don't mind!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“And the best part was that the entire time Sherlock was running, he had no idea Lestrade already got the guy!”

Everyone roared with laughter as he finished the story, and John couldn’t help but to grin. He was shocked at how much fun he was having- though Sherlock being out of the room long enough to share embarrassing stories him had a lot to deal with it.

“Sherlock was so embarrassed that he hid inside for a week,” Lestrade chimed in. “Christ, he was still gone hours after I booked the guy.”

“That’s because there were accomplices,” everyone turned to find Sherlock slipping into the room, a sly grin on his face. “And they’re still out there somewhere.”

His eyes twinkled as he looked right at his nephew, whose own eyes lit up with awe.

“He’s just kidding,” Laura said.

She leaned over and kissed her son on the head.

“Damn straight he’s just kidding,” Lestrade mumbled, “open and shut case, that was. Trust Sherlock to muck it up.”

His boyfriend rolled his eyes as he sat down next to him.

“Everything alright?” John asked quietly.

Sherlock nodded and quickly went back to his meal. John frowned, wondering what could have kept Sherlock and Mycroft upstairs for so long.

“Laura was telling us earlier about how she studied abroad in Scotland,” John commented, for the sake of conversation.

“I took a history class,” Laura explained. “I fell in love with Scotland. We planned to go after the wedding until, well.”

She and her husband looked away, and an uncomfortable silence fell over the table. Footsteps echoed in the distance to break the tension, and John felt everyone else’s relief when Mycroft reappeared.

*Never would have imagined thinking that,* he joked to himself.

“Mrs. Hudson, why don’t you tell Mycroft what you were saying about the chicken?” John asked,
A rosy pink hue spread across Mrs. Hudson’s cheeks as she lifted her eyes to the eldest Holmes.

“It’s very lovely, dear,” Mrs. Hudson admitted.

Mycroft’s face fell to a humble, shy, smile, as though no one had ever given him a compliment before.

“It’s mother’s recipe,” he explained, taking his seat. “I taught it to Sherlock once, and he nearly blew my kitchen up.”

They burst into laughter again, and even Sherlock snickered beside him. John nudged him in the shoulder playfully, appreciating that he was trying to have fun too.

After the table was cleared and everyone began to gather in the living room again, Sherlock pulled him aside. A smile was on his face, like he had something to hide, and John couldn’t help but to be nervous.

“What?” He demanded.

“Come on,” Sherlock simply instructed.

Tugging on his hand, Sherlock led John back up the stairs without a word. John’s eyes roamed the hall as they wondered between walls full of century-old family photos. All of them were black and white, save for a few that looked like they might be from the 50s.

“Myrcroft loves old photographs,” Sherlock explained.

“These are amazing,” John said.

He stopped at a picture of a young girl with fiery red hair and pale skin. She sat on a man’s lap, looking rather unhappy with being told to pose by what must have been a new family car.

“Is this your mum?” He asked. Sherlock stopped beside him and gazed at the picture, almost as though he never noticed it before. He simply nodded, and John offered quietly: “She looks so much like Mycroft.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock mumbled, “come on, there’s something I want you to see.”

At last Sherlock stopped at the end of the long hall. John looked around, confused. From what he could see there was simply a hall decorated with dark red and off-white wallpaper on this end of the house. But when he looked up he noticed the notch Sherlock reached for. He easily grabbed hold of it and pulled on it to reveal an attic staircase.

“You’re not going to take me up there and kill me, are you?” John teased.

He felt uneasy about exploring an unfamiliar dark attic that, from the smell of it, hadn’t been occupied in years. He also couldn’t help but to remember what Mycroft said about ghost.

Sherlock simply grinned.

The staircase was dark and dusty, but Sherlock reached up and switched on a light so that he could really see where they were.

“It’s a bedroom!” John realized.
The attic was packed with boxes labeled with names like “Sherlock- age 10”, “Sherlock- age 15”, “Sherlock-birthday”. A twin bed sat in the back corner, and beside it a wooden desk stocked with microscopes and textbooks.

“This looks familiar,” John said, “is this your room?”

“It was,” Sherlock admitted, “I have another room, on the other side of the house.”

“You have two rooms?!”

“Well, I mainly wanted to stay in the attic so eventually I just moved everything up here,” Sherlock admitted, “Mycroft hated it, but I hated Mycroft even more.”

“Rebellious Sherlock Holmes,” John sang as he examined the boxes. “Are these actually filled with things, or are they for show?”

“Take a look,” Sherlock offered.

His lover disappeared to the back of the room to gaze out a small window. Reaching up, Sherlock wiped the dust away as he gazed out to what must have been an all-too familiar view.

John selected a box labeled “Sherlock-newborn”, and his heart melted as soon as he lifted one of the cardboard sides.

“Oh my god!” He said, sighing dramatically. “Sherlock, you were a really adorable baby.”

A picture of a tiny newborn with a single wad of black hair on his head stared up at him. John’s heart felt funny as he grabbed the picture and studied it closer. The name ‘Sherlock H. Holmes’. ‘H’ for you too? What does it stand for?”

“Hareton,” Sherlock replied.

John glanced up to him, surprised, but his boyfriend kept gazing out the window.

“Is that a family name?”

“No. It’s from Wuthering Heights.”

A small grin appeared on John’s face, and at last Sherlock threw a glance back to him.

“Mum loved that book,” he explained. “She loved to read. It’s what convinced her to name her kids odd things like Sherlock and Mycroft.”

“Not odd,” John said, picking up the next photograph, “brilliant.”

The next photo was obviously of that same little girl, except here she was in her late 20s or early 30s. Gorgeous red locks fell past her shoulders as she gazed down at her son, clearly tired but delighted all the same. A tiny Sherlock sat nuzzled in her arms, clinging to her dress.

“Your mum was very pretty,” John said, “you obviously got her good looks.”

He didn’t have the heart to mention that Sherlock looked nothing like his mother. Mycroft had her hair, her eyes, and her complexion while Sherlock simply shared the same pale skin.

“I look like my father,” Sherlock mumbled.
He turned away from the window as though it suddenly bored him, and instead his hand grabbed ahold of John’s again. John carefully placed the photograph back into the box as he followed Sherlock back toward the bed.

His heart leapt as Sherlock pulled him onto an old, plaid, quilt and lay him down on it. John’s body tensed up as soft lips brushed against his cracked ones, and he welcomed the feeling of Sherlock’s warm hands on his arms.

“Hareton,” John murmured, “I like it.”

“Hamish,” Sherlock teased, “our families are boring.”

As they kissed again Sherlock settled down on top of them. The mattress let out an embarrassing, loud, creak as their combined weight sat down on it, and they both exploded into laughter.

“We shouldn’t do this here!” John hissed. “They’ll know what we did!”

Fingers groped at him, sending his eyes rolling back into his head, and suddenly he didn’t care anymore.

“I never had anyone in this bed,” Sherlock said. God, it was like he thought he had to reassure him of this. “Want to be my first?”

A sloppy grin spread across John’s face, and he moaned as Sherlock’s lips danced across his neck and chin.

“And I thought I was the bad one,” John teased.

He reached up to tug at the buttons of Sherlock’s shirt, but hands grabbed his wrists and simply held his arms close to Sherlock’s chest. John sank into the bed as Sherlock pressed against him, kissing him deeply.

“Lay here, with me,” Sherlock pleaded between kisses.

“I don’t think I have a choice.”

At last he was able to breathe as Sherlock rolled off of him. They were both panting as they rolled over to face each other, and John scooted closer so that their chests lingered inches apart. Leaning forward, Sherlock sent a set of kisses trailing down John's neck, and he shivered as his lover’s fingers pulled back his collar for further access.

“I hate this place,” Sherlock whispered against his skin. He had trouble concentrating on what Sherlock was saying as his fingers ghosted up John's chest, teasing at the buttons of his shirt without actually opening them. Their mouths met again, and John's tongue managed to slip in to explore for a few moments before Sherlock pulled apart to continue: “I hate this house, I hate this room, I hate these boxes. They mean nothing to me.”

John comforted him by suckling on his neck and pressing gently against Sherlock’s nipples with his palms.

“Everything’s changed too quickly.”

Their eyes met, and for a moment all signs of arousal scurried away as he saw how hurt Sherlock seemed to be, and he couldn’t understand why.
“But it’s good change,” John said.

Their bodies moved even closer together, close enough for John to wrap his hands around him. Sherlock let out an erotic moan as John’s fingers gripped his arse. He was repaid with quick kisses, and then Sherlock suddenly knelt down so that his lips could trail up John’s arm. He rolled back the sleeves of his right arm so that he could brush his lips across the skin of his forearm, and John shivered as he held onto Sherlock’s shoulders for support.

“I want to work on cases again,” Sherlock murmured, “but I want to go away with you sometime, on a proper holiday.”

John’s eyes flew open, and his body lit up with pleasure. Just the idea of having Sherlock alone, all to himself, in a hotel or on a beach somewhere, sent his heart racing.

“Yeah,” John nodded, “cases…then holiday. Christmas, maybe? Or…fuck…even Halloween?”

“I’m not talking to Mycroft, just to let you know,” Sherlock informed him, changing the subject completely.

“Fine.”

It wasn’t fine, but his mind was only able to concentrate on one thing at a time at that moment, and that thing was Sherlock’s hardening cock digging into his hip. John pulled Sherlock on top of him so that he straddled his legs, and he let out a soft moan as Sherlock kissed his lips and chin in a carefully timed dance.

“Everything’s changed,” Sherlock said again, pinning his face against John’s shoulder.

He ran a hand through Sherlock’s hair. The pain in his lover’s voice made him worry what this was really about, and suddenly the soft kisses and the brush of fingers against his chest and neck were like empty cries for help.

"Are you alright?" He asked.

Sherlock sat up straight and looked around, as though noticing where he was for the first time. Quietly, his boyfriend squirmed out of bed and walked over to the storage that made up most of his old room. He simply grinned and reached for one of the pictures in the baby box. He stared down at it, and John realized Sherlock hadn’t been telling the truth at all when he claimed he hated those boxes.

“Best not stay up here for long, we should get back to the dinner. Didn’t I tell you, John? This room is haunted.”

Chapter End Notes

You guys are AMAZING! To both the readers and reviewers who keep coming back and the ones who stay up all night to read the whole thing at once...THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart!!
Dan's Secret

The sun was just barely peeping up over Baker Street when Dan bounced into the kitchen the next morning. John looked up and was shocked to come face to face with the little boy this early in the day. He was only up after a night of tossing and turning. It felt odd to sleep alone after sharing a bed with Sherlock for so long, but it finally gave him time to try to wrap his mind around it all—Sherlock and sex and the new family and Mycroft and Lestrade. Sherlock was right: things had changed, and fast.

“Hi John!” Dan sang.

His voice echoed through the silent flat, and John had to blink a few times over his coffee mug before he fully registered what was going on.

“Hi,” he replied coolly, “you’re up awfully early.”

“It was dark outside when I woke up,” Dan announced. “I’ve been in Uncle Sirlock’s room.”

John snickered; he didn’t know what he found harder to believe, the ‘uncle’ part or the fact that the kid still couldn’t pronounce Sherlock’s name.

“Is Sherlock sleeping?” John asked.

“Yes,” Dan said. He climbed up onto the kitchen table and grabbed a two day old newspaper. He looked from the pictures to the words and frowned, completely baffled by it. “I think he was awake late.”

“Really?”

Somehow it was comforting to know that Sherlock had also been up all night…he just wished it was easier for them to be together.

“Yeah,” Dan said. “I think we both couldn’t sleep.”

Alert signals went off in John’s brain, and he quietly watched Dan as he drew lines on the table with his finger. The kid looked so lost, and panic settled in him. He feared this was the beginning of those signs he warned Laura about—nightmares, trouble sleeping, not knowing how to communicate how he felt. He was four, and had just been through a trauma…even John was at a loss of what to say. But he knew if Dan came down here this early in the morning there must be a reason: he must trust him.

“Can I have some juice, please?” Dan asked.

John smirked; he couldn’t get over how adorable the kid sounded when he talked.

“Of course,” John replied.

He smiled when he opened the fridge to find it stocked with juice and food instead of heads and fingers for a change.

“Do you know why Sherlock has trouble sleeping?” John asked, hoping he wasn’t overstepping any boundaries. Dan looked up with him in interest and shook his head. “He has scary dreams.”

Dan’s eyes went wide, and John knew he was getting somewhere.
“We talked about them,” Dan admitted. “He said he goes to a…a mind room.”

*He really told him about the mind palace,* John mused.

“I tried it last night,” Dan went on, “but it didn’t work.”

John passed him the juice.

“Would you like some eggs?” John offered.

“Not really,” Dan mumbled.

“How about some toast?” John asked. Dan shook his head. “Just one piece?”

Dan let out a dramatic sigh and nodded. He took out the jam, put the bread in the toaster, and sat down across from Dan.

“My stomach hurts.”

The reply was so small that John wasn’t sure he was actually supposed to hear it.

“Do you feel sick?” John asked, feigning concern. He knew Dan was hiding what was really wrong. He had seen enough kids with enough stomach aches in clinics to know what ‘my stomach hurts’ really meant.

Dan simply shrugged. The toast popped up, and he swirled around in his chair to grab it. The kid simply stared as he prepared the toast and jam, and when he passed the plate to him, Dan just stared at it.

“Dan?” John announced, hoping to get his attention for real this time. “Aren’t you hungry?”

Another shrug.

“What if I help you eat it?” He said. “Here: I’ll take a bite, then you take a bite.”

He tore off a bit of the toast before passing the plate back to Dan, who still ignored the food. He wondered if Dan was sitting around waiting for him to figure out what was really going on.

“Dan?” He asked again, quietly. “Why didn’t your mind palace work?”

“Because he was there.”

John’s heart leapt as he immediately realized what Dan meant.

“He was there?” John repeated.

Dan nodded.

“John?” Dan’s voice croaked in the quiet flat. “Are we bad people?”

John’s eyes went wide, and he suddenly he weren’t alone. Something really was going on with Dan, and here he was acting like he was just another patient when the kid was *Sherlock’s family.*

“Why would you think that?”

“Because people are trying to take us,” Dan said, speaking down to the table. “Why would they take us if we are good?”
“Dan…” John sighed. The he looked up, realizing exactly what Dan had said. “Wait, people?”

“Yeah…the bad man and the other man.”

“Other man?”

None of the police reports mentioned a second suspect. Laura told him it was just one man who took all three of them, using chloroform on the adults and scaring Dan into getting in the car.

“On the phone,” Dan said. His eyes never left the table, but he finally reached for the piece of toast. “The bad man was talking on the phone. He said he would take us somewhere, and the man on the phone told him not to. He said ‘what do I do with them?’ I gave him Mommy’s card with Sirlock’s house on it.”

Heart racing, John’s eyes dashed around the flat in hopes that Sherlock would suddenly appear. He shouldn’t be hearing this- the police should be hearing this. Or better yet, Mycroft.

“John?” Dan asked softly.

He nearly broke when he heard how scared the kid still was.

“What if he’s there when we go back home?”

Oh Dan…

“The bad man?” John asked. Dan nodded. “Uncle Mycroft took care of the bad people. You’re safe now, safer than you’ve ever been before.”

“But there could be other people.”

John could have murdered the kidnapper right then and there. At four years old Dan already comprehended how scary and dangerous the world was, and he would never be able to understand that.

“But see, you and I are lucky, because we have your uncles looking out for us. They’ll make sure nothing ever happens to either of us.”

Yet somehow we get shot at during every single case…

“I guess so,” Dan sighed. “Can I go back to bed now?”

John nodded.

“Of course,” he said.

He stood up and gathered the kid in his arms. Dan’s head immediately fell to his shoulder.

“We won’t let anyone hurt you,” he promised, “but you should talk to us, okay. No more lying about things that happen to you.”

He stole a glance toward the sleeping kid on his shoulder, but Dan’s eyes were already closed. He was fast asleep. John carefully placed him into the bed next to the still form of his boyfriend, and he fought urge to climb in next to them. Instead he took back his mobile and stood back to admire them.

Dan saw the kidnapper. He was on his mobile talking to someone. -JW
Mycroft replied immediately:

Thank you. -MH

And, of course, that was the last John heard of it.
This is for everyone who likes to see jealous! Sherlock. Also there is a shout out to Doyle's The Adventure of the Copper Beeches here. I decided to do a little twist to the who may have a crush on who part of the story.

The room was tense as Sherlock waited for his sister to comprehend what he just told her. He and John exchanged nervous glances; they weren’t sure how Laura was going to react. They weren’t even sure who they should tell. Laura stood up, at first, in shock, but then sat back down quickly and brought her fingertips to her chin.

“I just can’t believe Dan would lie like that,” she finally said. “He’s never lied about anything before, not on this level at least.”

“He’s clearly more afraid than he’s letting on,” John explained. “We can’t blame him-“

“No, I don’t blame him,” Laura assured. “I’m just in shock. And angry. That bastard took my son. God knows what he would have done to him.”


His heart melted as tears welled up in his sister’s eyes. He threw a glance to John, begging for help, but his boyfriend only nodded toward Laura. Reluctantly, Sherlock stood and awkwardly wrapped his hands around her.

“It’s okay,” he whispered. “He’s perfectly safe now. It’s a good thing he told us. It’s a good sign. He trusts us. He’ll tell you if something else bothers him.”

“But he couldn’t tell me!” Laura sobbed. “He didn’t even tell you, he told John!”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin.

“John has that effect on people.”

He stole a glance toward John and was pleased to see him blush.

“It’s just scary to think there could be more people involved in this,” Laura said, “maybe even more than Mycroft realizes. How can he know everything?”

“You would be surprised,” John called from across the room.

There was a knock on the door, and he and Laura immediately broke apart. He and John exchanged glances again; no one had knocked on the door like that since the night they met Dan.

“John, why don’t you answer it?” Sherlock suggested.

Groaning, John stood and trudged toward the door. He watched as his boyfriend’s body stiffened when he threw open the door to find a tall, skinny, brunette waiting for them. Even Laura looked
impressed by the woman’s elegantly crafted wardrobe: a long skirt trailed down to strappy brown sandals. A coral coloured halter top wrapped around her chest and neck.

“John?” He said. “Why don’t you invite our guest in?”

John’s pupils were blown wide, and Sherlock couldn’t stop the jealousy fuming inside him. *He’s checking her out!*

“Right,” John said, swallowing nervously. “Right, come in. Are you here with a case?”

“Yes,” the brunette said. “I’m Violet Hunter, here to see Sherlock Holmes.”

“That’s me,” Sherlock waved. “John, why don’t you show her into the flat?”

John’s face paled as he turned to Violet and waved her toward the sofa. He visibly cringed, surely thinking of the number of times they’d had sex on that very sofa.

“How can we help you?” John asked.

Violet took one glance down at the sofa and clutched her handbag tightly to her body.

“I’m seeking your professional advice, Mr. Holmes,” Violet explained. When he turned to his sister for her reaction, he noticed her tears were gone and her eyes were instead lit up, bemused. “This is regarding a job.”

“Oh,” Sherlock said. He purposefully switched his demeanor, hoping to appear professional and unintimidated to impress Laura and John. “Do you think your boss murdered someone?”

Violet’s eyes narrowed, and he immediately realized she didn’t appreciate the suggestion.

“This is about rather or not I should take a job.”

Laura’s hand flew to her mouth to hide a snicker, and Sherlock threw a sharp glare her way.

“Is it a dangerous job?” John asked, hopefully. “Is someone asking you to do something you shouldn’t be doing?”

His boyfriend inched closer to their client. His eyes were obviously focused in on her ridiculous large breasts.

*They’re clearly fake*, he thought to himself.

John didn’t seem to mind as he continued to stare at them. He wished he were close enough to slap John on the back of the head.

*He’s thinking about sex!*

“No, it’s not that,” Violet said. She let out a dramatic sigh, as though she thought they were all idiots for not figuring it out already. “This employer wants me to cut my hair.”

Sherlock’s eyes flashed to the hair that fell past her shoulders. Her hair was healthy and straight, with tiny golden highlights scattered amongst the brown strands.

“Well it’s not uncommon for companies to want their employees to fit into a certain look,” John said.
“John, do stop talking.”

He smirked as John’s face went red, and Laura laughed again.

“It’s fine,” Violet said. She turned to John, and her eyes narrowed with interest.

Sherlock was grateful when John instantly looked away.

“Is that your only problem with the job?” Laura asked.

Violet shrugged and sighed once more.

“I suppose,” she said. “The man’s quite nice, just a little odd.”

“What is the job?” Sherlock asked.

“I am to teach his daughter at home,” she explained. “The man’s wife has passed, and he’s very protective of his daughter. He would like me to work as a full-time teacher, sort of like a governess, I suppose.”

“You’re a teacher?” John asked.

His voice was unusually high.

“Yes,” Violet replied, “I’ve worked at London-area schools for the past ten years.”

“Let me get this straight,” Sherlock announced, “you’re being offered full-time employment under the supervision of a single man. The salary is clearly promising, with the potential for raises. The girl is already smart and willing to learn, though she’s terrible at algebra—”

“Useless subject,” Laura mumbled.

He glared at her.

“It’s not useless!” He insisted. He turned back to the client. “Accept the job. Accept it now, or you’ll be loathed by the millions of unemployed people out there who would kill for a full-time job offer.”

Violet’s eyes narrowed again, though this time she was obviously impressed. Sherlock smirked, satisfied with himself, and she offered him a kind smile.

“I think I will,” Violet said, “and if I have any issues with him, may I come to you for help?”

“Yes!” John replied.

Everyone stared at John, and he quickly cleared his throat.

“I mean, of course we’ll be here,” he said.

“Lovely!” Violet said. “Thank you, Mr. Holmes. You made that decision rather easy for me.”

She turned to leave without notice, and they let her go without saying another word. When the door was safely shut, Laura wasted no time bursting into laughter beside him.

“That was a client?” Laura squealed. “Jesus, what are your murder cases like? The case of which cat ate the mice?”
This time Sherlock blushed, and he didn’t reply as he turned to storm into the kitchen.

“Oh, Sherlock!” John pouted. “Come on.”

John followed him, but it wasn’t the insult he was thinking of when he spun around and slammed John against the fridge.

“Hey!” John snapped.

“You were checking her out!” Sherlock hissed.

John sank back against the fridge, trapped.

“Need I remind you that I slept with women for over twenty years?” John said. “Expecting my body not to respond to them is like expecting a rock star not to gawk at a fancy guitar!”

“Well it wasn’t guitars you were gawking over,” Sherlock shot. “You were staring at her breasts. Your mouth was practically watering, like they were speaking to you!”

“They were staring at me!”

John’s eyes went wide as he realized how stupid the comment was.

“It was just a reaction, Sherlock,” John said quietly.

Sherlock’s heart nearly broke into two.

“That’s what you said when we first kissed.”

He knew John realized how much the comment hurt him when his boyfriend’s eyes softened and his hands reached for his arms. John offered him a comforting squeeze, and his face fell to the floor.

“Prove to me that you weren’t checking her out,” Sherlock challenged.

Before he could blink he was spun around and forced up against the fridge himself. John’s lips attacked his, trapping him into a sloppy, wet, kiss. Fingers gripped tightly around his arms, refusing to let him go as he squirmed from the shock of it all.

Once his body registered what was happening, a parade of effects traveled through him. Thoughts of sex with John flashed across his mind, the hair on his arms stood up straight, an electric current raced through his bones, and his cock twitched as he became aroused.

A soft moan escaped him as John deepened the kiss by forcing his tongue down his throat. The tongue scraped across the roof of his mouth, the back of his teeth, and down his throat again. He shook with excitement, and John grabbed onto him even tighter.

When they broke apart for air, John wasted no time in declaring:

“I want you.”

Sherlock gasped as lips attacked him again, going this time for his neck. His eyes fluttered shut as John suckled at the skin there before letting his tongue dash back up toward his ear.

“God I want you,” John murmured into his ear.
His body shuttered as the wet tongue circled his ear, which felt like it was on fire.

But suddenly everything ended when John abruptly broke away.

His eyes twinkled, and Sherlock knew John proved his point.

“Was that convincing enough?” He teased.

Sherlock only managed to nod.
Oral Sex: Quickly and Quietly

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Sherlock moaned softly as the sensation of someone creeping through his room pulled him out of deep sleep. Entertaining a four year old all day seemed to be the cure to his insomnia, and though the occasional nightmare still plagued him he found it easier than ever to sleep through the night. He wasn’t amused when creaking floorboards woke him at two in the morning, but when his eyes opened to find John hovering over him every cell of his body burst awake.

John climbed into bed with him without asking permission, and Sherlock let a few soft kisses brush across his lip before he jumped into defense.

“Are you insane?” He whispered, resting his head in his palm. John mimicked him. “Laura’s sleeping over on the sofa, remember? She fell asleep there while watching your stupid show.”

“And she’s been out for hours!” John replied. “Let’s have sex.”

Quiet fits of laughter spilled out of him, and a bright grin shone on his face in the moonlight.

“You’ve never put it so bluntly before.”

“It’s been days, Sherlock!” John whined. “The incident in the kitchen nearly killed me.”

“You mean when you shoved me up against the fridge and snogged me in front of my sister?” He said. “I think that nearly killed all of us.”

John grinned, untouched by the embarrassing memory of Laura’s face when they broke away from that kiss.

“We should put a door up in the kitchen,” John whispered.

“We should change the locks to the flat.”

“We should do this.”

His eyes rolled back as John sucked at his neck and forced Sherlock’s arms around his neck. They scooted closer together, and his body was tormented by the electric kisses and warmth of John’s skin.

“Quiet,” Sherlock whispered.

John’s mouth fell over his, and as they moaned into each other he wasn’t sure if that would be possible. His lover wasted no time in bringing his hand down to tug his trousers down, and Sherlock reached for the tie on John’s pyjamas. Their lips danced in unison as they gracefully shrugged off their pyjamas, and he planted a firm hand on John’s chest to hold him steady.

“We agreed,” Sherlock whispered into John’s ears, “no sex until the family leaves. We don’t want another repeat of the Mycroft incident.”

To distract him from that horrible memory, Sherlock licked John’s ear and then covered his lips with his mouth just in time to catch the soft groan. John pushed Sherlock playfully to his back and rolled over on top of him, a move that sent the hair on his body standing straight up and his heart
racing three times too fast. Pupils blown, Sherlock gazed up at his lover, waiting for what was to come next.

“Your body doesn’t seem to be in agreement with that agreement,” John teased.

He placed a hand over his cock, and Sherlock gasped. His head hit the pillows as his body arched up in ecstasy, and he knew there was no turning back.

They managed to stay silent after that, being too distracted by hands, lips, teeth, and the steady rub of their erections to keep bickering. John’s steady hands held his back, lifting him off the bed just enough to create a good angle. He straddled him and planted his fingertips at his hipbones, pressing down tightly enough to cause soft bruises. Leaning forward, John’s lips graced one nipple, than the other, sending sharp electric shots of pleasure threw him. Sherlock lifted a hand to comb through John’s hair, simply admiring him as he worked.

His lover’s kisses trailed down to his cock, and John quickly scooted back to allow enough room to-

“Oh!”

Sherlock covered his mouth quickly, forgetting his own orders to be quiet. Eagerly, John’s tongue raced up and down his shaft, taking him in inch by inch. He had to bite down on his arm to keep from crying out when those lips moved to tease at his balls before taking him in once again. John pulled away for a moment, panting, and the way his eyes trailed up to meet his own sent shivers down his spine. A hand carefully cupped his arse before John’s tongue sat off again, attacking the head and working its way down. His back arched as he felt his cock suddenly hit the back of John’s throat, and he grabbed for a pillow to stifle his own cries.

John took him down further, only to work his way back out again, and fuck when did he become so talented at this? Sherlock’s eyes blew open even wider when he looked down to see John pumping his own cock, and he whimpered when he felt himself draw closer to his climax.

His cock dipped into John’s mouth again, gracing the back of his throat at just the right angle for-

He moaned into the pillow and gripped John’s arms tightly as he came inside John’s mouth. John let him go with a glorious pop and immediately scrambled on top of him. Strangled pants escaped John as his hands worked his cock, and Sherlock shuddered as cum spilled onto his own stomach.

John let out a soft “oh!” as he collapsed on top of him, and Sherlock grin. Running a hand through John’s hair, he whispered:

“I missed you too.”

With a feverish nod, John rolled off of him so that they were shoulder-to-shoulder again. Naked and covered with sweat and cum, they lay in silence as they caught their breath. To his horror, Sherlock realized how quiet the flat really was.

“There’s no way she didn’t hear that,” John mumbled, reading his mind.

“I tried to warn you,” Sherlock teased.

Their eyes closed briefly as they shared another kiss.

“I suppose I should go back to bed now,” John sighed.
“I suppose.” His fingers kept rhythmically brushing through John’s blonde strands. “Get dressed first.”

Rolling his eyes, John slipped out of bed. Their eyes never left each other as he got dressed, and he leaned in for another kiss before saying goodbye.

“I love your family,” John whispered, “but I miss you.”

They shared one final kiss before Sherlock mumbled against his lips:

“I miss you too.”

Chapter End Notes

To anyone wondering, you haven't seen the last of Violet Hunter!

Have I mentioned how amazing you guys are? Words can not express how thankful I am for your support!
I know a lot of people wanted to see another case. Sherlock and John are back in action!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“John!”

John groaned as he was woken by the sounds of Sherlock shouting and knocking at the door. When his eyes burst open he groaned again when he saw the sun wasn’t even out yet.

“John!” Sherlock threw the door open and stormed in without waiting for permission.

“Sherlock!” John exclaimed, pulling the covers back over his head. “The point of knocking on a door is to let someone allow you to enter.”

“No time, John, come on. Case!”

He peered out from under the blankets and groaned a third time when he saw that it was just four AM.

“It’s too damn early,” he mumbled. “I’m just coming off of holiday.”

The covers were suddenly thrown off of him, and he hid his head in his arms to protect him when Sherlock turned on the light without notice.

“Time to face the world again, Dr. Watson,” Sherlock said, “duty calls.”

Spots sprinkled in his eyes as he looked up at Sherlock for the first time. He was impressed to see that Sherlock was fully dressed in nice slacks, a slick sky-blue collared shirt, and the scent of fresh soap from a shower.

“Can’t duty wait until the sun rises?”

“Would it help if I told you we’re helping a damsel in distress?” Sherlock’s eyes were twinkling, and John sat up, interested. “Violet Hunter texted me a half hour ago. It’s her first night on the job, and she’s spooked.”

“She’s spooked?” John echoed, throwing his legs over the side of the bed. He ran his hands threw his hair, attempting to make himself look presentable. “Why is she spending the night? I thought she was just a teacher.”

“He offered her a raise if she agreed to live with them,” Sherlock explained, “but after one night there she’s having doubts.”

“Imagine that.”

He rolled his eyes as he reached for his nearest shirt and tugged it over his head.
“She hasn’t even seen his daughter yet,” Sherlock said. John looked up at him, eyes wide, and it was almost wrong how excited his boyfriend looked about this. “In fact, she’s found no evidence that a daughter even lives in the house! Don’t you see, John? This is—“

“Don’t say fantastic!” John protested, pulling on his trousers. “It’s creepy, Sherlock. Creepy is what this is. I can already tell. And four AM is far too early for creepy. And besides, why the hell did she agree to take this job without even meeting the daughter?!“

Sherlock shrugged.

“She’s just stupid, I guess.”

They gazed at each other, and John couldn’t help but to chuckle. As weird as the case sounded, it was nice to see Sherlock get excited about detective work again.

“Fine,” John sighed. “Do I have time for coffee?”

Sherlock pulled him by the arm so that they were face-to-face, and before he had a chance to breathe their lips smashed together in an electrifying kiss. His hands were sweaty as they latched onto Sherlock’s, holding on tightly as his boyfriend’s tongue dipped into his mouth. He breathed in sharply as the scent of Sherlock’s soap hit him even stronger, and when his lover finally pulled away his lips were left feeling tingly.

John was panting when they finally broke apart.

“Awake?” Sherlock asked.

“Yeah,” John breathed.

The twinkle was back in Sherlock’s eyes, and John’s mind was so fuzzy from the kiss that he only remembered to grab shoes and socks at the last moment as they left the room.

Laura was fully dressed and curled up on the sofa when they walked into the living room.

“She’s going too?” John asked.

“She wants to see her consulting-detective brother in action,” Sherlock announced proudly.

“He woke me up at three AM!” Laura moaned into a pillow.

“I’ll get a cab,” Sherlock offered.

“I’ll be right back,” John said.

He disappeared back into his room and slipped into the closet. He moved some old clothes and boxes around to reveal a loose floorboard. Pulling up the floorboard, his eyes fell on the safe containing his service weapon for the first time in weeks. John closed his eyes and cringed as he remembered gunshots chasing after his boyfriend.

His steady hands gripped the gun for a moment before he carefully stuffed it in the back of his pants. He knew it probably wasn’t necessary to take the weapon along, but the thought of something- anything- happening to Sherlock made his blood boil with rage.

And they hadn’t even left the flat yet.
I'm sorry for the lack of updates lately. I hope to make up for it by [hopefully] getting out two updates today!

Also, I'm finishing up my other story, Left Behind, and I'm planning a possible new story...a Mycroft/Lestrade adventure! In case you may be interested!
Violet Hunter instructed them to meet her around the back of a large estate located just outside London city limits. Sherlock couldn’t help but to admire the 18th century home; even in the dark early morning hours he could brush his hand over the exterior and see the fine details.

John and Laura lagged behind him, practically falling over each other in attempt to stay awake. Their client was rolling back and forth on her heels and wringing her hands when they approached her, clearly anxious.

“How are you, Miss Hunter?” Sherlock greeted.

“He’s been away all night! He left me in this bloody house alone. I’ve got these messages from him, drunken messages, Mr. Holmes! Asking me if anyone’s been around, if I get out much during the day, when my favourite foods are. It’s a bunch of random shit, and it’s freaking me out.”

Behind them, John snickered.

“It’s four in the morning and you called us out here for sexting?”

“I believe there has to be sex talk involved in order for it to be considered sexting.”

He grinned at John, who simply raised his eyebrows, impressed that he would know that.

Sherlock’s eyes twinkled in a there’s more where that comes from kind of way, and he turned back to Violet.

“And you still haven’t met the girl?” Sherlock said.

Violet shook her head, looking like she might break into tears.

“Violet, have you cut your hair?” Laura suddenly squealed.

Sherlock studied his client and frowned; somehow he had missed that her long locks had turned to a short, carefully cropped, cut. Violet blushed and subconsciously tugged at her hair.

“It was part of the job description, remember?” Violet whined. “I miss my hair.”

He resisted the urge to roll his eyes, and he wanted to stomp on John’s foot when sympathy actually crossed over his face.

“So your boss has been out all night?” Sherlock spoke up. “I’ve trust you’ve been looking around?”

“Yes, like you suggested.”

“Sherlock!” John hissed.

He ignored him.

“And?” He asked.
Violet unlocked the back door to let them in as she explained:

“I know he’s either divorced or widowed-“

“Widowed,” Sherlock announced. All eyes fell on him, and he sighed dramatically when he had to explain: “The furniture is wrong.”

“The furniture is what?” Laura echoed.

“The sofa, the armchair, they’re dark brown but look at those pillows. They’re very masculine and new. They’re all golden and old with frilly things on them. They don’t match the style of the other things in the room at all. The pillows are hers. He keeps them around for sentiment, perhaps, but more than likely because he can still smell her on them. Or at least he thinks he can.”

“But there are no pictures of her,” John pointed out.

“The death was recent,” Sherlock said. “He’s in shock.”

“Well he hasn’t mentioned anything about it to me,” Violet said, crossing her arms, “I looked him up online- and nothing! I couldn’t even find anything on the daughter.”

He took that as a cue to whip out his mobile and do some of his own searching. Violet only agreed to give him the boss’ earlier that morning, but she was right: a quick Google search brought up nothing.

*Something with the names*, he thought.

“Did he offer a tour of the house?” John asked.

“Oh course,” Violet nodded. She wrapped her arms around her chest, as though she was cold, but the house itself was rather warm. “But he wouldn’t let me go downstairs. He had to take a call and never got back to the tour.”

“Who was the call from?” Sherlock asked.

He noticed that Laura’s eyes were dancing from him to John in awe, and he couldn’t help but to feel proud.

“Dunno,” she admitted.

“Do you have keys?” Sherlock said.

“To everywhere but downstairs.”

Sherlock grinned.

“Then that’s where I want to go.”

His mobile suddenly buzzed, and he opened it to find a text from John.

*What do you know about sexting? – JW*

Sherlock grinned. He was careful not to look at John as he replied:

*I know I’d like to finish what we started last night. God, that image of you above me…I’ll get off on that for weeks. -SH*
He could practically hear John smirking behind him.

*Pitiful attempt. How about we blow off this case? Client is stupid. Case. Closed. –JW*

*What, and go home and blow something else? –SH*

*Now you’re catching on. –JW*

“Are you two texting each other while in the same room?” Laura teased.

John blushed, and Sherlock had to look away. He never considered how weird it would be to work with John again after everything that had happened between them.

*If I solve this case before noon tomorrow then I get to top the next five times we have sex. –SH*

His reply came almost immediately.

*You can’t bet on sex! –JW*

*If I solve this case before noon today I get to choose how I fuck you. –SH*

His heart was racing and his hands felt a bit tingly. Biting his lip, he desperately fought the urge to grin- and it was all because he knew John was being tormented just as much as he was.

*If I solve this case before seven, I get to bring back the toy box. –SH*

*Please don’t call it that! We sound like freaks. –JW*

“Sherlock!” Laura called; at some point she had gotten ahead of them.

Sherlock smiled down at his mobile and replied to John before going after her.

*We are freaks. In a good way ;) -SH*

Chapter End Notes

Have I mentioned you guys are awesome? Well, you are! Sorry if updates are slow this week. Work is taking over my life (again). I promise I will bring you more interesting case chapters and less filler soon!
Undercover

Chapter Notes

I decided to put my own twist on Doyle's Copper Beeches story. Hope you don't mind!

“This house is amazing,” Laura sang as they carefully made their way down a dark staircase. She ran a finger across cracks in the old walls and dust on black and white family photos. It reminded John a lot of Sherlock’s family home, and he couldn’t help but to wonder if his boyfriend felt the same. He glanced at ahead to see how he was doing, but Sherlock was as quiet and observant as ever. John smiled a little; he had to admit that being back on a case was starting to feel good.

“Really?” Violet shot, turning her nose up as she carefully descended the steps. John thought she must be the only person who would wake up at three in the morning and put on an electric blue dress and heels. “It’s very dusty and dark.”

“It’s very historical,” Laura replied. “There’s so much character. There are probably so many stories to this house.”

“And probably a body or two,” Sherlock chimed in.

They all looked up. Was Sherlock actually teasing her? Laura grinned, impressed. He winked at his little sister and continued to follow Violet down the stairs.

A shiver raced up his spine as they reached the downstairs hallway. It was dark and poorly lit, and a pit sank in his stomach as he was reminded of some kind of dungeon. There were three closed doors- one down the hall directly in front of them, and one on either wall. Sherlock tried each, to no success.

“So you’ve never been in any of these rooms?”

“No,” she replied, “The only one I’ve been in besides my own is a locked closet up stairs. You must see it! It’s even creepier than down here.”

“How so?” John asked.

Ten minutes later they were standing in front of a hallway closet that sat beside Violet’s room. Through her open door they could see her pink and purple luggage sets, her bright red bed clothing, the dark brown curtains and the makeup lining a sleek oak dresser. Inside the closet sat the same luggage set, the same type of bed clothing, and even the same brand of makeup. Sherlock peered into one of the suitcases to find a stash of dresses; all from the same designer Violet was currently wearing.

“He gave me these things!” Violet whispered. “I found a spare key to the closet in my bedroom. It was under a loose floorboard beneath the bed. I don’t think I’m supposed to know what’s inside. These clothes, the bedding- all of it- he supplied it to me for the job.”

John stared at her in awe, and he was glad when Sherlock finally said it:
“And you didn’t think that was the least bit strange?!”

Violet just shrugged.

“How did you find out about the job?” John asked. He watched Sherlock shift through the things in the closet: old pairs of jeans, copies of albums from the 80s, magazines, shoes.

“It was funny, really,” Violet began. She leaned against the wall and yawned; it was the first sign of tiredness he’d seen in her that morning. “I was job searching on my laptop at a café. Mr. Rucastle happened to walk by and asked me how the search was going. We chatted a bit, and he admitted he was looking for a tutor for his daughter. I told him about how I have completed some educational training in university, and he hired me almost immediately. I wasn’t even aware I was in a job interview!”

Laura stifled a laugh, and John felt justified in completely changing his mind about Violet.

She was clearly crazy—beautiful or not.

“How old is the daughter?” Laura asked.

“Six, I think,” Violet said. “She comes home today from vacation. She’s been with her aunt. Oh—and he also has another daughter. She’s supposed to be close to my age, which I suppose explains all the stuff. It’s just creepy, don’t you think? Him trying to pass off all of his daughter’s stuff to me? From what I can tell she doesn’t even have anything to do with him anymore.”

John raised his eyebrows and turned to Sherlock. From the wheels turning in his eyes, he could tell Sherlock thought this was at least a ‘seven’.

“The more I stay here the more this just all seems off,” Violet admitted. “I’m worried I made a terrible mistake. Please don’t leave me, Mr. Holmes! What if he’s a creeper?”

“Then you should have thought of that before taking a job offered by a stranger at a café,” Sherlock shot. Violet stood stiff, offended, and even John had to snort as he and Laura followed Sherlock back down the stairs. “Technically there is no case here, yet. But I’m certain there is something strange going on in this house.”

“No shit,” John mumbled.

“I want to stay,” Sherlock announced. John turned to him, panic rising in his chest.

“No!” He exclaimed. “No Sherlock, no! I will not stay here!”

“Come on, John!” Sherlock said, eyes lit up with excitement. He desperately turned to Laura and was relieved to see that she obviously thought her brother had gone mad too. “Can’t you feel it? This house has a story. Something is wrong here. Nothing has happened yet, but something is wrong. We’re literally stepping into a crime in progress. I can’t put my finger on it yet, but this is our chance to actually stop something from happening as it happens. It will be brilliant! Come on, Laura, what do you think?”

Laura’s eyes went wide as her brother turned to her, and she looked around helplessly, as though hoping another ‘Laura’ might be in the room to answer him.

“What?” She cried. “No, Sherlock, I have a plane to catch tomorrow!”

“Then we’ll solve the case by tomorrow!”
“I thought you said there is no case!” John protested.

Sherlock placed a hand on Laura’s shoulder. It was awkward and uncomfortable; even Violet seemed surprised.

“A young woman feels unsafe, John,” Sherlock said quietly, feigning concerned. “Isn’t that enough?”

“You just want to investigate a creepy old man’s house,” John muttered. “There are probably ghosts here.”

“Besides, we don’t even have a reason to be here,” Laura said.

Sherlock turned to Violet.

“Didn’t you say there was a cleaning staff?”

Violet nodded.

“Yes. A couple. Mr. Rucastle got angry at them earlier today because he suspects they’re stealing.”

“They are,” Sherlock said, “and we’ll prove it to him. And then, he’ll hire us.”

John didn’t have a good feeling about this.

At. All.

“‘Hire us?’” Laura repeated.

“Cleaning staff?!” John exclaimed. “I went to medical school, Sherlock! I served in Afghanistan! I’m not going to be someone’s bloody housekeeper!”

“It’s just for a day!” Sherlock said, rolling his eyes. “Something’s wrong here, can’t you feel it?”

“You just miss being on cases,” John said.

Their eyes met, and from the longing in his boyfriends’ he knew he was right. For a split second, he almost felt sorry for Sherlock. His friend was having way too much fun with this, and he didn’t want to be the one to take that away.

“Fine,” John sighed, “but if we do this there better be something going on in this house!”

Sherlock grinned, and his eyes twinkled.

“Oh, there will be. Like I said John, I can feel it! Can’t you?”

He took off down the hallway, typing away at his mobile—probably asking Mycroft for favors. John sighed again and followed, with Laura trudging beside him.

“I don’t get it,” Laura said, “what am I supposed to feel?”

John just shrugged and admitted:

“I’ve been working with the man for over a year, and I still haven’t figured that out.”
“I won’t forgive you for this,” John muttered.

He glared at the dusty bedroom window before grabbing the window cleaner and going at it.

“It’s a window, John,” Sherlock said from across the room. “It’s not the end of the world.”

“Says the person not doing anything!” Laura said. She suddenly screamed and scrambled away from the dresser she was cleaning. “Sherlock…”

John exchanged glanced with his boyfriend before following him to the dresser. All three pairs of eyes fell on the picture of a beautiful young woman- who looked exactly like Violet.

“She looks like Violet!” John pointed out, shaking his head.

His heart was pounding with the kind of adrenaline akin to how he felt during horror movies. It felt surreal, suddenly, to be standing there and realization that Sherlock was right. Something was most definitely going on in this house.

“Says the person not doing anything!” Laura whispered. “I mean, this was stuck in here with the man’s boxers and socks. Is that his older daughter?”

“Says the person not doing anything!” Sherlock said, wrapping her arms around herself. John was surprised when Sherlock placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

“I don’t think that’s it,” Sherlock said. “He’s ashamed of something.”

“You think?” Laura snapped.

“No, not like that,” Sherlock said. “If it was that he wouldn’t allow strangers to roam around his house.”

“You met him when we were interviewed this morning,” John said, “the man is a creep! We need to get the police involved.”

“And tell them what?” Sherlock said. Their eyes met, and John suddenly remembered how difficult working with Sherlock could be. “I need to look around the house more. You two stay here.”

“Wait!” Laura said suddenly. “Get down, look!”

They fell to the floor simultaneously as she nodded toward the window. John peered over the two siblings just enough to catch a glimpse of a man sporting a black suit and sunglasses standing across from the garden.

“This is creepy,” Laura whispered, eyes wide. “We shouldn’t have come here. Christ, why did I let you talk me into this?”

Sherlock actually grinned.

“Because this is in your blood!” He said. He tugged the curtains closed and jumped up. “You’re
going to be brilliant at this, Laura, I can tell. You’ll get used to the creepiness.”

“I hope I never get used to it,” Laura sighed.

“I’m going to have a look around,” Sherlock said, “if only I can find the key to that door downstairs...”

“Hey!” John grabbed his arm. “We’ve got to finish up in here. The man’s a perfectionist. He’ll fire us if we don’t get through with everything today.”

Sherlock gaped at him and a pit fell in his stomach, making him feel stupid for speaking up.

“You know this isn’t actually your job right?” Sherlock said. He patted him on the shoulder, like a child. “I’ll have this case solved by tomorrow.”

Swirling around, Sherlock waltzed out of the room with that familiar wild-eyed look John loved so much.

Well, thought he loved anyway.

“Does he do that a lot?” Laura asked with a grin as she went back to cleaning.

“What?”

“Piss you off on purpose,” she replied. “It’s adorable. I can see a lot of Dan in him, actually.”

“Yeah, that’s because he acts like a child,” John mumbled.

He moved around Laura to begin making the bed.

“Seriously, though, I can tell you’re good for him,” she inched away from the dresser to help him with the bed. “Is the relationship going strong, then?”

Laura’s eyes twinkled when she looked up at him, and he froze, immediately realizing what she meant. She did hear them!

“Oh god,” he groaned. “I am so sorry!”

“It’s nothing to be embarrassed about!” Laura laughed.

“It’s everything to be embarrassed about!”

“If you two wanted space you should have kicked me out,” Laura said, “I would have been fine at the hotel.”

They began laying down a fresh set of sheets, and in the reflection of the mirror across from the bed he could see his face had turned bright red.

“Dan seems to like London,” John commented, hoping to change the subject away from him and Sherlock.

“He loves it,” Laura smiled, “honestly I think he’ll be disappointed when he gets back to New York.”

“You guys will have to visit again sometime,” John said.
“Or maybe you guys could come to America.”

Their eyes met, and they both burst out laughing.

“Right, Sherlock in New York,” he said, shaking his head.

“It wouldn’t be that bad,” Laura teased. “As long as we keep him away from the loud noises, the crowds, the people…”

“You’re catching on,” John replied, “I suppose you’ve realized now how strange your brother is.”

“He’s not too strange for you though.”

Her eyes twinkled again, and a grin spread across his face.

“You two are brilliant together,” she said as they changed the pillow cases. “And Sherlock, well, he’s one of a kind isn’t he? He’s wondering around this house trying to solve a case that doesn’t exist for the sake of helping a girl he doesn’t know.”

“He’s pretty amazing,” John admitted, “but he’s really changed, too. He used to be horrible around people. He would act so uncomfortable and awkward.”

“You were that change!” Laura said.

John stopped. He had never even considered that.

“Obviously I don’t know how he was ‘before’,,” she said, “but clearly my brother’s been through some shit in his life. Seeing him in a healthy relationship, seeing him adapt to these crazy changes and seeing him out there trying to help people…it’s refreshing, you know? It gives me hope.”

“Hope for what?”

Laura shrugged, her face suddenly crestfallen.

“My life has pretty much sucked, up until Dan and Jason,” she admitted. “I was an awful kid, with an awful father and a mother I never got along with. I used to think my life was destined to just be shit. When I had Dan I was worried I wasn’t up for the job of being a mother. Sometimes I even still worry about that. But being here, and knowing I have family out there that cares…it’s just comforting.”

They worked in silence for a moment, and John couldn’t help but to think back to when he first met Sherlock. He had never felt as lonely as he did those first few months of being back in the country. Meeting Sherlock was like an instant sign that things were about to change for the better.

“I felt the same way when I met him,” he admitted. “Did he tell you my parents disowned me when I told them I’m gay?”

Laura’s mouth fell open as she looked up at him, horrified.

“Bastards!” She exclaimed.

“Yeah,” he agreed, “but Sherlock was so…good…about it. Looking back, I honestly wonder if the reason he was always so timid and, frankly, anti-social was because he was-“

“In love?” Laura teased.
His eyes went wide, and by the look of her face she regretted saying that.

*In love.*

There was no way he and Sherlock were in love. Their relationship hadn’t gone that *deep* yet. And was Sherlock even capable of love? Real, honest to god love?

Was he?

He thought about the past few weeks spent just the two of them, and how it seemed like the most normal thing in the world to spend most his life in bed with Sherlock. He thought about how much he longed for his lover as soon as he would leave the room or how worried he would be when he would do something as simple as go for a walk around town. He thought about the gun, tucked away carefully in his pants because the thought of even the smallest thing happening to Sherlock made him…

His palms were suddenly very sweaty, and he desperately tried to hide them in his pockets before Laura noticed.

“Oh god!” She said quickly. “I’m sorry. That was out of line.”

“No,” he said, letting out a long sigh. “That was what I was getting at, it just wasn’t what I was getting at. Sherlock’s so different from everyone else, but the deeper our relationship gets the more I realize he really is like the rest of us. He has all of these flaws and things he hasn’t dealt with, and he’s riddled with emotions he doesn’t let anyone see. I think that when we met I was someone he could finally let in. I think he has that with you too, now.”

This connection he and Sherlock had, it was brilliant. And he knew no matter how hard he tried, he would never find another person who would mean as much to him as Sherlock. He did want to be there for his boyfriend, always. He wanted to know everything about him, and he wanted to be able to accept it.

John wanted Sherlock to know everything about him and accept him…

*Love* him.

*I’ve gone completely mad.*

“He does,” Laura nodded. “I know my family went through a trauma, but I’m glad we all found each other. I’ve really enjoyed being here. And you know-“

They both stopped working when they heard the sudden sounds of pattering feet on the hardwood outside.

“Do you hear that?” John asked quietly.

Out of nowhere Sherlock flew into the room and leapt on the bed. John and Laura jumped up without question when a large Mastiff ran in, chasing after them. The dog stayed on the floor, barking violently as they clung together on top of the mattress. Sherlock was trembling beside him, and John remembered how shaken he was after the Baskerville incident. John’s hand fell on Sherlock’s wrist, and he felt his lover’s heart rate immediately calmed down.

“Fucking dog,” Sherlock mumbled.

“Where did it come from?” Laura asked, blowing a loose strand of hair from her face as she tried to
calm down herself.

“Out of nowhere,” Sherlock said. “I swear it wasn’t in the house before. There’s not even a trace of dog hair!”

“This house makes no sense,” John sighed.

He felt a bit shaky himself. Briefly, he closed his eyes and recalled being trapped in that awful lab, thinking the hound was after him.

“Lily!” A child’s voice suddenly squealed. “Lily get back here you stupid, useless, ugly, dog!”

A tiny, blonde-haired girl stormed into the room, and the dog immediately rounded on her.

“SHUT UP!” The girl screamed at the dog.

The Mastiff scurried past her, continuing to bark its head off as she fled the room. The girl looked up at them for the first time, her bright blue eyes examining them like they were lab rats.

“Why are you on the bed?” She asked.

John glanced at Sherlock before admitting, quietly:

“We hate dogs.”

The girl snorted and rolled her eyes. Sherlock was the first to climb down from the bed, and John helped Laura down right after.

“I miss Mr. Toller,” the girl complained, “he could always control that fucking dog.”

Arms crossed at her chest, she stormed from the room. The three of them exchanges glances.

“Did she just swear?!” Laura exclaimed. “She can’t be much older than Dan!”

“Lily!” Violet’s voice suddenly cried. She ran into the room and collapsed, breathless, against the wall. She looked between the three of them like she wasn’t walking into anything odd at all. “Have you seen her?”

“Yeah,” John said, pointing out the door, “the bloody dog ran that way. Nearly gave us a heart attack. You should have warned us about her!”

“No,” Violet shook her head, “the girl. Lily. She’s refusing to do her math work. I’ve been chasing her all over this house. I swear it’s like trying to teach a monkey. Actually, monkeys are probably smarter than her. And nicer.”

“Wait a minute,” Laura said. She took an accusing step toward Violet. “Are you telling me the dog has the same name as the girl?”

Violet stared at her, puzzled.

“Yeah,” Violet said simply.

She brushed past them and stormed out of the room herself, much in the same manner as the little girl. They turned to each other again, and John stabbed a finger into Sherlock’s chest.

“I’ll never forgive you for this!” He shot. He looked his boyfriend up and down, trying to catch
any signs that he might still be shaken up. Sighing, John realized he could never be mad at Sherlock for too long. “Are you alright?”

A grin spread across Sherlock’s face as he withdrew something from his pocket: a key. By the amazed look on his boyfriend’s face, John knew it had to be the key to the room downstairs. He handed it over to John and beamed proudly as he turned the key over in his hands, impressed.

Sherlock swirled around the room and pumped a fist into the air, crying:

“I’m brilliant!” John and Laura followed, rushing to keep up. Sherlock called after them: “Found it in a wine cabinet. It’s a spare key. I think the old housekeeper left it. The man was a drunk, he probably never realized he lost the key-“

John stumbled into Sherlock’s back when his boyfriend suddenly stopped in front of them. His eyes trailed up and went wide when he realized what happened.

Mr. Rucastle was glaring down at them.

“And where do you three think you’re going?”

Chapter End Notes

I hope you all are enjoying the "case"! I'm ready to take on prompts again, and I need to go back and see if there's any I haven't done that could work now. But if you have any request, please, feel free to ask!!!

Thanks!!!
“Don’t eat anything he offers us!” Laura hissed as they crept down the stairs after Mr. Rucastle.

“Are you going to starve, then?” Sherlock shot. “Besides, we’re not eating. We’re working, remember?”

Behind them John sighed and spoke up:

“This really isn’t necessary, Mr. Rucastle. We’re fine with working through the morning. We’ll take our break at noon.”

Mr. Rucastle snorted.

“Break?” He replied. “I didn’t say anything about a break. I offered you coffee. Your break is when you finish.”

Sherlock bit back a yelp as John suddenly shoved him, and he glared back at his boyfriend. The idea of not having any kind of break from the madness of this house was clearly not amusing to John, but he didn’t care about their ‘job’ in the slightest.

“We were wondering if we could stay the night?” He asked. “It only makes sense. You have the available rooms, and obviously we will clean up after ourselves. The drive back into town is a nuisance at night. This way we can start even earlier tomorrow morning. You wouldn’t have to pay us.”

“Of course I won’t pay you to sleep in my own bloody house!” Mr. Rucastle said, roaring with laughter. The man was tall and lanky, with wrinkly skin and glasses that were too big for his face, but he had the voice and personality of a large, athletic, young man. “If it means you will work earlier tomorrow then it’s fine. I will have to lock you in your rooms, though, of course.”

“What?!” Laura exclaimed.

Sherlock glared at her. He was really hoping they would both understand the importance of complying with Mr. Rucastle’s every wish and not pissing him off.

“Can’t have you wondering about the house, can I?” Mr. Rucastle explained. “I’m sorry, but with everything that happened with my last employers I just can’t take the chance.”

They were finally back into the main room, and Mr. Rucastle left them alone for a moment to make the coffee. It took no time for the other two to round on him.

“This is unbelievable, Sherlock!” John shot. “We’ve got nothing with us but the clothes on our backs. No one knows we’re out here. And he wants to lock us in our rooms! If we agree to this, then we’re officially insane.”

A wild grin broke across Sherlock’s face.

“We agree to the terms, Mr. Rucastle!” He called.

Laura reached to slap his shoulder, but stopped as the man of the house wondered back into the
“Thank you,” John mumbled as he accepted the coffee.

“Violet, Lily, downstairs!” Mr. Rucastle suddenly called out.

Sherlock blinked in surprised, shocked that he would refer to Violet like she was his own child. Within moments the two girls were pounding down the stairs. He wasn’t sure who looked more frustrated and angry- Violet or the girl.

“I meant the dog, Lily!” Mr. Rucastle snapped. “Upstairs. Finish your schoolwork. Now.”

“But-“

“GO!”

_God it’s like being back at home._

He and John exchanged glances, and he knew his boyfriend thought the same.

“Thank you,” Violet said. She looked exhausted and worried, and he noticed she was throwing glances his way every time she got the chance. “She hasn’t been cooperating with me all morning. She seems upset about something.”

Mr. Rucastle laughed as he sipped his own coffee.

“She’s a child, of course she’s upset about something.”

The three of them watched as the man sipped at his coffee, seeming to be trapped deep in thought all of a sudden. He’s upset about something too, Sherlock thought. His eyes roamed the man’s body, picking out every detail- the lack of dog hair on his clothes, the secondhand suit he wore, his thinning grey hair.

Suddenly Mr. Rucastle’s mobile buzzed, and his face changed completely. His eyes narrowed, almost in a defensive way, like he was responding to a threat.

“I need to go into town this evening, to deal with matters concerning my wife’s death,” Mr. Rucastle explained. “I feel safe leaving Lily here, as long as you four are here as well.”

“We will be!” Violet replied.

Laura and John glared at her.

“With all due respect, Mr. Rucastle,” John said, “we’re not babysitters. Isn’t it a risk to put your child in the hands of strangers?”

Mr. Rucastle’s eyes narrowed, and Sherlock wanted nothing more to be able to yell and John and tell him to _shut up_ before he blew their cover completely.

“Why?” Mr. Rucastle asked. “Should I be worried? She’s six, and it’s one night. You all will be fine. You asked to stay the night. I will pay you, if it helps.”

“It’s fine!” Violet said.

She looked rather desperate to receive the few extra wages she would get for that night. Sherlock studied her, wondering what she was missing. Now that he thought about it she looked rather out of
place in the expensive dress she wore. She clearly didn’t know the first thing about teaching or watching a child. In fact, Violet seemed to be more uncomfortable here than any of them.

“Well then,” Mr. Rucastle said, standing up. “I will be leaving in an hour.”

“Mr. Rucastle!” John called. Sherlock closed his eyes, hoping that he had something useful to say. “I’m sorry, but how did your wife die?”

Excellent!

Mr. Rucastle glanced back at them, suddenly looking distraught and overwhelmed.

“Car accident,” he replied simply, quietly. “Feel free to roam the house tonight just…please, I’ve been through too much already.”

He left them with that, and that one burst of emotion confused Sherlock more than any of their other findings combined.

John rounded on him as soon as Mr. Rucastle was out of the room.

“He wanted to lock us in our rooms!” He exclaimed.

“But he’s not going to,” Sherlock pointed out.

He leapt up and went back to snooping around the room. He picked up vases, opened drawers, peered in cabinets, and looked everywhere he could find in hopes for clues.

“Oh, he tried to do that to me,” Violet said. “It’s one of the reasons I was afraid of being here alone.”

“How did you talk him out of it?” Laura asked.

Violet shrugged and picked herself out of her chair.

“I told him I was ill,” she explained. “No one wants someone vomiting all over their spare bedroom.”

She left the room and the three of them stared at each other.

“I’m really freaked out, Sherlock,” Laura said. She sounded like she might want to cry.

“You’ve said that,” he sighed. He turned his gaze to a window facing the garden, where there was no sign of any man in a suit.

“What are we going to do?” John asked.

“Wait until he leaves,” Sherlock replied, “and then we’ll find out what the deal with the room is. Violet, I trust you’ll be able to keep Lily occupied?”

Violet offered them a pitiful attempt at a smile.

“Which one?” She joked half-heartedly.

Sherlock smirked at her and she stood up, knowing his answer.

“John?”
“Yeah?” John replied.

He stuck out his hand, and John took it reluctantly. Sherlock’s lips curled up to a smile as he said:

“You’re coming with me.”

Chapter End Notes

I promise this is going somewhere- and fast! I just haven't had any time to write this week, but at the same time I want to get something out so short chapters it is. I'd like to continue doing more prompts. I'll look back at ones I haven't done, but if you have any new ones, don't be shy! And remember, they can be anything- from smut to cases to comedy to...I dunno, dream sequences. My plan now is to continue the fic with prompts, and throw in a fun case every now and then. I want this to be something YOU GUYS enjoy, so if there's something you want to see, let me know!!

Thanks!! :)
John waited for Sherlock to explain himself as he was shoved into a small cupboard behind the front staircase. His eyes adjusted to the darkness just as Sherlock pulled on a chain to turn on a light bulb. A grin greeted him as his eyes landed on his boyfriend.

“What’s happening?” John demanded.

He bounced from one foot to another, feeling anxious and claustrophobic, until Sherlock’s hands fell on his shoulders.

Their eyes met, and he was taken aback by the sincerity in Sherlock’s.

“Are you really freaked out by this?” Sherlock asked quietly.

“Yeah,” he admitted, “I am. The guy’s clearly a creep, Sherlock. God only knows what he has locked down in that room. It could be a body!”

Sherlock snorted.

“If it were a body we would smell it,” he pointed out. “It’s probably drugs or money.”

“As much as I would love for this to be about hidden treasure, I have to agree with Laura,” John said, “we may be in over our heads.”

“We don’t even have a real case yet!” Sherlock’s hands found his, and John held on, grateful for an excuse to touch him. “Do you trust me?”

_Maybe I am being crazy._

“Of course.”

“Then you know I would never do anything that would hurt you.”

John burst out laughing. He couldn’t help it, and even Sherlock’s hurt look didn’t stop him.

“What?” Sherlock said.

“Sherlock, nearly everything we do puts me in danger!” He said. Tears were dripping from his eyes now from the effort of crying. “Fuck we’ve been kidnapped, shot at, I nearly drowned. Remember that? As long as we’re investigating murders, we’re in danger. And that’s fine. I like danger, remember? And in case you have forgotten, I like you too. But _this_? Admit it, Sherlock, you’ve got to be freaked out too!”

Sherlock simply rolled his eye and pointed to the ceiling. John looked up and noticed for the first time a doorway to the attic. Reaching up, Sherlock pulled down the door to reveal a hidden staircase.

“Admit it, John,” Sherlock echoed. “You’re intrigued.”

_This is what you signed up for_, he reminded himself.
Without agreeing to anything out loud, he followed Sherlock up the stairs. Sherlock tugged on another chain for a light, and John burst out laughing again.

The attic was completely empty, save for a single trunk in the corner. The back half of the small attic was covered by a shadow, but it was obvious there was nothing more to the room but decades of emptiness.

“Shut up,” Sherlock mumbled.

“You were just so excited,” John teased.

“There could still be something here!” Sherlock said. “There’s a trunk. That’s something.”

“It’s probably full of old clothes and spider webs,” John said, “but go ahead, take a look. I have my gun in case any ghosts jump out at you.”

He slid his gun just enough out of his pockets so that he could prove Sherlock right. Sherlock grinned and waltz over to the trunk with purpose, like he was walking up to a body at a crime scene. He knelt down and turned back to John with a smirk before picking the lock. The trunk opened with ease; even Sherlock seemed surprised. John chuckled again.

Sherlock’s face fell as he gazed down at the trunk, and John was by his side in seconds.

“Oh my god,” John whispered, bringing a hand to his mouth to hide his shock.

“Shit,” Sherlock murmured.

He looked away in disgust while John began rifling through the pictures. They were all of an older woman, around Mr. Rucastle’s age. Judging by her blonde hair and blue eyes she was his wife; she was the spitting image of his daughter. Beneath the pictures were articles and copies of an obituary—her obituary.

“Oh shit,” John said as he sat back, obituary in hand. He took out his mobile and clicked on the flashlight app so he could see better. “Are you seeing this? She wasn’t killed in any car accident…”

Sherlock was sorting through newspaper clips. He nodded, his face suddenly gray.

“She was murdered,” Sherlock whispered.

“They never found the guy.”

Their eyes met, and John felt sick to his stomach.

“Do you still think we’re not in over our heads?” He asked.

Sherlock just stared at him.

“I may have spoken too soon about the possibility of a body,” Sherlock said.

They sat in silence for a minute, staring at the collage of news clips and pictures. John was about to speak up about possibly phoning Lestrade when a low growling sent them both to their feet.

“Sherlock,” John said quietly, “when was the last time you saw the dog?”

The giant Mastiff stepped out of the shadows just as Sherlock opened its mouth.
“What the fuck is that thing doing in the attic?!” John cried.

Sherlock’s reply was a hand clamping down on his arm. He wasn’t sure if it was for his benefit or Sherlock’s. They were backed into a corner, and the dog was stepping closer and closer. His heart rate picked up as he calculated how far away they were from the staircase.

“Maybe he hides it up here because it’s terrifying,” Sherlock said. His voice suddenly went higher than normal.

The dog growled again and ran toward them without warning.

“Shit,” John mumbled as he fumbled around for the gun. “Shit, shit, shit!”

Sherlock’s fingers were planted so tightly around his arm that they would leave bruises. They stood shoulder to shoulder in the corner as he finally got hold of his weapon.

“What are you-“

He closed his eyes and pointed the gun at the ceiling before Sherlock could finish. The dog yelped and ran way, trotting down the stairs until he could leap onto the cupboard floor and scurry away. Looking down, he realized Sherlock’s arm was around his stomach, trembling.

With a faint smile he leaned forward, offering a sweet kiss.

“Have you always been this afraid of dogs?” He asked. He smiled as their lips lingered together.

“Fucking Baskerville,” Sherlock mumbled.

He shivered, coming down from the adrenaline. As they came down to earth John’s eyes fell on the trunk again and he groaned.

“Are you two okay?” Laura’s voice called from downstairs. “We heard a gunshot.”

Sherlock grinned at him.

“John shot at a dog.”

He glared at him. Of course Sherlock would make him look like the stupid one.

“I did not!” John protested. “It was a warning shot. I shot at the ceiling. That dog could have bloody killed us!”

Their eyes met again, and he was reminded that he couldn’t stay mad at Sherlock too long. Sherlock made to head toward the staircase, but John grabbed his hand before he could leave.

“Hey, earlier, were you asking if I were comfortable working on a case?” John asked. Sherlock looked away for a moment, hesitant, but nodded. John reached up to kiss him once again.

“Thank you,” John said quietly. “I appreciate that.”

His lover simply nodded, letting his hand slip away as he led John down the steps.

Chapter End Notes
Over 300 comments?! HAVE I MENTIONED HOW AWESOME YOU GUYS ARE?!!!!!! Thank you SO much!
Chapter Notes

I'm SO sorry for the lack of updates! It's been a hellish week, and then I have company in town so there aren't many chances to escape and write. I wanted to get at least something out there so here's a tease of the conclusion of this case! I'm going to try my very, very best to post the second part of this either tonight or tomorrow.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Well, I guess this is it,” John breathed.

The hallway was nearly black, but from the light radiating off his mobile he could see the ominous door. Sherlock had the key in his hand, and his eyes were wild like a child roaming through new hiding spots in his neighborhood. John wasn’t sure why his heart was pounding so much; they had been through so much more than mysterious doors and creepy houses. They texted Lestrade to give him a heads up that an old case might need to be cracked open, and they had the girls on lookout upstairs with that stupid dog for protection.

Instead of offering encouragement, warnings, or anything Sherlock stuck the key in the lock and threw the door open.

“Shit,” he whispered.

Beside, him Sherlock’s eyes went wide.

“I don’t believe this,” Sherlock shot.

He waltzed into the room, ignoring John’s hand grabbing for his arm to stop him.

“Sherlock!” He pleaded.

“It’s empty!” Sherlock exclaimed. He swirled around to John; he looked comically huge in the tiny dorm-sized room. “It’s empty, John!”

Anger and frustration burned through him because he knew this meant he wasted an entire day of his life being paranoid about a house that ended up being, well, a house. At the same time Sherlock was clearly ready to explode, and nothing was worth that.

“There’s got to be something here!” Sherlock huffed, kicking at the cement floors. “Some kind of evidence, some kind of…anything!”

His boyfriend sank down to the floor and planted his hands and ears against it, as though he actually thought that would be useful.

_I can’t believe we texted Lestrade over this_, he thought miserably.

“I just know there’s something about this house!” Sherlock mumbled into the floor. “All those pictures we found…he has to be hiding something. I can feel it. Don’t you feel it, John?”
Closing his eyes, John briefly worried Sherlock may have gotten a little too much cabin fever from all that time off. Maybe he was trying to make something from nothing because he was so desperate for a big case again. He wanted a comeback. He opened his eyes and watched helplessly as his lover straightened up and clenched his fist.

“I feel it, love,” he said quietly. He hated how empty his encouragement sounded, and when Sherlock gazed after him he knew he thought the same thing.

“John, I- JOHN!”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide and his arm desperately flew out for him. His own hands flew to the service weapon still hidden in his trousers, but he was too late. Something sharp stabbed at his neck.

“Sherlock, I think I…wha-?”

*Have been drugged,* is what he wanted to say, but it was too late. He collapsed on the ground with a sharp breath and was out cold in an instant.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry, I know that's a mean (and typical) cliffhanger! I literally had a like a spare twenty minutes to write so I just wanted to post *something*.

As always, you guys are amazing! I know some of you were anxious for them to get back on cases, so I hope you have been enjoying this!
The night doesn't exactly go as Mr. Rucastle planned, and Sherlock figures out what's going on just as the drug's side effects kick in.

The first thing Sherlock noticed when he woke up was that his heart was beating slowly. A bit too slowly.

Drugged.

Before he could even think of opening his eyes he tried to access what happened to him. His felt heavy and a dull pounding seemed to be telling him something happened to his head. A warm, wet, feeling on his face signaled some kind of facial injury. The back of his head felt weird, like something was pressing against it, into it, trying to get in. His arms were too heavy to tell if his hands were tied, but judging from the fact that he couldn’t move at all he guessed they were. For a moment he concentrated only on getting his breath back, and when he felt like he could finally face whatever was out there he drew in a sharp breath and opened his eyes.

And froze.

He was in a graveyard.

It was small, but it was definitely a graveyard.

With headstones and graves and everything.

A half dozen headstones were in two perfect rows, and he lay on the ground in the middle of him. Wincing, he dared to lift his head and his body went cold when he saw blood on the leaves beneath him. His heart leapt when his eyes found John, propped up against a rotting headstone next to him. John was wheezing, and when he coughed suddenly Sherlock could barely make out the name “Andrea Rucastle” on the grave behind him.

“We’re in a graveyard,” he rasped.

John coughed again and allowed a sloppy grin to cross his face. He was most definitely still affected by the drugs. Sherlock reached behind his own neck and winced as he felt where the needle hit him.

“No shit, Sherlock,” John snorted.

“We were drugged.”

“Brilliant,” John said. He laughed and threw his head back; when Sherlock looked at him again he felt sick. This was clearly not the John he knew. The effects of the drugs would be worse on him-his body just wouldn’t be used to it. “You’re just on top of it tonight! Except for the part where you make me stay in this creepy house, with this lunatic, with his dead wife’s things stuffed away in an attic full of lies, and a fucking graveyard out back.”
“Lots of family houses have graveyards.”

John glared at him.

“Mine does, that’s all,” he admitted. Diziness overwhelmed him from the simple act of looking around, and he closed his eyes tightly to fight the intenseness of it. “Flunitrazepam.”

“I know that. Doctor, remember?” John said. His words slurred together, further confirming his diagnosis. “How do you know that?”

Sherlock bit his lip. He wished his head weren’t so heavy and his thoughts were a little clearer. He could see right through the side-effects without problem. He knew exactly what was happening and- even worse- what would happen next.

He knew he could handle it, but he was worried about John.

“I used it a couple of times,” he admitted. “It helped, with the cocaine withdrawal. Well, I thought I did. Thank god Mycroft was there because I nearly went and overdosed on that too. It was horrible.”

“Great,” John sighed. Sherlock opened his eyes again, and he was already feeling ill just watching John and knowing how confused he must be. “Sherlock…he wouldn’t just happen to have a couple of doses of this stuff sitting around. Do you think he’s been using it to…you know…hurt somebody?”

It was a good theory, a great theory actually, but it wasn’t the kind of answer John needed to hear right now.

Some twigs broke nearby, and their eyes instantly met. John opened his mouth to scream, but Sherlock shook his head violently.

“Don’t!” He mouthed.

John looked heartbroken but sank back against the grave without protest.

The footsteps drew nearer, and while he listened carefully for smallest of clues (intruder is wearing trainers, it’s clearly a man, he’s got denim trousers on, so probably not Mr. Rucastle) he noticed John looked absolutely sick. For a brief moment he wished there were something he could do to comfort him, but he knew the best thing he could do for them both was to maintain constant vigilance.

At last the intruder stumbled out of the brush, and John let out a sigh of relief when they saw it was not Mr. Rucastle.

“Oh thank god, it’s really you!” The man exclaimed; he was already nearly sobbing and they didn’t even know his name yet.

Nevertheless, Sherlock wasn’t going to protest when the stranger bent down to untie them. Once he was free he crawled over to John, who heaved a heavy sigh of relief when his hands were free. Sherlock was shocked when he threw his arms around him, holding him tightly and squeezing him gently before pulling away. John offered him a small, bashful, smile, and Sherlock mimicked him before turning back to the stranger.

“Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson,” the man announced. “I’ve read your blog. I’m Anthony Ferguson.”
Sherlock bit back a groan. The class of people who read their blog was never that impressive.

“I’m the fiancé of Anna Rucastle, Mr. Rucastle’s daughter,” Anthony explained.

“I’ve seen you before!” John exclaimed. “Outside Violet’s window.”

He turned to him, shocked he hadn’t heard this before. John simply shrugged.

“I assumed you would think I was going crazy if I told you,” he admitted.

Sherlock pursed his lips.

“Never assume.”

“So there are two daughters?” Sherlock said.

“Yes,” Anthony nodded as he helped them stand. Sherlock grabbed his head as blood rushed to his brain and the world spun. He closed his eyes tightly, and he was grateful Anthony gave him a moment to recover before continuing: “Anna and I are set to get married in September, but a couple of weeks ago she just fell off the face of the planet. No calls, no texts, no dates, no anything. After a few days I finally came around the house only to have her father promptly shut the door in my face. The guy’s a bastard.”

“We’ve noticed,” John mumbled.

“I thought something seemed weird, so I began stalking the house. I put in an official missing persons report with the police, who asked Mr. Rucastle a few questions and did nothing beyond that. They claimed Anna called in sick a couple of times at work. A few days ago I filed another missing persons report, but when the police went by the house they actually claimed they saw Anna there! I continued stalking the house until tonight, when I realized what was going on.

I saw Mr. Rucastle leave the house with his daughter, but inside there was some woman who looked exactly like Anna. Mr. Rucastle snuck his daughter out the back, and I followed her. He shot at me, and I lost them—”

“Wait, he shot at you?” John said.

He stumbled forward as Anthony moved his hand from his ribs, and Sherlock’s body ran cold as he noticed for the first time the blood seeping through the man’s shirt. As clouds drifted away from the moonlight he could see how pale the man’s face was as well.

“Sherlock,” John suddenly whispered, his own face going pale as he turned to him. “I had my gun with me. It’s missing.”

“You brought it with you?”

“Of course I did!” John hissed. “I’m sorry, Anthony, it’s probably the one you were shot with. You need to sit. Let me look—”

“No!” Anthony exclaimed, clutching his ribs in pain even as he cried out. “I’ve got to fine Anna. That guy’s a madman. He’ll kill her. Why do you think you were brought to a graveyard?”

“Okay!” Sherlock whispered, hoping to signal to the others that they needed to be careful. “How long ago were you shot? How far into the woods are we?”

“Not too far and about twenty minutes ago.”
“Can you make the walk?” Sherlock asked.

Anthony drew in a deep breath and closed his eyes before nodding.

“Yeah, I can.” He didn’t sound too sure of himself.

John snaked an arm around his waist to help Anthony stand straight, and even Sherlock still felt dizzy as they made the first few steps out of the graveyard.

“I came into the woods to find her,” Anthony sighed after only walking a few feet, “I can’t go back until I do.”

“It’s night, and we have no idea where we are,” John pointed out. “We don’t know how far back these woods go. We don’t have any idea where he might have taken her. We don’t even have a torch.”

“I managed to phone the police after I was shot,” Anthony admitted. He reached into his pocket with a clumsy hand and pulled out a mobile. “I ran into the woods afterward. I don’t have a signal.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes as he accepted the mobile. Sure enough, there was no signal.

“We phoned the police too,” Sherlock said. He tried to step over a branch, but the world suddenly went all blurry. John reached out to catch him, throwing him a concerned look as he straightened up. “They’re probably swarming the house now. They don’t have a clue about the graveyard—”

“Sherlock!” John suddenly hissed.

There was more shuffling around in the woods, and his heart pounded as his eyes darted around for the source. He could feel the relief flow through the other two men when Lestrade stumbled up to them.

“Thank god!” John breathed.

“Did you find her?” Sherlock demanded.

He tried to storm toward Lestrade but ended up stumbling, leaving the D.I. to catch him.

“You alright?” Lestrade asked with a faint smile.

Sherlock simply glared at him.

“You did bring back-up?” Sherlock shot.

“The team is searching the house,” Lestrade said, “when we search the back we found footprints and drag marks. We found your sister and your client in the house, hiding in a cupboard. They said they heard a gunshot.”

My sister.

Sherlock closed his eyes, knowing everyone was watching as he breathed out a grateful sigh. He was so torn between being concerned for John and concerned for his sister that it was painful?

When did emotions begin to matter this much?

“Sherlock?” Lestrade asked, placing a hand on his shoulder. He didn’t realize he was swaying a bit, and he didn’t fight the hand steadying him.
“Fine,” he announced. “All fine. Is there any evidence of- is that the bloody dog?!”

They turned just in time to see Lily the dog crashing through the woods. The Mastiff completely ignored the group and the graves as she darted through the trees, and Lestrade took after her immediately. The injured three tried their best to keep up but they didn’t have to go far.

The hound was standing over its master, growling down at the old man he had pinned to the ground. A young woman stood beside them, shivering in only a knee-length dressing gown. She did look exactly like Violet, down to the short haircut. Her face was deathly pale and the skin beneath her eyes was worn almost black.

“That was easy,” Lestrade announced. Mr. Rucastle glared up at them. The D.I. glanced to the girl and asked: “Are you Anna Rucastle?”

She nodded. Tears ran down her cheeks as she trembled and held her arms around herself. Anthony stumbled toward her to wrap his arms around her and throw his own jacket over his shoulder.

“I was so worried,” Anthony whispered after they shared a wet kiss. “I knew something was wrong.”

“He held me hostage,” Anna sobbed. “He wants the money, Anthony. That’s all he wants. He needed you to believe I didn’t love you anymore. I tried to break me, emotionally, and with my health. He's sick!”

“Money?” John asked, turning to Sherlock like he might have the answers.

“You’re under arrest,” Lestrade declared, stepping over the dog and jerking Mr. Rucastle to his feet. He looked the man in the eye, and Sherlock wasn’t sure he’d ever seen Lestrade look so disgusted.

Sherlock took a few uneven steps toward them. Mr. Rucastle was fuming even as he ignored the dog standing on top of him.

“I haven’t done anything!” Mr. Rucastle exclaimed. “You have no proof.”

“Oh don’t even try!” Anna screamed. “You fucking-“

“Everyone just stay calm,” Lestrade said, holding up a hand. “There will be plenty of time to battle this out in court.”

“I can’t believe you would kidnap your own daughter for money,” Anthony spat.

Mr. Rucastle closed his eyes, and when a brief moment of shame crossed his face Sherlock was finally able to piece the whole story together.

“And kill his wife,” he announced. Mr. Rucastle’s eyes flew open, but before he could protest, Sherlock explained: “It’s the mum’s side of the family who was rich. The money was left to the mother, who died and left the money to the daughter, not him. You just turned eighteen, didn’t you, Anna? Married early?”

Anna nodded.

“Of course, and it takes a great man to agree to that as you're dying. Brain tumor.” Anna sobbed, and John looked sick, but he ignored them as he continued: “Mr. Rucastle believed that if he could convince Anthony his fiancé left him then he could just wait until Anna passed. But Anna’s a
fighter, and the disease isn’t taking her down as quickly as her father needs it too. The wedding was coming up, and if her death didn’t hurry his family’s money would be passed to Mr. Ferguson’s once they were married. He became too impatient and decided to end it himself tonight. He wasn’t going to shoot her or harm her physically. He was going to poison her and make it look like suicide. Like she simply ran away in the middle of the night to take her own life. It must have been written in his wife’s will that the money would only go to him if the daughter perished.”

“That’s horrible,” John whispered, “your own daughter…”

Lestrade just shook his head as he knelt down to handcuff the bastard. John stood back to watch with Sherlock, but suddenly his head erupted with pain and he grabbed at it, desperate to make it stop.

_Not right, _he thought desperately, _not the right effects._

“Sherlock?” John asked.

His worried tone was the last thing he remembered before blacking out once again.
His vision was blurry when he came to, and his head felt strange, like it wasn’t really attached to his body. After lights swayed in and out of focus Sherlock realized he was in a hospital room. The sun was out behind closed blinds so it was morning- and he could only hope it was the same day. A hand fell into his, and relief immediately flooded through him when he turned around.

Laura’s face greeted him with a smile.

“Welcome back,” she said. He looked around again and blinked in confusion.

Hospital room, he reminded himself. Hospital room. Hospital. Why can’t I get that?

Panic overwhelmed him, but instead of a racing heart his chest seemed to heave up and down in slow motion. He grasped Laura’s hand tightly to hold onto the only thing about this situation that was familiar.

“It’s okay,” Laura whispered, squeezing his hand. “You were drugged, remember?”

He shook his head and closed his eyes, trying to think back. He remembered Violet asking them about the case and taking John and his sister to some strange house in the middle of the night. He remembered secret rooms and keys and that fucking dog.

But that was it.

“I…I don’t,” he rasped. Licking his lips, he realized how dry his mouth was and Laura handed him a cup of water. He downed it quickly and tilted his head back, exhausted by the simple effort of drinking. “What’s wrong with me? I don’t remember.”

“You remember the house, yes?” Laura asked. “Creepy old Mr. Rucastle and the dog? He attacked you and John. You took a nasty blow to the head and the bastard drugged you with Rohypnol.”


The thought of John lying in a hospital room made him so sick he nearly threw up right then and there. It didn’t help that his vision was going blurry again, and the effort of trying to remember what happened made his head hurt even worse.

“He’s going to be fine,” Laura said. “He hasn’t lost conscious, but his memory is a bit fuzzy too.
They’re checking him out in the A&E.”

Sherlock frowned as panic crept up his throat from his stomach.

Want to throw up…want to throw up.

He swallowed down the bile and turned to look Laura straight in the eye. If John was in the A&E and he was in a private room, something must be wrong. Even worse, Laura said he’s going to be fine as in I’m not fine.

“What’s happening to me?” He asked.

He couldn’t remember the last time he sounded so helpless. It didn’t make him feel any better when Laura’s face fell and she briefly glanced to her hands, trying to escape his eyes. She was saved when the door swung open and a middle-aged doctor waltzed through, slipping on Latex gloves and eyeing the two with curiosity.

“I’m very happy to see you awake,” the doctor greeted. He didn’t look happy, Sherlock noted. He looked scared. “What is your full name?”

Even as he asked he grabbed the chart at the end of the bed and began to study it.

“Sherlock Hareton Holmes,” he announced. He sat quietly as he waited for the next question.

“Date of birth?”

“21st of September, 1976.”

The doctor stared at him, and Sherlock swallowed nervously.

“I mean, 12th!” He snapped. “The 12th of September, 1975, not 76. Sorry, I’m a bit distracted, what with the horrendous hospital smell and the beeping.”

Even as he insulted it the beeping slowed down, and he forced himself to not turn and confirm the fact that his heart rate was slowing down again. Giving up on his fight, he concentrated on breathing. The doctor studied him, glanced to Laura, and then stood so that he was at the foot of the bed.

“Who is the current Prime Minister?” The doctor asked.

“David Cameron,” Sherlock mumbled, throwing a hand over his face. Suddenly even the dim lights seemed too bright. “Barack Obama is the current U.S. president. I’m a consulting detective for the Scotland Yard. My brother’s name is Mycroft. I had my last physical fourteen months ago. Is there any other useless information you’d like to know about?”

He knew what the doctor was doing. Concussion. And judging by the look on his face, a bad one. He could practically hear John saying it.

“I think that covers it,” the doctor replied hotly, “I’m Doctor Bryant. You were brought into me about an hour and a half ago. They flew you in.”

“Flew-?”

He turned to Laura, who shrugged.

Mycroft, he thought miserably. Of course. In fact, everything about working with Lestrade was
beginning to make a bit more sense. His brother had always arrived to the scene a little too quickly, and he was always there in no time if something went wrong. Trust Lestrade to feed information to him.

“Do you remember the attack, Sherlock?” The doctor asked. He tried think back again, but all he came up with was a foggy memory of an old attic. “Let me put it this way: what is the last thing you remember?”

His mouth opened, but a sudden ringing in his ears startled him. The doctor seemed to understand what was going on, and he walked over to exam his ears and his eyes. When the torch blinked in front of him he winced violently; the sun might as well have been right in front of his face. As the light flickered off flashes still erupted in front of his eyes, and he felt sick. Swallowing quickly, he stopped himself from throwing up but the urge to be sick made his body curl up. He felt pathetic, but he was beginning to understand the worry in Laura and the Doctor’s eyes: something was wrong.

“I just remember wandering through the house,” he finally said. “In my mind the house just looks like the house I grew up in…I can’t remember the details.”

Sherlock closed his eyes tightly, feeling helpless. Dr. Bryant helped up a hand in his own defense and explained:

“I’m not trying to get a statement out of you, just a medical perspective. Now, this test is going to seem pointless but I need you to concentrate, alright?”

He nodded, but when he saw the cards the doctor pulled out of the drawer he couldn’t help but to let out a groan.

“Sherlock!” Laura warned, glaring at him.

“I’m going to show you three cards,” Dr. Bryant explained. “Tell me what they are.”

He held up a picture of a cat, a dog, and a mouse.

“Cat, dog, and mouse,” he sighed. Closing his eyes, he resisted the urge to fall asleep.

“Great,” the doctor said with a smile. He sat the cards down on the table. “Now, tell me what the cards were.”

His heart skipped a beat at the sudden demand, and his eyes dashed around in panic for help. I can’t! The sheer horror of the realization made him feel sick again, and Laura held a protective hand against his back as he leaned forward and fought the urge to be sick.

“Nauseous?” The Doctor asked. He nodded. Dr. Bryant crossed his arms over his chest: the tell-all sign something was definitely wrong. Sherlock swallowed again, preparing himself for what he would hear. “You were injected with a high dosage of Rohypnol.”

He subconsciously wrapped his hands around himself, feeling uneasy in front of the two pairs of eyes studying him.

“I imagine your attacker wanted to assure you didn’t remember what happened,” the doctor explained. “The detective who brought you in- Lestrade- can explain that to you in more detail. What I’m really concerned about, though, is your concussion. It’s severe, Sherlock. You were unconscious for an hour and a half. We did an MRI to scan for any brain damage and it came back
clear, but I want to keep you under observation. Sustaining that severe of a head injury, combined with being drugged, could increase your chances of the injury worsening.”

All at once the smell of the hospital hit him strong enough to suffocate him, and he wanted to be anywhere than that room.

“I live with a doctor,” he said; from the look of empathy on Laura’s face he sounded pathetically desperate. “He can watch me.”

“You need to be in the hospital, Sherlock,” Laura pleaded, “if something happens, you need to be here. John would agree.”

He knew she was right: John would agree. In fact, if John were here he would probably handcuff him to the bed just to make sure he stayed.

“The important thing is that you rest,” Dr. Bryant said, “let the nurses know if you need anything. Are you in any pain?”

Sherlock swallowed and closed his eyes, doing a quick access of his symptoms. Head: hurts. Heart rate: slow. His head felt heavy and mind cloudy, and the worst part was…

*What’s the doctor’s name again?*

He frowned, and the doctor seemed to understand his frustration.

“Sherlock?” Laura asked, placing a hand on his arm.

“The amnesia will be a bit of a shock for a while,” the doctor admitted. “Like I said, I want you to rest, alright? I’ll drop in periodically to check on you.”

With that the doctor left, and like usual with doctors it almost felt as if he couldn’t get away any quicker. Throwing his head back, Sherlock groaned and slipped his arms over his face.

Just as the door closed it opened again, and his heart fluttered when as he watched John slip into the room.

“Oh god!” John cried softly as he rushed toward him.

He welcomed John into his arms as his boyfriend threw his arms around him and held him close.

“I’ve been in the A&E. They told me you were in a room, and I was so afraid—“

“I’m okay,” he whispered.

Sherlock squeezed him and rested his head on John’s shoulders, never wanting to let go. Maybe it was the exhaustion taking over his body, or maybe it was all the confusion messing with his emotions, but he even had to blink away a tear. They broke apart, and John let out a stifled sigh.

He was able to observe his boyfriend for the first time, and he felt sick to realize John’s face was a ghostly white. John was clearly drained and confused himself, but it didn’t look like he was hurt, save for his hands being bruised from what must have been rope. Gauze was wrapped around his left arm from where blood was drawn, and a hospital arm band was still snug around his wrist.

“I can’t remember what happened,” John admitted. “Last thing I remembered was being in an attic, but I can’t remember whose. They said it was Rohypnol. Why would the bastard have roofies lying around, ready to be injected, is beyond me. I don’t have my mobile on me. I’m assuming yours is
missing too?"

Sherlock looked around, noticing for the first time his clothes were missing and he was in a hospital gown.

"Lestrade took his stuff as evidence," Laura explained.

“Great,” John sighed. “We need to talk to Lestrade as soon as possible—"

“John,” Sherlock pleaded, grabbing John’s arms. Their eyes met, and he hated himself for being the cause of how scared John looked at that moment. “I have a concussion. It’s serious.”

“He was out for over an hour,” Laura said.

John looked between the two, as though he just didn’t want to believe it was true. Without saying anything he stormed around the bed so that he could get a better look at the knot on the back of his head. Sherlock winced as John ran his fingers across the bump.

“Bastard,” John whispered, “I hope Lestrade puts him away.”

Laura sighed, and the two stared at her, wondering what they were missing.

“I’ll let you two catch up,” she said, “I need to call Jason. I’m glad you’re alright, John. Sherlock…rest. I mean it.”

She offered him a faint smile as she left, and Sherlock turned back to John.

“What did the doctor say?” John asked.

“MRI was okay…amnesia…severe concussion…he says he needs me to stay for observation,” Sherlock said.

His words were beginning to slur together. He closed his eyes as his brain suddenly went all fuzzy again, and more than ever he wanted to sleep.


A hand slipped into his, and Sherlock squeezed it. He opened his eyes and gazed up at John. That same weird feeling was coming over him again, the one from when he first woke up that made him feel like he couldn’t wrap his mind around what was going on. He was losing sight of the facts of hospital, head injury, John OK, case…it was all becoming too much to keep track of.

“But I agree, you need to rest,” John said. He pulled up a chair so that he could sit right next to his bed. “I want to talk to you, though, when you’re better.”

Sherlock stared at him, wondering what the fuck that was supposed to mean.

“I’ll be right here,” John said, brushing a hand up his arm, neck, and finally to his face. Sherlock shuddered. The touch only helped pull him toward sleep, but he didn’t want to rest.

“I want to talk—"

Now. Please!

“Sherlock,” John begged quietly. “If your doctor was just in here and told you to rest, you need to.
Your brain has suffered trauma. For once, I don’t want you to think too much, okay? Just rest and I’ll be here. I'm freaked out too, but we need to step back, take a deep breath, and take it easy for a minute.”

He looked away to hide the desperation in his eyes, but with the simple movement of his head his body nearly fell apart. Taking John's advice, he drew in a deep breath and exhaustion immediately overwhelmed him. He closed his eyes, welcoming the darkness, and let himself give into John’s orders.

Chapter End Notes

As always, thanks for being so amazing!
Goodbyes

Chapter Notes

This chapter is for JustSemiotics, who way back in chapter 47 requested seeing how Sherlock would react to Dan giving him a present. I thought it was an excellent set-up for their departure!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The steady beep of what was obviously hospital machinery pulled Sherlock out of a deep sleep. Problem was, he wasn’t sure why he was in a hospital.

As his vision came into focus, Sherlock could make out the form of a smiling little boy. It took him a moment of panic, but at last he landed on Dan, my nephew, and scooped the kid into his arms.

“Sirlock!” Dan greeted, hugging him tightly.

When the kid pulled away he presented him with three sheets of paper.

“I drew these for you,” Dan explained. He handed him a drawing of a box with a triangle on top of it, with a small stick figure beside it. Two straight lines were beside the stick figure, connected at the bottom by a single line. Sherlock didn’t have a clue what it was supposed to represent. “That’s my house in New York. That’s my swing.”

The kid pointed to the two straight lines, and now Sherlock got it.

Sort of.

He grinned and looked up, pleased to see his sister and brother-in-law standing beside his bed, beaming. Dan withdrew the next sheet to reveal what appeared to be a circle with boxes inside, stationed above blue wavy lines.

“That’s the Eye,” Dan said. The London Eye, Sherlock realized. “For the day we rode bikes.”

Sherlock had to fight the urge to grin like an idiot. No one else in their right mind would have recognized the drawings, but now that Dan explained it to him they made perfect sense. He couldn’t have been prouder of his nephew.

Dan handed him the final picture. It simply had a diagonal line with a circle at the end and tiny lines drawing away from it.

“And that one’s a dinosaur,” Dan announced proudly

Sherlock couldn’t help but to laugh at the absurdness of it, and he scooped Dan back into his arms.

“I love them,” Sherlock whispered.

He blinked away a single tear, but more threatened to surface when he looked over and saw a tiny suitcase beside Laura’s feet and what was obviously a carry-on bag. He could remember that they were due to leave soon, but he had no sense of what time or day it was it.
“You’re leaving,” Sherlock said quietly as Dan pulled away.

The kid jumped down from the hospital bed and ran back to his dad’s arms.

“I wished we could have a real goodbye,” Laura admitted, “like a party or something. I don’t want to go…god I don’t want to. But we have jobs to get back to, and Dan starts school. Our plane leaves in a few hours so we really do have to go. I wanted you to rest, though. The most important thing is for you to get better.”

His heart began pounding very fast, and it felt a bit hard to breathe. His chest was tight and he was suddenly very nervous, even though he knew it was only a panic attack brought on by the thought of but I don’t want them to go!

“We really have come full circle,” Laura said, taking his hand into hers. She squeezed his, as though realizing he needed the comfort. “You met me in a hospital room, and I’m saying goodbye to you in one. It’s been a bizarre trip, but I can’t imagine it turning out any better. When I found out I might have a brother I didn’t want to get my hopes up but god, you’re so clearly…my family. In the best of ways.”

He just didn’t get it. He was so confused.

Why am I in a hospital?
Where is John?
I’m not ready to say goodbye!

“There’s so much I want to tell you,” Sherlock managed, his voice suddenly going very weak.

He didn’t want her to leave without knowing everything—especially the drugs. It just wouldn’t be fair to her.

“There will be plenty of time,” Laura said. “Here, this is for you.”

She presented him with a simple get well card, reading only “Stay Strong” in gold lettering on the front. Inside the card there was only a sheet of paper.

A plane ticket to New York.

“It’s for Christmas,” Laura explained. “Or…whenever. Just come visit, alright? I gave Mycroft one too. I know your relationship is a bit rocky so you don’t even have to come at the same time, but please…visit us. There’s one for John, too.”

He peeled a second ticket away from the first, but his mind was too blown by the gesture of someone buying him a plane ticket and begging him to come see them that he hardly noticed.

“I have Skype and international calling,” Laura went on. Tears beamed in her eyes as she kept rambling. “And e-mail. So no excuses, okay? I want to hear from you. I want to hear from Mycroft and John and…god I can’t believe I have to leave you like this. It makes me feel like a terrible sister.”

Sherlock smiled a little. Sister. He still couldn’t get over it. He grabbed her hand and squeezed it.

“You’re not terrible,” he whispered, “not at all. You’re brilliant. And you were brilliant on the case.”
“Which you hardly remember,” Laura teased. She leaned forward to kiss him on the cheek. “Take care of yourself. I will be messaging you to make sure you do. God I hate this…it’s just too soon, you know? We only just met. So you have to visit. Promise me.”

Sherlock swallowed nervously. One thing he did remember was insisted to John that he was not, under any circumstances, visiting America.

But now he wanted nothing more than to be on that plane with her.

“I will,” he promised.

He squeezed her hand again and she wiped a tear from her face. She pulled away, and as she did Jason reached out to shake his hand.

“Thanks for everything,” Jason said. Quiet and simple.

Sherlock nodded.

Dan stepped up next, and he thought he might break. Nothing could prepare him for saying goodbye to this kid.

“I’ll tell all my friends about you in school,” Dan promised, as though it were the most important promise in the world. Sherlock laughed, and scooped him into his arms for one final hug. Dan planted a wet, sloppy, kiss on his cheek before pulling away.

“Hey,” Sherlock said suddenly, pulling Dan by the hand before he could leave. Dan looked at him, eyes wide with wonder. He remember how scared the kid was when they first met, and how shaken he was whenever he had a nightmare. “Mind palace, remember? You’re strong and brilliant.”

Dan nodded, though he could tell by the confusion in his eyes he didn’t have a clue what he meant by ‘strong and brilliant’. Laura grinned above him, appreciative.

“Take care,” Laura said once again, “I’ll let them know you’re awake.”

Sherlock nodded. He resisted the urge to close his eyes and hide in his own Mind Palace as his family gathered their bags and shuffled out of the room. Laura turned and offered him one final smile before slipping through the door and closing it.

He lay his head back against the pillows, feeling exhausted. And alone.

All of a sudden he just felt so alone.

Knowing no one else was around, Sherlock didn’t stop the single tear from falling down his cheeks.

Chapter End Notes

DeathFrisbee221 drew up her version of Dan's artwork! Check it out here, it's too cute!!
I'm sad to see them go, and it may seem a little abrupt given the circumstances, but they did have a plane to catch and they've been away from their life in New York for quite some time. We all know Sherlock doesn't have to feel alone for too long. John will be there to help him mend and get better. Where is John now? In the waiting area, having a family reunion of his own. You'll see...

I hope you've enjoyed the family segment of this story! They'll eventually be back. This is definitely not goodbye forever!

And now, back to the Johnlock...
Shortly after Sherlock fell asleep again, John was banished to the waiting area. He knew the nurse was right, Sherlock needed his rest, but now he sympathized more than ever with patients who didn’t want to leave the victim’s side.

By noon he nearly dozed off while sitting in a plastic chair and watching a children’s cartoon. A gentle hand shook him awake again, and he jumped when a familiar voice called out:

“John?”

His eyes lit up and he leapt to his feet.

“Harry!” His arms were around his sister so fast she choked for air.

“Hi,” Harry sang softly, wrapping her arms around him. “It’s good to see you.”

“Yeah,” John agreed.

They pulled back, and for a moment they just studied each other. Lately it seemed like every time they met up they were like whole new people: this time her long blonde hair was cut nearly to her ears, but it looked cute. Her skin had more color to it, and it looked like she lost weight in a healthy—not drug induced—way. She looked relaxed. Peaceful.

“I heard what happened on the news,” Harry explained. “You’re famous! Like legitimate, world-wide, CNN is talking about you, famous!”

“CNN?” John repeated.

His mouth fell open, stunned, and Harry just laughed.

“Well, they’re more concerned with the girl found in the spare room,” she admitted, “but you were there, so your picture has been flashing around the telly and everything! You guys are international heroes. I’m sure your mobile has been ringing off the hook for interviews.”

He groaned; he almost forgot about his missing phone.

“I lost it during the kidnapping,” he said, “but Lestrade suggested we shouldn’t pay too much attention to the news yet. He wants to see if our memories come back naturally first. I guess he’s afraid the news might be a bit biased.”

Harry snorted.

“It wouldn’t be the first time,” she replied. Her smiled saddened as she gazed at him and, instinctively, reached up to brush his hair like she used to do. “I was proud, when I heard what you guys did.”

John looked around, suddenly feeling uncomfortable. He had gotten quite a few odd looks while sitting in the waiting area. Some were smiles, some were winks, some were older women who looked like they might cry. He didn’t have the heart to admit to them that he didn’t have a clue what it was he actually did.
“I wish I could say thank you,” John said quietly, “but I just can’t remember what happened.”

“There are rumors you two were drugged,” she said. “It’s true, isn’t it? Oh god…are you even okay?”

“Yeah, I’m okay,” he lied, “it was Rohypnol. I’m more worried about Sherlock than myself. He got hit on the head pretty hard. It’s why I’m still here, actually. He’s under observation to make sure the trauma doesn’t get any worse.”

A hand flew to Harry’s mouth, and part of him couldn’t help but to wonder if she suspected anything.

“I’m so sorry, John,” she whispered.

She grabbed his arm and squeezed it, and he nodded, grateful.

“I think he’ll be fine,” he confessed, “I’m just worried about him being, you know him. He relies on his mind, Harry. I don’t even know how he will react to losing parts of his memory. Hell, he might even struggle to make new ones or recall facts…I haven’t really gotten a chance to speak with him. I’m trying to be patient but I just…I’m scared.”

He instantly regretted the last confession when Harry’s eyes lit up and her lips formed into a smirk.

“What?” He demanded.

“It’s so obvious!” Harry cried. “John…”

She took him by the hand and began dragging him out of the waiting area. He was due for some fresh air anyway and didn’t argue with slipping out into the courtyard adjacent to the hospital wing. Harry held onto his arm as she led them down the small path that circled around the courtyard. He was grateful for her support; even standing and moving still made him dizzy. Forcing himself to ignore it, he focused on damage control instead.

“I didn’t mean-“

“You did mean!” Harry said. “And it’s okay, John. Stop. Look at me.”

She grabbed ahold of his arms and maneuvered him so that he was facing hers. He sighed, feigning frustration.

“It’s okay if you want to say it,” Harry said.

He studied her eyes and nearly melted right then and there when he realized how sincere she was being. She really had changed. It was like looking into the eyes of a whole different person when she wasn’t drinking, and he admired her so much that he knew he had to say it.

After all, who better to understand what he was going through than Harry?

“I’m in love with him, Harry.”

Harry beamed and pulled him into a tight, suffocating hug.

“I knew it!” She said into his ear. “You two, you’re just…I knew it, from the moment you told me about him. He’s just different, yeah? Unique and-“

“Brilliant,” he offered.
“And hot,” she grinned. He tensed, embarrassed, but she only laughed as she untangled herself from him. “Come on, admit it. The sex must be fantastic.”

He choked and looked around, desperately hoping no one overheard that.

“You knew it?” He repeated. “You knew about me and Sherlock, or you knew I was gay?”

Harry’s eyes fell to the ground and she tugged a stray hair behind her ear, like she always did when she was caught off-guard.

“That’s not the point, here. The point is: you’re in love. The proper, life-changing kind of love.”

The terrifying kind.

Because he was so afraid, so terrified, to admit to anyone- and especially Sherlock- that the last thing he really remembered was talking to Laura and realizing that I love Sherlock Holmes.

“Who cares if you fall for some hot brunette with big boobs or…some hot brunet who collects human cells for his own personal experiments? I’m just happy for you, that’s all, so happy for you. And proud. Very proud.”

She beamed again, and his heart suddenly felt like glass. He was sure his face was burning with nerves, but at the same time a huge weight lifted from his shoulders. He finally confessed his deepest, darkest, secret to his sister, and for once it felt like he had someone he could relate to.

“At the same time, if you want to talk about it you know I know what you are going through,” Harry offered.

John nodded and let out a low sigh of relief.

“Is it weird that it just doesn’t seem weird at all?” He asked. “Being gay, I mean. I’ve never been attracted to another man so when Sherlock came along that obviously changed, but at the same time it just feels so natural. I’m not ready to hold hands and skip down sidewalks together, but I’ve gotten past being jumpy whenever he puts a hand against my chest. Actually, now that I think about it that didn’t take very long to get past at all.”

Harry laughed and dug her hands into her pockets, and his cheeks stung now with embarrassment.

“I’m sorry, that really wasn’t appropriate!”

“It’s fine, John!” Harry insisted. “I said you could ask questions. For me I guess it was a bit different, but I was so young and hadn’t really been in a relationship before. I had mum and dad on my case and- oh my god do they know?!”

He froze, and his heart broke into two. His eyes closed at the memory of his own mother’s hands slapping against his face and her eyes, full of shame and disappointment.

“Oh god,” Harry choked, throwing her arms around him once more. “I’m sorry. They’re arses, both of them, and they don’t know anything.”

“She slapped me,” he admitted. Harry hugged him tighter. “She just looked so disappointed. But I’m not, am I? Do you think-”

“Oh of course not!” Harry snapped. She pulled away from him, and of anything she looked disappointed that he would even suggest that. “God, don’t even say that! You’re a medical doctor,
you were in the army, you saved countless lives, and you go around solving serious police cases just because you can. You’re all kinds of amazing, John. Any parent who would dare to think you aren’t worthy of being there son is just a bitch, really.”

John smirked a little.

“Things still not so good between you and mum either?” He teased.

She glared, but she didn’t stay offended for too long. Her face fell again as she looked to the ground and offered:

“I know things haven’t been too good between you and me. But I’m done with drinking, for real this time. I completed the programs, and I’m seeing a therapist. I’m not even trying to date, I’m just trying to wrap my head around... life, you know? I’ve taken a temp job for now and it’s decent work. I’m proud of how much I’ve changed, and I want things to change between us. We should stick together.”

We’ve only got each other, was what she obviously meant. But when she looked up to him, she still had that same, sorrowful, look as she always did when she was in denial of what a shitty family they had.

For the first time he was beginning to see a serious connection between he and Harry and Sherlock and Mycroft. He always knew how hard it must have been for Mycroft to look after a brother who was doing damage to his own health and future, but he hadn’t considered they were both in a situation where their siblings were all they had.

“You’re amazing, and Sherlock’s lucky to have you,” she announced. “I hope he gets better soon, I really do. I’ve got to go, though I’m actually on a lunch break. If you need anything John...please...I’m always around. I’m proud of you. You were a real hero last night.”

She hugged him again while he awkwardly stood there, stiff and confused.

He just wished he knew why everyone was being so nice.

And...what girl in the spare room?!

“Thanks,” he mumbled as they broke apart. She smiled one last time and began to make her way back inside the hospital. Before she could disappear he called out her name, catching her attention just in time. “Harry! Come around sometime. Get to know Sherlock a bit better.”

Harry laughed.

“I’m not so sure Sherlock wants to know me any better,” she admitted, “but I will come by though.”

He nodded, remembering how wary Sherlock was of Harry at first. He wondered if he would act like that now.

“Take care of yourself,” he pleaded.

She smiled again.

God he missed seeing her smile like that.

“I will.”
She disappeared, and John was left reeling from his own confession.

*That’s it then, he thought, first Laura, now Harry…I might as well tell Sherlock himself. I love you. That’s all I have to say. Can’t be too hard…*

*Right?*

Chapter End Notes

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!!!!!!!!!!
“You have to know why.”

John blinked, startled, and studied Greg over the railings of Sherlock’s bed. They stood on either side as Sherlock slept, supposedly oblivious to the other two men gossiping about him.

“Why?” John repeated.

“You have to know why you love him,” Greg explained. “He’ll ask.”

He’ll ask.

Of course he will. Typical Sherlock, that:

*Hey…I love you.*

...*why?*

“Don’t you know why?” Greg asked.

Greg was studying him now with this skeptical expression that made him worry he wasn’t the only one having doubts about confessing his love for Sherlock.

“Is it his looks?” Greg teased.

His stomach did somersaults as he gazed down at Sherlock. Even laying in a hospital gown, hooked to wires, he was beautiful.

“His interests?” Greg continued.

He thought of the eyeballs that used to sit in the fridge; he’d only just managed to convince Sherlock to throw them out a few weeks ago.

“The sex?”

John’s eyes shot to Greg in horror, but his friend only grinned.

“I’m only teasing!”

“Why is everyone asking about my sex life today?” John moaned.

“We’re just fascinated,” Greg shrugged, “Sherlock Holmes and sex. It’s like finding out the Pope can rock out on electric guitar.”

Closing his eyes, he tried not to think about *it*. The very thought of sex with Sherlock- any of it- the sounds, the smells, the things they could do together- got him way too excited way too easily.

“I just think the question is why would *he* love *me*,” John admitted.

Greg let out a dramatic sigh and walked over to his side of the bed. He grabbed his arm.
“With me,” Greg announced.

John let himself be dragged out into the hall. The corridor was empty; it was way past visiting hours, and the only people in the rooms besides patients were approved family members. And of course people who happened to know Mycroft Holmes. He felt an eerie sense of deja vu as he glanced down both ends of the hall, hoping they were alone.

“I know we don’t really talk, but if you want to tell me what’s going on, I’m here,” Greg offered.

He nodded, appreciative, but he wasn’t even sure where to begin. Did he start with the fact that just thinking about Sherlock was beginning to make him feel nauseated? This wasn’t because of being head-over-heels in love, but it was because of the fear of what would happen when Sherlock found out how much he actually cared for him.

Or maybe should he start with the unknown- the open book that was Sherlock Holmes? The mere amount of things about Sherlock that he didn’t know was enough to make him nauseated. How could he be so ready to love someone unconditionally when he only had the privilege to know bits and pieces of them?

*He hides things from me. He’s still afraid to tell me things. And the things he has told me…I’m I really ready to accept them? Am I ready for that to be a part of me?*

“John?”

“Yeah?”

“You look like you’re about to throw up.”

“I may.”

Sighing, he sank down to the floor so that he could sit against the wall with his knees curled to his chest. Greg joined him and briefly placed a comforting hand on his knee.

“I shouldn’t tell you this, but I am,” Greg began. “We got a confession out of the suspect. Last night, when you two were attacked you were drugged first. Then he went for Sherlock. He attacked him but Sherlock fought back. He was trying to get to you, John. Sherlock was trying to help you, even when his own life was being threatened.”

His heart pounded as he absorbed this new information. Once again, there was Sherlock risking everything for him. Every time it happened he wasn’t jolted back to life because of Sherlock’s efforts- just the idea of Sherlock laying down his life like that sent his mind reeling.

“Bottom line, if you don’t think Sherlock is capable of love, he is,” Greg said. “He’s so capable of it that it consumes him. The problem is he has so lacked being loved that he is so easily manipulated, and usually by the worst people. His trust has been shaken, but the real problem is that his trust in himself has been shaken. He’s been damaged, mentally and physically. But once someone can help him re-establish that trust and connect with him he’ll see the world in a new way. I know he will, and I know you’re the person to do it. Just look at how much he has already changed in a couple of months. Imagine a couple of years. Imagine a couple of dozen years.”

Greg’s soliloquy caught him completely off-guard, but suddenly everything did seem to make sense. If Sherlock was ever shy about sharing it was obvious that he was just thinking of all the people who hurt him. He let so many people in at a time when he was desperate and vulnerable, and god he couldn’t begin to imagine how terrifying it must be now for him to trust people.
“Yeah, I guess I’m going a bit insane,” John admitted.

Getting to his feet, he sighed and ran a hand over his face. Suddenly the exhaustion was hitting him. It was after midnight again. He needed sleep.

“Glad I could help,” Greg mused. “Honestly though I think you’re just getting a bit of cold feet. It happens to the best of us when we realize we’re in love.”

“Are you?”

The question fell out of him before he had time to think, and judging by Greg’s shocked expression it would have been better to keep his curiosity to himself. Greg glanced away, uneasy, but nodded as he turned back to John.

“Yeah,” he admitted, “yeah, I am.”

“Do you think Mycroft loves you?” He asked. His arm flew to his mouth, as though his brain thought that might take the ridiculous question back. “Oh god. Sorry! That was-“

“It’s fine,” Greg said. “Let’s just say if there’s anyone more difficult to connect with than Sherlock, it’s Mycroft. But he’s taught me a thing or two about trust. Being with him…it’s been the first time I’ve felt like I can truly connected with someone, you know? At first it was weird, like being in a one-way relationship where the sex was good but you never knew what the other person was thinking. Then one day it just seemed to click with him, and he let me in. He’s broken down, a time or two. Anyone can, with the right person there to help them through it. God knows he’s helped me get through some things too.”

A smile fell across John’s face, and at last he felt like he was regaining his confidence a bit.

“You were there the night Sherlock’s ex was murdered,” John said quietly, “you were with him through the drugs, and you helped get him off the streets. After all that, do you think he trusts you?”

Greg looked crestfallen, and John hadn’t considered the impact this secret relationship with Mycroft would have on Sherlock and Lestrade’s trust.

“I used to hope he looked up to me, like a bit like a father and son type thing,” Greg admitted, “at least, that’s how I felt about him. I’ll always be there for him, but he needs someone who loves him. Unconditionally. Romantically. Sexually. Emotionally. He’s never had these things, not in a pure way. I think I understand him better than most, and I’m sure he thinks he understands me. He obviously trusted me enough to let me help him back then, but after he got better he became distant. He needed more.”

When they first met he wouldn’t have imagined Greg having all of these hidden feelings about Sherlock. He trusted Sherlock more than John realized. He really did talk about Sherlock like he was his son, and it was almost sad to think that his lover would probably never know how much Greg cared about him.

“Thanks for the advice,” John said, placing a hand on the handle to Sherlock’s room. “You’re wrong, though. Sherlock wouldn’t see the world in a different way. He sees the world in his own way, and I think he always will. It’s what’s special about him. And I think…I think that’s why I…”

His mind went completely blank and his body froze. Greg only grinned, knowing what was happening to him.
It was almost like this was his body’s way of saying *we’ve reached the point of no return*. He loved Sherlock, and he wouldn’t have it any other way. Damn his flaws, his trust issues, his fears-

*It’s why he sees the world the way he does. And it’s beautiful. It’s sad and tragic sometimes, but beautiful.*

“If I can give you a lift somewhere, let me know,” Greg offered, “but just to warn you there are about two hundred reporters from around the world camped outside Baker Street.”

John only faintly heard what Greg said.

“I’m just going to stay with Sherlock.”

Greg shrugged.

“You know my number.”

His arm felt heavy as his hand twisted the doorknob and he stepped back into his boyfriend’s hospital room. Sherlock lay perfectly still, with his arm thrown over his chest. His face was still too white, but his vitals were good. He seemed to be sleeping soundly, despite the conversations going on about him. Despite John’s heart, pounding. He could just hear Sherlock now:

Pupils, dilated. Heart rate, elevated.

*I don’t have to tell him right away, he decided, but now I know: this is real.*

Chapter End Notes

Thank you guys SO much! I can't say enough how much your comments make my day. I hope you're happy with the way the story is progressing!

Sherlock gets to go home soon, but he won't be quite ready to go back on cases. How will John cope being trapped inside the flat with this guy he's madly in love with? Will the truth slip out?
Dr. Watson's Confession

Chapter Notes

This chapter is for everyone who wanted a Mystrade update or wanted to see them again, and for tvfriend who wrote: "I don't know if you are still taking requests, but I've been reading mystrade like crazy for the last couple of days. I would love to see a chapter where Greg is comforting Mycroft about Sherlock being drugged and almost murdered!".

I'm definitely still taking requests! Sorry, it's just taking me a bit longer for me to get around to them because this story actually, sorta, kinda, has a plot now.

Warning: discussions of Sherlock's past drug abuse

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I’m bored.”

“I don’t care.”

“But John, I’m bored!”

“Jesus, you’re worse than your nephew!” John exclaimed, throwing his hands in the air in defeat. “What do you want me to do about it?”

They glared at each other. After nearly a month away from cases and over 24 hours in the hospital, they were both getting a bit of cabin fever. Sherlock even more so. He lay tucked in his bed, surrounded by pillows and covered in blankets. John stood next to him, arms crossed now and looking as frustrated as he felt.

“I don’t know,” he sighed. He closed his eyes as he threw his head back against the pillows. “I just wish I could remember something.”

“Me too,” John whispered.

He didn’t have the heart to admit how envious he was that John seemed to remember a great deal more than he did. Every time he fell asleep he seemed to wake up remembering less and less. Now it came down to remembering a house and a woman with blonde hair. And then...nothing. It was frustrating, it was disheartening. It was disappointing.

There was a sudden knock at the door, and Sherlock grumbled:

“I don’t want to see them.”

“Why do you always think it’s for you?”

John sighed dramatically as he stormed out of the room. Eyes closed, he listened as the bedroom door slammed and John’s feet disappeared into the living room. Once he knew he was alone again he opened his eyes and rolled over so that he could stare at the wall. He shivered; it was still summer, he didn’t know why he was so cold. His head hurt, but he was afraid to tell John. Every
now and then his vision went a bit blurry, but all he had to do was blink and pretend it never happened.

He shivered again, and a dizzying wave of nausea hit him. Sherlock considered bolting for the bathroom when the door opened, and Lestrade stepped in.

“Hey,” Lestrade said quietly.

Their eyes met, each of them practically radiating we’ve been here before.

“Hey,” Sherlock said.

His voice was devoid of emotion, and he could see in Lestrade’s face how much this frustrated him.

“I brought you some bagels,” Lestrade said, holding up the paper bag he was holding. “I figured you hadn’t eaten anything and…well, here.”

He shoved the bag into Sherlock’s hands without asking his permission. Just from the smell he could deduce they were blueberry and cinnamon bagels from the bakery beneath Lestrade’s flat, and just the smell was enough to make his stomach grumble. He knew Lestrade was thinking of the last time he helped him through detox. He refused to eat, except for simple things, like bagels.

“Thanks,” Sherlock croaked.

Reaching for the glass of water by his bed, he took a moment to let it sink in that Lestrade actually remembered that detail.

“How are you holding up?” Lestrade asked.

He placed his hands on his hips, like he did sometimes when examining a crime scene. Sherlock gazed at him and considered telling him the truth. When he was around Lestrade he always felt like he not only could be completely honest with him, but that he had to be.

Well, except when it came to investigating cases, of course.

But when it came to the drugs, or being ill, or struggling with whatever personal trauma might be going on, he respected the man too much to lie.

“I have a headache,” he admitted. “I don’t know if that’s a bad thing or not.

Judging by the sudden fear in Lestrade’s eyes, it was very bad.

“Have you told John?” He shook his head. “Sherlock, you should talk to him, okay? You know you can trust him.”

He knew.

“I just don’t want to worry him,” he mumbled.

Closing his eyes again, he turned away and regretted ever bringing it up.

“Anything else?” Lestrade demanded.

“Nausea.”
“And?”

“Fatigue. I’m just tired, I’m not dying.”

“What about your eyes?”

Sherlock froze, and his heart skipped a few beats. Vision. Of course, now he was remembering. Through one particular detox he struggled with a particularly strange bout of blurry vision that scared the shit of Lestrade. It passed on its own and was probably just a side effect of the meds he was on, but Lestrade took it seriously.

“I’m calling your doctor,” Lestrade announced.

“No!” Sherlock exclaimed, shooting straight up. “I’m fine! I’m fine, I just-”

“You could have a brain...thing going on, Sherlock!”

Someone knocked at the door, and they both stopped. He glared at Lestrade, warning him to not say anything. Lestrade opened his mouth to protest, but when John entered he stayed silent.

“Mycroft’s here,” John said.

Lestrade’s eyes lit up, and Sherlock resisted rolling his own eyes. Mycroft slipped into the room and Lestrade practically leapt at him, pulling him into a tight embrace. His brother simply stood there, letting his eyes fall close and his chin rest on Lestrade’s shoulder.

“I’m so sorry,” Lestrade stammered. Sherlock and John exchanged glances; why was Lestrade suddenly acting like this was his fault? “I should have been there for him from the beginning.”

“It’s fine, Gregory,” Mycroft insisted. “It’s not your fault.”

He opened his mouth to argue, but Mycroft smirked and continued before he had the chance:

“He’s in custody, right?”

Greg nodded and pulled away, straightening himself up. He glanced around, his eyes practically wet with tears of guilt. His cheeks flushed as he seemed to suddenly remember they weren’t alone.

“Yeah, we got him,” Greg said, “the trial should be pretty straightforward.”

“Good,” he turned to Sherlock, and suddenly he felt like he was one of his own experiments, and everyone else were the scientists examining him. “Can you really not remember anything?”

He shook his head.

“He had a severe concussion,” John said. He handed Mycroft his medical charts, and his brother immediately took to flipping through him. “We were drugged with Rophenol. Sherlock, more so than me. That, combined with the head wound put him at a great risk for amnesia.”

“Have you recovered any of your memories?” Mycroft asked, never looking up from his chart.

He shook his head.
“Have you had any trouble making new ones?” Mycroft pressed.

“Trying to be the doctor now, Mycroft?” He teased. “Is the government boring you?”

Mycroft glared at him, unamused, and Sherlock admitted:

“Yeah, a bit of trouble. It’s fine though, really-“

“It’s not fine!”

He was taken aback as all three of them screamed at him in unison. They all stared at him as he continued to glare, and Mycroft was the first to speak up.

“You were drugged, Sherlock. Do you not realize how serious this is?”

“Mye, that’s being a bit harsh,” Lestrade attempted. “We’re all worried about his head, but we can’t assume that-“

“Because I was drugged I’ll slip into relapse?” Lestrade’s mouth fell agape, and John looked like someone ran over him with a truck. His stomach churned when he realized his boyfriend would be the only one in the room who didn’t have a clue what he meant.

“I used to use Rophenol, John,” Sherlock explained hotly, “I used it to come down from cocaine highs. I even overdosed on it too, once, because I would forget how much I took after I took it. Don’t you see, John? Mycroft thinks that because someone drugged me with it I’ll get addicted again. But I won’t. I didn’t do this. I didn’t ask for it! And I’m not enjoying it. I’m not fine. I feel terrible, alright? If that what it takes to convince you that I’m not relishing in this experience, I feel terrible.”

Three sets of eyes stared at him, stunned. John slowly shook his head and, without warning, stormed from the room. Panic rushed through him, and he tried to leap out of bed but Lestrade stepped in front of him.

“Don’t, Sherlock,” he said quietly, “he just needs some air.”

How could he know that? How did he know John wasn’t storming out because Sherlock disappointed him?

Breathing hard, he threw himself back against the bed in frustration three times before he finally grabbed a pillow and launched it across the room toward his brother.

“Mature,” Mycroft shot.

He reached for the lamp next, but Lestrade’s arm was on his before he could.

“That really isn’t fair of you, Mycroft,” Lestrade said, rounding on his boyfriend.

Sherlock looked up at him in surprise, and even Mycroft seemed startled that his lover sided with him.

“I know you worry about him,” Lestrade continued. He took a step toward Mycroft and grabbed his hand. Sherlock watched, entrance, as he watched his brother be comforted by someone other than family for the first time. “I know more than anyone. But I also know more than anyone how hard Sherlock worked to get off the drugs. He was sick in my flat for weeks, remember? It was months before he fully recovered, and that was just the first time. When it was the Rophenol he
was just…scared. Scared because he couldn’t remember anything, scared because he didn’t understand what was happening to him or why it was his fault. I know why you get so nervous about him. I know how easy it can be for addicts to relapse if they’re exposed to their addictions again. But he’s changed, Mycroft. He worked so hard to get to where he is now, and even better he has John. I know you only doubt him because you worry so much, and the thought of something happening to him…that thought makes me ill, too. But what’s important right now is that he heals. It’s not the time to be accusing him of anything.”

“I’m not trying to-“

“I know.”

Sherlock nearly threw up when the two exchanged a quick kiss, right there in his bedroom. *In front of him.* He coughed, and they quickly broke apart.

“He’ll be fine,” Lestrade promised, raising a hand to caress Mycroft’s neck.

“This is getting disgusting,” Sherlock mumbled. “Can I have John back, now?”

Lestrade smirked and wrapped an arm around his brother’s waist. He was happy when Mycroft squirmed, clearly as uncomfortable with this public display of affection as he was.

“We don’t want to send him into shock, Gregory,” Mycroft teased. Then he sighed, suddenly becoming serious again. “Sherlock, I really don’t think that little of you. But no matter how strong you become, there will always be temptations trying to get you to give in. I just want to make sure you’re prepared to defy them.”

He didn’t have anything smart to say about that. For once, he actually thought his brother was being sincere.

“I’m fine,” he muttered.

“You just said you were terrible,” Lestrade replied.

*Why must I decide to be honest?*

“I appreciate you coming over Mycroft,” he sighed, “and I appreciate you bringing him back down to earth, Lestrade. But please…I think I should talk to John.”

Lestrade nodded and placed a gentle hand on Mycroft’s shoulder.

“Come on,” he asked him, “call me, if-“

“I will.”

Mycroft said nothing else as he was led out of the room. Closing his eyes, he embraced the silence he had before confronting John.

But as the seconds dragged on his stomach churned even more. Just the thought of talking to John about drugs made him leap of bed and finally make a run for the toilet. He reached it just in time to hug the rim and throw his head over, emptying everything that was in his stomach. By the time he finished he felt lightheaded. Footsteps sounded outside the door, and he was running a shaky hand over his mouth when John spoke up.

“Are you alright?” His voice was quiet; it almost sounded like he might have been crying.
When he looked up to see John’s red-rimmed eyes his theory was proven right.

“Are you alright?” He echoed back.

“Just a bit tired.”

It was a pitiful excuse for the red eyes, but as John stumbled toward the sink he knew he at least wasn’t lying about the exhaustion. Sherlock leaned his head back against the wall and ran trembling hands through his sweaty hair as John wet a hand cloth.

John didn’t say a word as he knelt down and ran the cloth across Sherlock’s forehead. He stiffened at the warm touch and was grateful when John then pressed the cloth firmly against his forehead.

“Did you throw up any blood?” John asked softly.

It was his doctor tone. His *I care* tone. His *please trust me* tone. John should have known he didn’t have to use those tricks on him.

Nevertheless, he knew John was asking all the right questions, and he shook his head.


“John,” he moaned, feeling helpless.

“I wish you had told me,” John whispered, gazing at him. Sherlock opened his eyes and they stared at each other; John’s eyes were soft and welcoming. *He’s not mad.* “Do you still feel sick?”

“Just lightheaded,” he admitted.

He sank further down the wall and John shifted so that he was next to him; so that an arm was around him. He let his head fall against John. They kissed and John pulled away, licking his lips and anxious for more. Sherlock played with the damp washcloth. When his head began pounding again he placed it against his face, embracing its warmth before beginning his story.

“I’m sorry, I should have told you,” Sherlock said. “Like I said I…I used Rophenol to come down from the high of cocaine. Cocaine stimulated my mind, but when the high is over I just felt empty. Withdrawal was like a reminder of how pathetic my life was, how helpless I was and how I just had nothing. I was so addicted that I couldn’t wait another day for another hit. I always needed help. I always needed something to get me through. Mycroft thought I was sick, mentally, I mean. But I wasn’t. I was fully aware of what I was doing and I wanted it. God I wanted it. I didn’t have anyone or anything, just drugs. The worst is that I can’t even remember a lot of it because I made myself forget. I would wake up and be somewhere I didn’t know, or with people I didn’t know. After I met Lestrade sometimes I just woke up and…forget I knew him. To be honest with you I am a bit freaked out to be going through this again. Do you remember when I told you about the case at the sex club?”

John snorted and allowed a sad smile to slip across his face.

“How can I forget?” He teased.

“I didn’t remember what happened then,” he went on. “I told you about how Lestrade helped me remember. I just want to remember.”
“I know,” John whispered. He held him closer and kissed him again. His eyes must have been wild because John kept staring at them, concerned. “Do you want to go back to the hospital?”

Sherlock shook his head.

Of course he didn’t.

“Sherlock, look at me.” He didn’t, and now John looked just as afraid as Lestrade did. He supposed he did a good job of scaring people when he was ill. “I’m not them. You know that so please… please trust me.”

“I trust you.”

“Trust me,” John repeated.

When their faces were only inches apart Sherlock reached up to run a finger down John’s cheek.

“God you’re tired,” Sherlock whispered. “Have you slept at all?”

John shrugged.

“I’m fine.” They were both terrible liars.

Sherlock closed his eyes. Dizziness again, but he wouldn’t admit it.

He ignored John, and they kissed again. They scooted closer together so that John’s head could rest against his arm.

“If you feel like you need to be sick again, just warn me,” John said with a yawn.

He sounded like he could fall asleep right then and there.

“Mmm,” Sherlock mumbled, “okay.”

His stomach churned as he moved closer to John again.

“I didn’t have anyone for the longest time then,” Sherlock whispered, “but I do now.”

Sherlock planted a firm kiss to the top of John’s head, and his lover scraped his finger softly against his palm.

“Sherlock…” John spoke up so suddenly and then stopped, looking a bit ill himself. Sherlock nearly stopped breathing as he turned to him. Their eyes met and he realized that John still looked afraid, that there was something beyond the case and the trauma he wanted to talk about. “Sherlock I…I’m always here for you, you know that right?”

He nodded.

“And I care about you a lot, and I want you to be safe and…” John’s voice fell to nearly a whisper. “I’m not sure how this whole working cases thing is going to work out because every time something happens to you I just…I just…god this all sounded a lot better in my head.”

“In your head?” Sherlock mused, gazing at him.

John reached up, caressing his face before kissing him again. When they broke apart their heads rest together, and he could feel John’s hot breaths on his lips. John’s own lips were wet and
trembling; desperate. His breathing was rapid and uneven. In fact, he sounded like he might have a heart attack. He placed a hand to John’s chest to soothe him, and his lover grasped it, smiling through his panic.

“I’m sorry I bolted earlier,” John went on, “I just…I want to know all about you. I want to be with you, really with you and I…I guess the drugs still scare me. And I’m sorry for that, I really am.”

He touched John’s face again, becoming worried. Why was John acting like he was having some kind of panic attack?

“I want to know everything about you,” John repeated. “I want to understand you and know you and…god, am I making any sense?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“Afraid not,” he whispered.

Their faces were together again. John’s eyes trailed up to his, capturing his, and not letting him go.

“Sherlock, I love you.”

His whole world froze. He couldn’t take his eyes away, he couldn’t breathe. He couldn’t move, couldn’t blink, couldn’t think. Couldn’t talk, form words, move his hand. Couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t breathe.

“Sherlock?!” John suddenly exclaimed in panic.

A sickening bile rose through him, and Sherlock threw himself over the toilet just in time. He threw up a couple of times before pulling away, shakier than ever. John helped gently lower him to the floor and lay down next to him. He reached up and brushed a cold finger against Sherlock’s clammy skin once again.

“You what?” He finally blurted out.

“Are you alright?”

“No, no, go back to the…the love bit.”

John’s cheeks flushed, and he grasped Sherlock’s hand again, as though afraid he might bolt.

“You heard me,” John teased. He reached up to touch Sherlock’s face again. Neither one of them seemed to consider that they were laying on the floor of the bathroom, that the room smelled of his sick and that John had clearly not slept for days.

Does he expect me to say it back?

Did he really say it, or did I imagine it?

“I don’t…I don’t know…” what you mean.

His lover gazed at him with what he thought was pity, and he felt pathetic. Everyone else in the world seemed to manage these situations just fine. Why was he freezing up?

“I love you,” John said again, kissing him hard and quick.

Sherlock’s body curled up and John mimicked him so that they fit perfectly together. He worried
that he might be sick again, and it might not be entirely because of the injuries.

“I love you,” John said a third time.

They kissed again, soft and gentle this time. Comforting. John placed a hand on his shoulder and he allowed it. He didn’t have a clue what John meant by ‘love’, but he liked this. He was relieved when John didn’t press him for a response and instead settled into his embrace. It wasn’t that he wasn’t that he wasn’t flattered or entranced by John’s confession. He just wanted to know what John meant.

But when he looked back to him John’s eyes were closed and he was asleep, there in his arms, on the floor of their own bathroom.

And he couldn’t help but to smile.

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Chapter End Notes

There you have it. Usually I'm terrified of writing the big "I love you". So hopefully that didn't disappoint! Of course, we still have to hear from Sherlock!

Thanks for reading!!!!!
John groaned as he tilted his neck from side to side, getting out the kinks. He stretched his back and swiveled his hips from side to side, but nothing helped. Even his jaw was sore and his breath smelled. It was like he had a horrible night out drinking when in reality he spent it sleeping on the bathroom floor with his boyfriend.

Of course Sherlock seemed perfectly untouched. He was causally leaning over the counter, eating a bagel, and reading the morning newspaper. His free hand traced the rim of a tea mug; his finger trembled and the tea mug looked empty.

“Sherlock?” He asked carefully.

Sherlock jumped a bit and then straightened up. When he turned he smiled. It was almost robotic.

“Good morning, John.”

The greeting wasn’t warm or welcoming. The skin beneath Sherlock’s eyes was coated in black, and his face looked a bit paler than normal.

“Morning,” he replied, attempting to be cheerful. “Sleep well?”

Sherlock smirked, and he didn’t fight when John slipped his arms around him, holding him tightly from behind.

“Not too bad,” Sherlock said.

They kissed and John backed away to glance at the newspaper in Sherlock’s hand. It was in German.

“Nothing says bright new day like news from…”

“Hamburg,” Sherlock explained, “it’s about Mycroft.”

“Oh,” John frowned. “I didn’t know he made the news.”

“I read between the lines.”

He studied Sherlock from the corner of his eye as he made coffee. Frankly, his boyfriend looked a bit out of it.

“You look like someone who didn’t sleep at all for someone who didn’t sleep too badly,” John commented.

“On the contrary, Dr. Watson,” Sherlock teased, kicking himself away from the counter. “I slept very well. That’s not to say, however, that I’m rested.”

Oh that was just…very Sherlock.

To make him feel better, Sherlock planted a quick kiss to his cheek and shoved a bagel in front of his face. The bread smelled of freshly baked cinnamon. When John hesitated, Sherlock forced the
bagel into his mouth. He bit down into what could only be described as perfection and moaned with happiness.

“Jesus Christ,” John said through mouthfuls of bites. “This is gorgeous.”

“From the café beneath Lestrade’s flat,” Sherlock explained, “I used to eat these all the time when I was going through withdrawals. Brilliance, I tell you.”

Coldness ran through him and John glanced away, as uncomfortable as he always was when Sherlock began talking about the drugs.

“After I first met Luke we began staying in a shoddy flat above this pub,” Sherlock announced. “It was horrible. It constantly reeked of booze and stink from the bins downstairs. Cigarette smoke would practically flood into the flat and it was loud. Incredibly loud. It made me so jumpy, when I was high, when the flat to be so loud like that. The place was small, just one room with a small kitchen and a loo. There were rats and cracks in the ceilings and walls. It was cheap and we could still barely afford it.”

“How did you?”

Sherlock’s eyes shot up toward him and he swallowed, nervous.

“I played violin, on the streets,” Sherlock explained. John raised his eyebrows, impressed. Sherlock’s music was brilliant and beautiful, but to know it was good enough to make even a small living off of it was amazing. “Luke sold drugs.”

They simultaneously looked away.

“One night, after a drug deal went very wrong Luke came home in the middle of the night, shaking and beaten,” Sherlock went on. His eyes went dark and his face fell slightly, and John couldn’t decide if it was from mourning or shame. “I cleaned his wounds and he just…trembled. It was very unlike him. It frightened me, but I stayed silent. His arms were all dirty from mud and bruised from fingerprints. He never did tell me exactly what happened that night. Afterward we lay down; we had a single, twin sized mattress, about the equivalent of what you would see in a jail cell. It was on the floor, and it was always cold. Luke rolled over and looked at me, caressed my face, and told me he loved me. It was…it was the first time anyone had said it like that. Anyone who wasn’t my mum, I mean. He kissed me and we had sex—“

John flinched but luckily he didn’t think Sherlock noticed. He couldn’t understand how Sherlock didn’t see how much it bothered him to think about him living in such horrible, unsafe conditions. Sleeping on floors every night with rats and depending on money from busking and drug deals. Having sex with drug dealers…having sex with a man who wasn’t him.

Sherlock swallowed, and when he spoke again his voice was darker, more strained.

“Afterward he got out some drugs we had stashed and he began shooting up…I just watched,” god his eyes were unfamiliar now, caught up in a time John would never begin to understand. He felt sick inside, but probably not as sick as Sherlock look right now. It was shame, he decided. He looked scared of himself. Of his past.

John reached out and placed a hand on Sherlock’s shoulders. He squeezed gently, but at the comforting touch Sherlock looked away, like he was in pain. He rolled up the sleeve of his shirt to reveal the white scars that dashed across his left forearm. His arm began shaking violently, and John reached out for that too.
“Sherlock, it’s okay,” he whispered.

Closing his eyes briefly, Sherlock nodded, and John was relieved to know he acknowledged that he was there for him.

“He reached over and took my arm—” John held his breath as Sherlock took his arm and turned it over so that their bones sat parallel in mid-air. He traced a vein just beneath his elbow. “He withdrew another needle and injected me too because he knew it’s what I wanted. And I did want it. He told me he loved me again and I whispered it back because I thought I had to. It’s funny because the night began with me taking care of him and after that…he just had this control over me. This control that I mistook for love. It didn’t take long after Lestrade found me to realize that our relationship, that love I thought I had for him, was the reason my drug habit went so far. Of course, after he died I was just depressed and lost. I still thought I loved him and worse, I really did think he loved me. And for that, I was angry at the world.

That’s when Mycroft started to tell me that love is not an advantage. He meant that I was desperate for love from Luke because I never had that kind of love before. I let people take advantage of me, without even realizing it. I’m vulnerable. That’s why after I got clean I became a recluse. I went from being too trusting to being too afraid to trust. Until you.”

They simultaneously stopped breathing.

His body went completely cold as Sherlock’s warm hand slid up his arms, to his chest, and up his neck to pull him in for a kiss. Or so he thought. Sherlock stopped just before their lips could meet, and John’s breath hitched in anticipation.

“I trust you too much,” Sherlock said, breathless. His eyes locked into John’s, studying how uncomfortable he was. He tried to keep his eyes on Sherlock and was reminded of the constant deductions he was subject to when they first met. “I trust you far too much, and it scares me. You terrify me, Dr. Watson. You make me see things in new ways. You make me doubt my own deductions and although that infuriates me—‘he grinned a bit—“you make me question everything. Love is an advantage when it comes to you, John.”

For the moment his heart stopped.

*Does that mean what I think it means?*

Suddenly Sherlock dipped forward to complete the kiss, and John stopped breathing all together. He struggled for air as they kissed hard, arms grasping at each other as they fought to keep their balance. Sherlock flipped him over so that it was his back against the countertop, so that he was nearly sprawled over the counters and-

*God I want this!*

“Just stop,” John pleaded quietly. He had to close his eyes and pull himself together. Arousal was already stirring in him, his cock twitched, and he was sure his eyes were dilated. Their foreheads rested together, and John rest a hand on Sherlock’s chest as he explained: “You were in the hospital with a concussion just twenty-four hours ago. You have amnesia. We were both drugs. You were throwing up last night. Maybe you feel better at the moment, but we should just take it easy today.”

Sherlock simply blinked, as though the words were completely foreign to him. He let go of him abruptly, and as Sherlock turned back to his newspaper. He was torn between knowing what he was saying was true and listening to his body, which was swarming with emotion and anticipation.
So he compromised.

Reaching for Sherlock’s arm, he pulled him close again and seduced him into a sweet, soft kiss.

“Sofa,” John demanded hoarsely, “I said *take it easy*, not stop.”

His boyfriend nodded, not arguing as John grabbed his hand and practically dragged him to the sofa. Their hands were body sweaty, bodies tingly, and hadn’t a clue how they were simply going to *take it easy*.

He let Sherlock lay down first before lowering himself on top of him. They kissed once, twice, and then broke apart with John touching his face.

“How are you really feeling?” He asked quietly.

“A bit better,” Sherlock said, staring straight up at him. They kissed again. “Nausea is subsiding. I think throwing up helped.”

John chuckled.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

“I told you I loved you and then you threw up,” John teased, “I imagined a lot of bad reactions but that wasn’t one of them.”

Sherlock looked embarrassed as he kissed him again. They both let the kiss go deeper, further. He rolled over so that they could lay side-by-side and be more comfortable. Their hands were on each other’s shoulders, trembling ever so slightly. Lips graced his mouth, his teeth, his throat, and he moaned. He reached up to clench at Sherlock’s curls, and his boyfriend whimpered.

All at once they stopped suddenly, and Sherlock demanded:

“Then tell me again.”

John stared at him and lowered his hand so that he could move some of the fallen curls behind Sherlock’s ear. Their breathing was uneven and rapid, almost dangerously so, but John managed to remain calm long enough to murmur:

“I love you.”

They kissed again and pulled apart so John could drag his hand across Sherlock’s forehead.

“How do you feel?” He asked again.

Sherlock gazed at him, and he could see how exhausted his lover was. The snogging had clearly left him breathless. His lips, swollen from kissing, trembled ever so slightly. Bits of his face and neck were already red from John’s lips, and while he would have loved to make more of his body look like that, he had to pull himself back to reality. Only last night Sherlock was on the bathroom floor, sick to his stomach and nearly out of it. Adrenaline was the only thing that could give him this much energy so soon.

“I felt better when I first woke up,” Sherlock admitted. “Like I said the nausea’s going away now, but I still have a headache. Is that a bad thing?”

He stared at him with the worried, curious, eyes of a child, and John didn’t have the heard to admit how much hearing that worried him.
“How about you just rest, okay?” John said.

As Sherlock nodded he gasped, desperate and breathless from the energy running through him.

“We’ll pick up where we left off later,” John promised. “You look like you want to sleep. Rest, Sherlock, it’s what’s important. Get better.”

They kissed again.

*I don’t want this to end!*

Worse he was hard, and he could tell by the scrape of Sherlock’s cock against his legs as they shifted on the sofa that his lover was too.

“You look so tired,” he said again.

He made to get up, to give Sherlock room, but he was grabbed before he could make it to his feet.

“Don’t,” Sherlock pleaded, pulling him back down. “I’m alright.”

They were kissing again before he could protest, and soon the feeling of Sherlock’s lips on his skin, against his ear and neck, were just too much. He couldn’t give this up.

Their eyes met briefly, and John let out a gasp as Sherlock suckled on his neck. He held onto his boyfriend’s back, desperate for support as his eyes rolled to the back of his head.

“*Sherlock,*” he shivered.

Sherlock pulled away, grinned, and simply settled into his arms.

“There,” Sherlock announced, “done.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much!! :)
He concentrated not on the notes, but the dance of his fingers across the strings. Sherlock knew the piece by heart, his eyes only flashed across the pages of music for reassurance. The violin sang through the flat while John stared at his laptop screen. The music became stronger, more powerful, until-

“Jesus Christ!” John exclaimed as a string broke.

Sherlock was immune to the shock of broken strings, but John nearly leapt out of his chair and had to run a hand through his hair to calm himself.

“Your hair’s getting too long,” Sherlock commented.

His eyes roamed over his boyfriend, whose blonde hair now fell past his ears. It was a bit shaggy looking, making John look like he was attempting to look- no, feel- younger.

“What?” John demanded.

“You should cut it.”

They stared at each other, and he realized John must be worrying that he had been thinking about this for a while.

“Just a thought,” Sherlock said.

He turned away quickly to change the string.

“That was beautiful,” John said, getting to his feet. “I think I recognize it.”

“Mozart,” Sherlock explained. “Symphony 41, the 4th movement. You should recognize it. A lot of people do. That was one of my most popular songs, when I played on the streets. Managed to afford a lot of meals thanks to that movement.”

“Do you want one now?”

John grinned as he slipped up behind him. Sherlock allowed him to wrap his arms around him and pull him into a kiss. As they broke apart John gazed at the violin in wonder, and Sherlock carefully raised it so that he could take it in his hands.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock said. John looked so uncertain, so unconfident. He placed John’s hands on the neck and plucked at the strings with his own finger. “Like that.”

Swallowing, John lifted his fingers and mimicked the movements.

“Good,” Sherlock murmured.

A nervous smile crossed John’s face, and Sherlock moved his lover’s fingers so that they were in place to play a simple children’s tune.

“Hold the bow like this,” Sherlock instructed, placing his hand under John’s elbow and lifting it up
ever so slightly. “Now as we move the bow, lay your fingers down like so.”

Fingers on top of John’s, he placed them down in a short, simple, rhythm. He held onto both of John’s hand, guiding him through the song. After only a few bars of music John broke into a smile and laughed.

“‘Twinkle Twinkle Little Star’?” He asked. “Really, Sherlock?”

Sherlock grinned.

“Small steps,” he teased.

He carefully placed the violin down and grabbed onto John instead. John dragged a hand across his forehead and studied his face.

“How’s the headache?” He asked.

“Alright,” Sherlock shrugged. “Back on the blog, then?”

John raised an eyebrow but didn’t question his deduction.

“Just reading comments,” John replied, “lots of people are concerned about you.”

He was hardly interested.

“I’m trying to write something up about the case,” John admitted, running his hands over his face. “I just can’t come up with anything.”

Leaning forward, he planted a kiss on John’s cheek and closed the laptop for him.

“You seem to be feeling better,” John said with a grin. Sherlock didn’t reply as he let John pull him into his lap. He straddled him awkwardly, and even the simple act of kissing made him feel like they might fall over.

“Nausea is subsiding,” Sherlock said.

They kissed again.

“Head is still a bit fuzzy,” he went on. He placed a kiss on John’s neck. “But I’m okay.”

Their lips brushed together and John’s hands crawled up his arms.

“I’m okay, John,” Sherlock said again, voice falling to a whisper. He licked at the skin just behind John’s ear and his lover groaned. “It’s been a few days, now. I’m fine.”

He was far too tall to be straddling John’s lap, but neither one of them dared to move. He could feel John getting hard, and just feeling that strain made him gasp from arousal.

“Bed?” Sherlock pleaded, a soft whisper. “John—”

“Sherlock.”

They kissed again.

“Please,” Sherlock growled.

“Just-“ John grimaced as Sherlock kissed his neck, his chin, and tried to force his tongue back
down his mouth. He knew *take it slow* was what John was trying to say, but he never got that far. “Just...bed.”

Already they were breathing hard as they began shedding clothes. Locked in each other’s embrace they stumbled toward his bedroom door, and he knew the last thing he wanted to do was take it slow.

“Sherlock,” John gasped.

John’s tongue dove down his throat before he could answer. If John wanted to warn him again about taking it easy or going slowly, he seemed to forget as they closed the door behind them and toppled over onto the bed.

Chapter End Notes

I thought things should start getting back to normal for them :)

But, of course there's still issue of trying to remember....

I hope you're enjoying the story! Thanks for reading!
“Sherlock, are you alright?”

He was shaking so much that he couldn’t find the strength to reply. Lestrade pushed the blanket over his shoulders a little more as he took a seat beside where he lay on the sofa. A cup of tea was forced into Sherlock’s hands and Lestrade reached up to undo his tie, a symbolic end to his shift.

“Sorry, long shift,” Lestrade explained. “One in the morning was the best I could do, and that’s only until I’m called in again.”

Trembling, Sherlock sat up so that he wasn’t lying underneath Lestrade. His eyes were blurry but as he looked around at the unfamiliar flat the blurriness subsided. Each time he woke up he was confused; he had only been staying with Lestrade for three days. Three. Horrible. Days.

“Do you feel like you’re going to be sick?” Lestrade asked, reaching up to touch his forehead. “You look pale.”

It felt like his stomach was doing somersaults. Earlier he managed to eat a single bagel, and he was afraid if he stayed on the sofa for too long that it would end on Lestrade’s shirt.

So he nodded, and Lestrade helped him to the loo. His hand was tight around his stomach as he tried his best to forget how sick he felt. The further they got from the sofa the more Sherlock stumbled, and Lestrade wrapped a hand around him to keep him from falling. Suddenly his stomach lurched and he fell over. Using his hand, he caught himself against the wall and sank to the floor. Nausea and dizziness overwhelmed him as he dug his hands against his head, and he couldn’t stop himself from being sick on the floors, right next to Lestrade’s feet.

Instead of yelling at him Lestrade knelt down and placed a hand on his shoulder.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock whispered.

“It’s alright,” Lestrade called softly.

Sherlock ran a hand across his mouth and leaned back. His face was white in the darkness, and he could see the desperation and concern clouding Lestrade’s eyes. His new friend was beginning to doubt he was capable of handling this.

“You don’t have to keep babysitting me,” Sherlock offered. “I’m getting sick all over your flat, taking up space in your living room, and-“

“Stop,” Lestrade snapped. “Stop it, Sherlock, you know that doesn’t matter. I want you to get better. I know you can beat this. You’ve been through trauma-“
“I’ve been through nothing!”

Lestrade stared at him, looking so offended that Sherlock might as well have insulted him personally.

“How long have you been on the streets?” Lestrade asked.

His voice was soft but demanding, a trained tone he must have picked up after years of interrogating criminals. Sherlock looked him directly in the eye, searching for no sympathy as he admitted:

“Six years.”

Lestrade stopped, clearly stunned, but didn’t comment.

“What happened after university?” He asked instead.

“I never finished,” Sherlock sighed, “but I lived with someone in a few different shady flats. Places above pubs, stuff like that. We could barely afford it but we got by for a while.”

“Then what?”

Sherlock glared at him. He felt terrible and the smell of his sick was rotting in the room. Now didn’t seem like the appropriate time for a ‘getting to know you’ session.

“Then my flatmate, he got into a fight, a bad one,” Sherlock continued. “It compromised his... We didn’t have enough to keep the flat so we ran away before the landlord could kick us out. I was twenty-four.”

For a moment Lestrade looked impressed, but he reminded Sherlock more of someone’s father, who was scared to hear how their kid was really living. It didn’t make sense, though: they had just met. He didn’t understand why Lestrade cared.

“You’ve been living on the streets for six years,” Lestrade said. “You’ve been doing cocaine. You just nearly overdosed on a mixture of cocaine and heroin that you hardly remember taking. You’re poor, so I’m sure drugs aren’t easy to come by. How do you get them?”

Sherlock looked away. He didn’t want to go through this- especially not with a stranger.

“Sherlock?” Lestrade pressed.

He sighed, and it was only remembering that Lestrade was doing him a favour by letting him stay that made him admit:

“He gets them,” Sherlock replied.

“He?”

“My boyfriend.”

They stared at each other, and he had fun studying Lestrade’s eyes as the realization sank in.

“Your boyfriend gets the drugs,” Lestrade repeated. He said it like it really didn’t mean anything to him, and Sherlock was almost disappointed that he didn’t ask about it. Though he wasn’t sure why.

“How?”
He shrugged, and he was telling the truth when he said:

“How the fuck do I know? He just does.”

“Well he can’t pay people for them, unless he has money he’s not telling you about,” Lestrade said. “Does he have sex, in exchange for the drugs?”

Eyes wide, Sherlock had to restrain himself from hitting Lestrade. The D.I. knew it, too, and he swallowed nervously.

“I’m sorry,” he said quietly, “I have to ask these questions.”

“You don’t.”

“I do, when I have a young, homeless man going through withdrawal in my flat!” Lestrade exclaimed. “Especially when he’s a witness to a murder. Especially when he was so high he can’t remember what happened!”

Sherlock closed his eyes and looked away. He didn’t know what he was more ashamed of: the fact that Lestrade was absolutely right or the fact that tears were threatening to spill over just from the stress of being interrogated. He couldn’t handle this, and he knew it. His body was more fragile than he realized, and he just couldn’t do this.

“I can’t do this,” he whispered.

“You can,” a hand was on his shoulder again, “I’m asking you these questions to help you remember. Something must have happened that put you alone, in the alleyway that night. So tell me, Sherlock. Does your boyfriend offer up sex for drugs? Do you?”

He raised a hand but curled it into a fist before he could strike the copper.

“He doesn’t have anything to do with this!” Sherlock exclaimed. “He wasn’t with me because… because we fought, alright? I don’t know exactly how he gets the drugs, but he does. Sometimes he takes me along for deals so he must have some kind of…business strategy…worked out. But lately, this past year, things haven’t been good between us. He’s gotten worse.”

“Worse?” Lestrade studied him, and suddenly he felt like he may be sick again. Why did he have to go this far? “Sherlock, did he abuse you?”

He began shaking his head desperately.

“No!” He croaked. “No, he’s just a bit…dominate, that’s all.”

“Sexually?”

“No, just…Jesus, why are you asking me these questions?!“ He took a few deep breaths as Lestrade stared at him, simply waiting for him to continue. “He disappears sometimes. He’ll be gone for days, weeks even. He’s done that a lot this year. I’ve been sick of it, I really have been. I’m scared for him and he just acts like I shouldn’t be concerned. He gets mad at me for being concerned.”

“And how do you get drugs when he’s not around?” Lestrade asked. His eyes lit up with determination; the detective knew he hit jackpot with that question. “Has he disappeared recently?”

Sherlock sighed and let his head fall into his hands as he mumbled:
“Last week. I have a few people I can go to, if I’m real desperate. I have ways I can…I can get drugs, if I really want them. I don’t remember exactly what happened, but whatever happened after my last hit left me really shaken up. That’s why I crawled into the alleyway. I must have been…”

“Afraid?”

He nodded, and Lestrade scooted over so that he was sitting beside him against the wall.

“Come on,” Lestrade whispered.

Helping him stand, Lestrade led him toward the bathroom. This time Sherlock made it without being sick, and he felt well enough to stand over the sink and wash his face.

“Sorry about the floor,” he mumbled, “I’ll clean it up.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

Lestrade studied him through the mirror, watching him with admiration.

“You’ll get through this, you know,” Lestrade offered. “We’re getting somewhere. You’re already starting to remember what happened earlier that night. You have been through a trauma, Sherlock. You haven’t had an easy life, and now you could be the key to solving this murder. But it can only get better from here.”

He placed another reassuring hand on Sherlock’s shoulder, and he welcomed the comfort.

“I’ll get you some water,” Lestrade said.

Sherlock nodded, and his eyes trailed back to the mirror as Lestrade left. Drawing in a deep, shaky, breath, he rolled up the sleeve of his hoodie to reveal a collection of bruises and needle marks. They were still so fresh, so vivid, and the sight made him ashamed.

Shame.

It was a new thing to him, a new thing he had started feeling recently.

Shame.

Ever since Luke started disappearing, that’s how he felt. Maybe it was a sign, a sign that his body did want to move on from this torture.

Lestrade seemed confident in his insistence that it could only get better from here, and for the first time Sherlock admitted to himself that he really, really hoped it would.

Chapter End Notes

You guys make my day!!
The next night John answered a knock on the door to find two women he didn’t recognize. They were both young and blonde; they almost looked exactly alike.

“Hang on,” he said suddenly, as Sherlock appeared behind him. He pointed at one of the blonde women, whose hair was slightly longer than the other’s. “You’re from the case.”

Smiling, the woman nodded.

“We were afraid you wouldn’t remember,” she said.

Beside him, Sherlock looked ever more confused than he did. He at least remembered their faces, and now that he thought about he thought the one with shorter hair may have been the daughter of their criminal. The young girl was extremely pale, with frail skin and chapped lips.

“And you were the victim,” Sherlock said, nodding toward the girl with shorter hair.

The girl nodded but didn’t reply.

“I was your client, Violent Hunter,” the other woman explained.

“And I’m Anna,” the other girl said. “You rescued me.”

John’s eyes lit up. He knew they were supposed to distance themselves from news and the case, but he knew Sherlock would agree when he said he was desperate to know something.

“We don’t want to bother you,” Violet explained, “I’m sure Mr. Holmes is still recovering, but I realized you never got paid for your work.”

As always when it came to hearing about money, his heart leapt. It was no secret that they needed it. Taking nearly a month off to sit on their arses and have sex didn’t do any favours for their banking accounts and rent was coming up soon again. He didn’t want to mention to Sherlock that they were in trouble, but he was so desperate he had considered going to Mycroft.

“It’s not necessary,” Sherlock announced.

He made to slam the door in their faces and John’s caught it just in time. He glared at Sherlock, if not for being so ignorant to turn down being paid than for being rude to two people they helped.

“What he means is that we feel awful for what happened,” he lied. They still didn’t have a clue what happened. “We can’t accept payment.”

“We insist,” Violet said. “Here’s my portion. It’s a bit more than we agreed on, but you saved my life, Mr. Holmes, Dr. Watson. Anyone else would have slammed the door in my face but you two took me seriously. So please, accept this.”

She handed him an envelope full of cash, withdrawn from the bank today judging by the date on the envelope. John exchanged glances with Sherlock as he opened the envelope, and he nearly fell over when his eyes fell on a cheque for a thousand pounds.
“We can’t-” John attempted, but words were stolen from him.

“You can,” Violet said with a smile. She curled his hand so that it was clenching onto the cheque. “Please, it’s the least I can do. You two were in serious danger. You could have been killed. You were both drugged, and Mr. Holmes had a head wound. It’s the least I can do. Thank you, again.”

She gave them both a quick kiss on the cheek, and he was relieved she couldn’t see him blush at being kissed by a stranger as she turned to leave. Anna was left standing there, her own envelope in hand.

“You two don’t have the slightest clue who I am, do you?” She asked. They shook their heads, and she grinned. She extended the envelope out to John, and he accepted it. “This doesn’t even begin to make up for what you did for me. I would have died, and my little sister probably would have too. You put a dangerous, disgusting, man in prison. You saved me. You saved my life. I’m safe now, because of you.”

Tears swelled in her eyes, and John was about to offer her something when she reached into her purse for a bag of tissues. That’s when he noticed the bruising around her wrists, obviously from chains, and when he looked to his boyfriend he knew he noticed as well.

“I’m sure you don’t remember this, but I have brain cancer,” Anna admitted. His heart fell, and he felt terrible for getting excited about something as superficial as being paid. As he examined her closer he realized her hair was really a wig, and her arm was littered with bruising from IVs. “I’ve just been handed down this huge fortune from my family, and I don’t have a clue what to do with it. It will be my little sister’s soon, and she’s just a kid. She’ll go to live with my grandmother, but it’s not really the same, is it?”

“No,” Sherlock whispered behind him, “it isn’t.”

John felt terrible for him; Sherlock rarely talked about being raised by his grandmother, but lately it was becoming more and more obvious to him how envious he was that he did not have a traditional upbringing.

Anna offered him a soft smile and turned back to John.

“This is the least I can do,” Anna said, “please, accept this gift on my behalf. And thank you both.”

She gave them one last smile before she turned to bolt from the flat with tears rushing down her face. John waited until her car was safely headed down the block before he closed the door and fell against it.

“Shit,” he whispered.

It was just too surreal. He didn’t even know these people. He didn’t remember them, at least. His fingers trembled as he fought with the envelope, and he almost passed out when he saw how much the cheque was written for.

Sherlock forced the cheque away from his fingertips. His body went completely stiff and cold as his boyfriend’s eyes narrowed. They were both completely silent for a moment, until John finally managed:

“We could buy a house with that.”

“No, we couldn’t,” Sherlock sneered. “Don’t you know anything about the housing market?”
“We could put in a very nice down payment, at the least.”

“What do we need a house for?”

“A nicer flat, then?” John said. He was shaking now. He ran a hand through his hair, trying to steady himself.

“What’s wrong with this flat?” Sherlock shot. The cheque was shoved back into John’s hands, and his own eyes locked into the amount again. “You know we can’t accept that.”

“We don’t have a clue who that woman was and she just fled from the flat,” John pointed out. “And nothing’s wrong with this flat. I just thought we could do with something with a bit more space and less…bedrooms.”

His lips turned up in a smirk and his eyes twinkled as he looked at Sherlock. He could have sworn he saw his lover’s heart skipped a beat as he realized his meaning.

“This flat’s fine,” Sherlock protested.

“Yes,” John sighed. He felt ill; he had been getting that way a lot lately. It was just all too surreal. “A car, then. We could buy a car!”

Sherlock’s eyebrows shot up as he studied him, clearly oblivious as to why he was freaking out. “You can’t even drive!”

“I can drive!” John cried. “I just…haven’t bothered buying a car since coming back from war.”

“It’s going to be a bit like jumping back on a horse again, isn’t it?” Sherlock teased. “You remember all the rules of the road and, you know, how a car works?”

John went pale. Truth was he hadn’t driven in…it must have been nearly five years. Even then, he hadn’t owned his own car in almost ten. His old flat was closer to work, where he practically lived. During university he lived on campus. He never had much of a reason for a car, but now that he could afford one it seemed crucial.

“You can drive,” he pointed out. “Don’t you want a car?”

“Why are you freaking out about this?”

“Fifty thousand pounds!” John exclaimed. “This cheque in my hand is for fifty thousand pounds! That’s more than we’ve made on cases in the past year! Fuck, maybe two years. We could do very well, with this. We could go on holiday.”

“We’ve been on holiday!”

“A real holiday!” John said. “The kind where you leave the flat and go…do things!”

“You know we would end up just having sex.”

Their eyes met, and they both grinned. It was then that he knew Sherlock was secretly excited about the money; there was just something keeping him from being grateful for it. Was it just in his nature, from being homeless and poor for so long?

*God I’m inconsiderate*, he realized miserably.
Sherlock lived on the streets for a half dozen years surviving off of busking money and scraps from pub bins. Money excited him, yes, but living in even the smallest of flats with no car and having no clue where their next paycheque was coming from suited him just fine. He was safe.

“We invest it in the business then,” John said. “Maybe open some office space?”

“Open a practice.”

The world stopped.

Sherlock turned away, heading toward the living room and the book he had been reading.

A practice.

John hadn’t even thought about practicing medicine since they began working cases.

“What?” He demanded.

“Invest it,” Sherlock said, “open a medical practice. If you were going to use it for a down payment on a bloody house you could at least use it for useful space.”

“This wouldn’t even begin to pay for my own practice,” John said.

“Don’t you miss being a doctor?”

Their eyes met, and he realized there was more to Sherlock’s sudden retreat than the money.

“Where is this coming from?” John asked quietly.

“You get excited, whenever you’re given money,” Sherlock said. “It’s a great relief to you. And why shouldn’t it be? You miss being a doctor. You miss the personal reward of helping patients and the monetary reward of a nice salary.”

“It wasn’t that nice,” he lied. Truth was, before he went off to war and got himself shot he wasn’t doing half bad. “And I’ve told you, I love helping clients. Being a doctor is amazing and rewarding. And yes, it paid pretty well. But this…this is adventure. You can’t get this doing rounds in a clinic.”

He noticed Sherlock smile behind his book, and he realized Sherlock knew what his answer was all along. John fell to the floor beside where Sherlock lay on the couch. Sherlock looked down at him and lowered a hand so that it could touch his face. Reaching up, John met the hand and pushed the cheque into it.

Sherlock grinned.

“You can buy a car, if you want,” Sherlock said. He turned back to the book. Though you should pay Mrs. Hudson for her damaged walls first.”

“You pay her!” John teased.

“And I’m not teaching you how to drive.”

Just the thought made him giggle, and a grin spread across his face as he tugged the book out of Sherlock’s hands and placed both cheques inside, marking the pages where he left off. He climbed on top of Sherlock and gazed into his eyes for a moment before bending down to kiss him. Sherlock placed the book carefully on the floor and wrapped his arms instead around John. His
fingertips dipped beneath John’s shirt, teasing his spine, and John kept grinning as they kissed.

“Come on,” John murmured into his ear. “Let’s celebrate.”

“You realize you’re getting hard just thinking of having sex with me because we’re celebrating receiving gifts from people we don’t remember.”

John stilled.

“That puts it into perspective,” he mumbled.

Sherlock’s hand flattened against his bare back, rubbing him there in soothing circles as they kissed.

“It’s alright,” Sherlock muttered, “I wish I could remember them too.”

“We shouldn’t accept the money,” John said before planting a kiss against Sherlock’s neck.

“They both ran away from us.”

“True.”

They kissed again, and slowly the money was becoming less and less important.

“But we should still celebrate,” Sherlock whispered against his neck.

He shuddered as Sherlock tugged his shirt off, and their chests lay against each other. They kissed as Sherlock’s hands dipped into his trousers, groping his arse through his pants.

“Bedroom,” John gasped.

Sherlock grabbed the book, carefully making sure the cheques were safe, as they stumbled back into the bedroom.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks, everyone!! I'm so happy you're still enjoying the story and that so many new readers are finding it!

And yes, there will be smut! I just don't have time to write it right now. But hopefully, tonight!
He couldn’t help but to moan into the pillow as Sherlock pulled his trousers down past his hard, aching, cock. His lover remained silent as he settled down on top of him, chest against back, and John simply tried to breathe.

Lips graced his body, from his neck, down his spine, to his arse, but it was only when they teased at the cleft that he realized what Sherlock’s plan was. A tongue dipped into the crack, offering a few teasing licks before he kissed it. John tilted his head away from the pillow, letting out a silent scream as Sherlock used his fingers to part his cheeks ever so slightly. They hadn’t done this before. He hadn’t even thought about it before. But suddenly, he wanted it more than anything.

John’s hands grasped the pillows, reached for the headboards, fought for anything to hold onto to refrain from the urge to reach behind him. Sherlock licked at his hole, soothing the muscle and coaxing him to relax. He didn’t understand why Sherlock chose to do what he did, if these ideas hit him as soon as he hit the bed or if he planned them throughout the day.

God he hoped he planned it.

“How have you been watching porn?” John teased.

Sherlock grinned against his arse and licked it again. He planted a kiss to each arse, biting ever so slightly. He moaned again and buried his face into the pillow. His skin was flush and his cock hard. Desperate for friction, he rutted against the sheets gently as Sherlock licked at him.

“Maybe,” Sherlock whispered. “Shhh.”

He bit into the pillow to keep from making a sound. Eyes closed, mouth shut, he concentrated only of the feeling of Sherlock’s tongue, dashing in and out of the hole. It was the anticipation of what’s next that kept his breath coming in at sharp intervals.

Hands grasped at his arse cheeks, cupping them. Then they pulled back suddenly and slapped, offering him soft pats that were almost more ticklish than painful, until he slapped harder and John yelped into the pillow. His hand dipped beneath his body to his cock, and when Sherlock didn’t protest he touched himself.

Two slaps went to each cheek, and then Sherlock leaned forward again so his tongue could tease at the hole. He could practically feel the muscle loosening, opening to Sherlock’s touch. John moaned as he stroked himself. He rutted against the bed again, and hands grasped his hips, helping him. The tongue licked down the cleft again and dashed into the hole, diving deeper.

“Oh!”

Sherlock’s fingers rushed up his spine and then back down again, where he slapped again against his arse before his tongue dove back in. He stroked himself harder, his cock pumping in and out of his hand. He placed his free hand against the bed, hoisting himself up so that he could rut against the bed easier, jerking off against the sheets.

“Fuck!” He whispered as he came with Sherlock’s tongue against his hole.
His lover gasped in surprised, almost as though he didn’t think that would work. John made to lift himself up but Sherlock rolled him over instead. He grinned at Sherlock’s red lips and uneven breathing.

“Brilliant,” John murmured.

His hand slipped down Sherlock’s chest, graced his nipples, and reached down to the pants that still covered his cock. But Sherlock got there first, pulling them past his hips to dangle his cock in his face. John took it in his mouth, sucking harshly a few times before pulling off.

“Oh fuck,” he gasped, even as Sherlock remained silent.

Sherlock stayed quiet as he held onto the headboard, fucking John’s face in a slow rhythm. With one hand he reached behind himself to grasp his own arse and John grabbed it, forcing him away. Instead, he reached behind inside and grabbed his cheeks roughly for him. At last Sherlock moaned, loud and violent, and John took him down further.

Suddenly Sherlock pulled out, grasping his cock and gasping as he jerked off, right in front of his face.

“Oh god,” Sherlock grunted as he came.

John closed his eyes just as a stream of come sprayed across his eyelids. Sherlock gasped and groaned as he stroked harder, and another stream fell across his chin. He shivered as Sherlock ran his cock down his cheek and moaned as one last drop fell against his lips.

“Jesus,” John whispered as he threw an arm across his face, wiping the come away.

Sherlock shuddered and breathed in deeply as he finally collapsed beside him.

“Remind me not to let you use my laptop again,” John teased. “You’ve definitely been watching—”

He silenced him with a fierce kiss. John moaned a little just at the feeling of the kiss, brushing his hands down his arms and chest.

“I love you,” John whispered.

His response was a gaze, straight into his eyes, and a kiss again to the lips.

“I’ll teach you how to drive, if you want,” Sherlock offered.

He blinked in surprise; again, not the answer he was expecting.

“I told you, I know how to drive,” he said. “Sherlock…it’s not about the money. I just want us to be happy. Happy and able to pay rent.”

They both smiled and kissed again.

“How about—” Sherlock kissed his chin, licking away at the final traces of his release. “You buy a car, any kind you want. We fix Mrs. Hudson’s walls. We work a few cases. We go on a real holiday, anywhere you like. Pay off your debts, get a bloody dog, if you like.”

“You hate dogs.”

Sherlock stared at him, as though that meant absolutely nothing right now. When he couldn’t explain, Sherlock simply whispered:
“I want us to be happy too.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, thank you!!
John felt like a kid at Christmas as he browsed through online ads for cars. He felt guilty for being excited about the money, but at the same time it was *fifty thousand pounds* and nearly twice as much as he had earned in the past year. He wanted to do something crazy just because he could, for a change.

Sherlock, however, still didn’t seem to be affected at all.

“Are you still looking at cars?” Sherlock asked, leaning over his shoulder.

He was almost interrupting his view of the computer screen, and John pulled back, glaring at him.

“Yes. I thought you were fine with it?”

His boyfriend stayed quiet for a moment as he leafed through various models of sedans.

“There’s more to buying a car than paying the price tag,” Sherlock announced.

“Yes, Dad, I know.”

“There’s cost of petrol.”

“Obviously.”

“Insurance.”

“No shit.”

“And there’s about a 99 percent chance that we’ll wreck this car before the year is up.”

John looked up at him, mouth agape in disbelief. Only Sherlock would say something that morbid.

“God you’re the pessimist, aren’t you?”

“No, I’m a realist,” Sherlock teased, grabbing his violin.

He played a few notes before jabbing the bow toward him.

“Not to mention,” Sherlock went on, “you have to worry about parking. The car will have to sit on the street and someone will probably break into it, vandalize it, or steal it. It will probably break down and leave us stranded in the middle of nowhere during a case—“

“No!” John exclaimed, jumping to his feet. The other things he could almost see Sherlock’s point on, but this he wasn’t going to let him get away with. They stood with the violin bow stuck out toward him, like a sword. “No, the king of getting us lost in the middle of nowhere is not going to accuse a car I don’t even own yet of abandoning us!”

“When have I gotten us lost? I have an excellent sense of direction!”

“On the way back from Dartmoor,” John said, ticking off the first finger on his hand.

“We had been drugged!” Sherlock cried. “I was shaken up, remember? Traumatized! They gave me a blanket and everything!”
“That case with the computer geek and the damaged hard drive.”

“He purposefully gave us the wrong directions to put us in danger!”

“No, you read them wrong!” John snapped. He ticked off the second finger on his hand. “That time out near the shore, with the shopkeeper and the tourists.”

“We weren’t lost! I told you, I wanted to take the longer trail so that we could observe more. It was blatantly obvious the criminals were headed that way!”

“The criminals were almost back into town and we were busy running from wild animals!” John said. “Face it: a car would do us a lot of good. We wouldn’t have to worry about getting a cab or- oh! Crazy killer cabbies!”

“That was once!” Sherlock exclaimed. “Once and you’ve been holding it over my head ever since!”

“Whatever,” John mumbled, “it doesn’t hurt to just look. I’ll probably spend a lot of my part of the money paying off credit cards, like you suggested.”

He settled back into his chair and Sherlock settled back into looking over his shoulder while he browsed ads.

“Good,” Sherlock huffed. “It’s the logical thing to do. I don’t understand where this car thing is coming from, anyway. Is this some kind of midlife crisis?”

John paused, and he had to take a few deep breaths to keep himself from turning around and punching Sherlock in the face.

“Because there are a lot of things cheaper than a car that you can do to get through a midlife crisis,” Sherlock said, “volunteering, for example. Skydiving. Sex clubs.”

Snorting, John replied:

“Only you would suggest volunteering and sex clubs in the same sentence.”

“It’s just a suggestion.”

He could see Sherlock’s eyes twinkling in the reflection of the computer screen. John swallowed and squirmed in his seat, trying to hide the fact that the thought did turn him on. Almost. Sort of. But not enough to ever admit it.

“And besides,” Sherlock continued, “if you bought a car Mycroft would just put a tracking device on it, and it would be easier for him to follow us everywhere.”

John slammed the laptop shut and stood up, throwing an accusing finger at his lover.

“Thanks for that. You’ve officially taken the fun out of it.”
We're Going To Disneyland

Chapter Notes

DarkFoxKarin wanted Mystrade smut and John taking Sherlock to Disneyland. At the park, John's too afraid to ride the Haunted Mansion. So I took some of your suggestions and did this with it...I hope this counts as filling the prompt! Dreams can be all kinds of weird so I thought a Disneyland prompt would be an opportune time to do another dream sequence.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Of all the places for our flight to be diverted to…California?”

“I think it’s brilliant!” John exclaimed. “Who knew Disney did buy one get one free days?”

“Conveniently for you,” Sherlock said, glaring.

They stood in the middle of an empty Disneyland. The Who was playing over loud speaker. John was standing in shorts and a t-shirt while Sherlock was dressed in his usual trousers and collared shirt. He was clearly burning up.

“It’s bloody hot,” Sherlock mumbled. “Can we go home now?”

“One ride, give me that!” John said. “Come on, choose one.”

Sherlock’s eyes roamed over a map of the park.

“Is there really a jungle here?” He asked, wide eyed.

“A fake one,” John chuckled, “you wouldn’t get it. It’s meant to be silly.”

“People spend nearly a month’s wages and travel across the world to see something that’s meant to be silly?”

“365 days a year!” John chimed in.

“Bloody brilliant,” Sherlock mumbled. “I should have come up with this idea. Do they serve food? I want food. Pizza…pizza sounds good.”

“Yeah but a ride first, okay?” John said. “Which one?”

Sherlock turned the map around to reveal a picture of an ancient house that looked like something straight out of a New Orleans ghost story.

“At least they’re trying to make a mystery out of it,” Sherlock said, “I bet I can solve it before we get to the gift shop.”

“Sherlock, I’m not so sure…”

“Are you afraid of ghost?” Sherlock grinned. “Surgery, war, crime scenes, and John Watson is afraid of ghost. Doctor John Watson is afraid of ghosts!”
“Shut up!” John exclaimed, covering his ears. “Shut up!”

Sherlock tugged on his arm and led him down the path to the Haunted Mansion, which was conveniently right near where they were standing.

The inside of the building was cool, dark, and empty. As Sherlock led him into one of the buggies he held onto his hand for dear life.

“I swear to god if we see a ghost—“

“It’s not real, John! You know that.” Sherlock hissed. “Now be quiet. You’re scaring the children.”

But there were no children around. In fact, there seemed to be no one conducting the ride. The buggy began moving on its own, and John clenched Sherlock’s hand even tighter.

“It’s alright, John,” Sherlock whispered into his ear.

The music picked up; it was some song about ghosts and all the other figures dancing around them. He opened his eyes and screamed.

A ghostly figure of the cabbie he shot to save Sherlock was grinning at him. He screamed and desperately looked around for Sherlock, only to realize he had left him.

“I want off, I want off!” He tried to scream.

But apparently no one was around to hear him.

He closed his eyes tightly, regretting the decision to take Sherlock to Disneyland.

When he opened his eyes he was in another creepy house, but this one was very real. It was the Holmes’ ancestral home. As he walked up a staircase to the bedroom he noticed there were ghosts in the picture frames: the small white creatures danced behind family members as they posed by the hillside or inside the family room. The house felt cold and damp, and there was a voice…

“Mycroft—” Greg’s voice, “will you be my husband?”

John froze by a doorway that opened up to the master bedroom. Both men were half naked, shirts off, shoes and socks on the floors. Their hands were already ghosting across each other’s thighs and backs. They were smiling.

“’Course,” Mycroft whispered.

He turned to look for a way out, but the hall suddenly turned into a dark, endless, tunnel. The only thing left on the planet seemed to be him, and the two men on the bed who were-

Lying on top of each other, panting.

“But I don’t want to be here!” He tried to cry out.

Neither men seemed to notice as Greg’s hand went for the buckle of Mycroft’s belt, and the older Holmes moaned.

“I think John’s watching,” Greg whispered.

Oh. So they did notice.
“He likes to,” Mycroft teased. “Shall we let him...again?”

Again?!

“Only until Sherlock gets back.”

He swooped down to plant open-mouthed kisses against Mycroft’s belly, and panic rose within him. He had to get out. Had to find Sherlock.

He ran through the door, ignoring that the hall was black, and when he looked down the corridor again he was shocked to find that the darkness led to the park.

Eyes closed, he stepped forward, and-

John was back at Disneyland. He was on a rollercoaster this time. It was dark and The Who was blaring again. His head spun as the ride sent him tilting from side to side. There were endless loops and he was going fast, too fast, so fast he was afraid he might go tumbling into a different dimension.

Got to find Sherlock.

For some reason he was convinced Sherlock was on the ride. He was running away, running away from him, and he had to stop him.

Something buzzed and his pocket and he pulled out his mobile to read:

Mycroft’s just agreed to marry me. - GL

Simple as that.

Congrats. - JW

You should have stayed. Would have been fun. - GL

I need Sherlock, and I need him now! - JW

The ride went on and on for what felt like ages. What started as an endless track indoors was suddenly outside. He was flying above the park, traveling on this track at top speeds. His eyes dashed around, searching for his love amongst the hundreds of people who were suddenly in the parks.

But he couldn’t find him. He had abandoned him, here, at Disneyland, of all places. All because he was afraid of ghosts.

His eyes went wide as he realized the roller caster’s track suddenly stopped. His cart fell forward, with him in it, and he screamed.

“SHERLOCK!”

“Bloody fuck, John, I’m right here!”

John looked up and blinked, confused. He was on the floor. He couldn’t remember falling out of bed a day in his life but here he was on the floor, blinking up at his confused boyfriend.

“God that was weird,” John mumbled, throwing a hand over his face.
Sherlock reached down to help him up and he accepted. He crawled back up the pillows and just lay there for a minute, trying to comprehend what he dreamed.

“I had a dream that we were in Disneyland,” John announced, “and your brother and Lestrade got engaged.”

“I don’t know which part of that dream sounds more disturbing.”

And I didn’t even tell you about the sex part.

“Why would I dream about Disneyland?” He wondered out loud.

“Client was talking about it,” Sherlock replied. His boyfriend nuzzled back under the covers.

“That’s right!” Somehow, this made him feel ten times better about his dream. “His room, it had all that old stuff from the parks in America.”

“I still don’t get why people would care about a talking mouse.”

“Yeah, well you wouldn’t.”

His hand lingered on Sherlock’s head, and his lover didn’t argue as he gently brushed through the curls.

“Are you going to take that case?” John asked.

“I’ve already solved it.”

John gaped at him; it was only six hours ago that they returned from looking through the client’s home.

“But we’re still getting paid, right?” He demanded.

“Obviously,” Sherlock snorted. He sounded like he was already half-asleep. He couldn’t help but to wonder what Sherlock dreamt about… “I’m waiting at least twenty-four hours to solve the case so we get paid a full day’s rate.”

“That’s brilliant!”

Sherlock pulled his pillow over his head, signaling the end of his interest in the conversation, and replied:

“It’s elementary.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope I didn't disappoint!

Thanks SO much, everyone! You guys are amazing! I'm so glad you all are enjoying the story, and I would love to know what you think about it along the way!
John didn’t realize it, but Sherlock had been watching him closely all morning.

He knew John well enough to know when something was wrong, and he knew him well enough to know when he was having an off day.

And today was definitely an off day.

It started at half eight that morning with John’s hands shaking as he poured tea. Then John disappeared into his room without as much as a ‘good morning.’ He didn’t shower, didn’t grab the paper. His laptop was left abandoned, and the book he had been reading the night before was left open on the sofa.

John stayed in his own bedroom throughout the morning, and so Sherlock waited. He pretended to play his violin, choosing soothing, calming music in case John happened to be listening in.

At noon John was still in his room.

Sherlock was getting anxious.

His eyes dashed up to John’s room every now and then, and he thought back to when they met. He had tricked John into taking that room upstairs. Away. Isolated.

Wringing his hands, Sherlock debated on rather he should go up there or not, but he didn’t have a chance to decide. John appeared, empty tea mug in hand. They stared at each other, and Sherlock tried his best not to deduce him from head to toe.

“Sorry, I was just tired,” John mumbled. “Thought I’d have a lie-in.”

Sherlock blinked.

“It’s Monday.”

“Yeah, I know.”

John trudged down the stairs and diverted his eyes as he passed.

So he’s ashamed.

_Ashamed and upset. It’s not about me. He doesn’t want me worrying about him. It’s something personal, something that happened in his past. But something had to have triggered it. Something in the flat no...there’s nothing new. Something on the laptop?_

“So you mind if I use your laptop?” Sherlock asked.
“Go for it.”

Sherlock settled into a chair in front of John’s laptop, but when he opened it he froze, feeling too guilty to do any snooping around. He was better than that now.

Instead he got out his mobile to check for missed texts, but when he noticed the date he stopped.

Oh god.

*How did I not realize?*

*John did.*

*He did the moment that date on his mobile changed.*

*He knew it yesterday. He knew it a week ago.*

*He’s been preparing for it but nothing could prepare him.*

“I looked you up, you know,” Sherlock announced.

He studied his boyfriend’s body language, and when John looked up immediately he knew he was onto something.

“When we first met?” John asked. “I bloody knew it.”

“No, it was after we first had sex.” John stared at him and Sherlock smirked back. “I figured if I was going to start sharing a bed with a man I might as well know if he was a criminal or not.”

John glanced away, unphased but uncomfortable.

“You knew I wasn’t a criminal,” John shot. “Your brother probably had a full background check done on me.”

“I know,” Sherlock swallowed nervously as he stood from the table and stepped up to John. “And he did. But when we got…popular…and you started doing the blog, you must have known the site wasn’t the only search that came to your name. You were shot on the battlefield, John, there was a story. A news story and a photo. They praised you. You were a hero, John, you *are* a hero.”

As he grabbed John’s hand his lover teared up, and a knot formed in his stomach. John tried stepping back and he stumbled, grabbing his upper leg.

“Leg acting up again?” Sherlock asked. He tried to be quiet about it, calm, but he could tell by the twitch in John’s face that he could see through the sarcasm. And John didn’t appreciate it. “It was today, wasn’t it? How many years ago?”

John swallowed and looked down, rubbing at his eyes with his hands. With the act the tea mug fell to the floor, and John jumped away. Sherlock reached out for him, grabbing his and pulling him close.

“It’s okay,” he whispered as their heads rested together. “It’s okay.”

His boyfriend trembled in his arms, and for a moment Sherlock was scared. He knew all the facts there were to know about John- his birthdate, where he grew up, where he went to school and where he practiced before being in the army. He knew where he served and he knew how he got shot. He even knew his blood type.
What he didn’t know was how John survived it all. He knew he had a shit therapist who probably gave him some textbook answer about how to get over his trauma. He knew John still had nightmares and still got upset when he thought about the war. Who wouldn’t? He could see the way his lover tensed if the news was going on about the military and war politics.

Post-traumatic stress disorder. He experienced a bit of it himself, after Luke, so he tried to convince himself he understood the pressure John felt he was under. The constant guilt and the stress of just trying to move on from it all.

But at the same time, he could never know what was going through John’s mind.

A sudden sob escaped John, and Sherlock held onto him tighter. He could feel John’s hands clenching and unclenching against his back, and while he wished he could lead them somewhere more comfortable. But he was frozen.

“Oh John,” he whispered.

“One of my old army mates emailed me this morning,” John whispered through tears, “just to see how I was doing. He was a sergeant I took care of once, and we got along well after that. He tried to reach me after my discharge-“

“Honorable discharge.”

John breathed in deeply, nearly choking on his own breath as he did.

“But I was too ashamed,” John finished.

He pulled away, and Sherlock stared up at him as their foreheads barely touched. Red-faced and breathing hard, John closed his eyes and fought to regain composure.

“Why would you be ashamed?” Sherlock asked quietly.

“Because I was stupid!” John cried. “I made a stupid decision, a stupid judgment call, and you don’t do those kinds of things when you’re a doctor! You can’t. You can’t make mistakes. I had men to look after, and another who was injured that I was trying to get to and…I wasn’t thinking. I got shot and…that was that. I left them all behind.”

“You were shot, you couldn’t help that!”

“I needed to be there for them, and I wasn’t.”

Gripping John’s arms tightly, Sherlock held him close.

“You were there,” he said, “you risked your life to save that other man. You left no one behind. You took a risk for them all, every day. I read about you, John. I read about the things you did, the missions you led to make sure people had proper water and medicine. You put yourself in the line of fire, and I would bet every quid we own between the two of us that there are countless people out there who are thankful every day because you were there to save them.”

John sobbed again, but a small, sheepish, smile broke out between the tears.

It was beautiful.

“This friend, is he in town?” Sherlock asked.

His boyfriend nodded and wiped at the tears.
“Yeah,” John said through the last of the tears, “yeah, visiting. He wanted to meet up, go to a pub or something.”

“You should go,” Sherlock grinned, “I’ll go with you, if you’d like.”

John looked up at him, wide eyed, like a kid at Christmas.

“Seriously?” He asked.

Sherlock nodded.

“Any friend of yours…”

“I’ll write back,” John said. The mere suggestion seemed to instantly cheer him up, and the knot in Sherlock’s chest loosened. “Sorry about the tears. I just didn’t sleep very well last night. These kinds of anniversaries are hard, you know?”

He did know, and John must have realized what he said because their eyes connected in mutual understanding. For a moment he considered bringing up his experience with Luke, but it was too obvious that John wasn’t very fond of the thought of his ex-lover.

“Thanks,” John said when he remained quiet. “I just…it just haunts me. I see their faces, sometimes, all those people I helped. I saved most of them, but there were some…I still can’t reason with it. And when I got hurt, and I knew I’d never have the chance to make up for it all, I just lost it. I felt so empty and useless.”

“There’s nothing to make up for,” Sherlock said. “You could sit on your arse and do nothing for the rest of your life and no one would blame you. But you aren’t doing that. You’re helping me, you’re helping the police, and you’re helping victims.”

“It’s why I like doing it,” John admitted, “it feels like I’m still contributing. Like I’m still helping.”

“You are.”

They exchanged small smiles. John leaned forward to plant a hard kiss to his lips, and it took his breath away. He was left staring, blinking, as John pulled back and turned to his laptop.

“Sherlock?” He asked suddenly. “I like helping the police because it makes me feel like I’m still worth something, as a doctor. I’m helping all these people and, somehow, I find comfort in that after all I’ve been through. After all this time, sometimes I still wonder about the real reason you like helping the police. It’s because of Luke, isn’t it? They never found his killer, did they?”

Sherlock froze; that certainly wasn’t what he expected John to say. He couldn’t answer because his lover was 100% correct, and he could never, ever, admit to anyone.

“Name a place and a time, and let me and your mate know,” Sherlock replied instead. “And I’m here for you, if you need anything.”

John nodded, appreciative. As Sherlock turned to make some more tea, he caught John whispering under his breath:

“I’m here for you too.”

Closing his eyes, he pushed those memories away and reached for the kettle.

He didn’t realize it was his own hand that was shaking this time.
I'm glad you all liked the Disney dream!! I'd love to know what you thought about this chapter as well!!

Thanks!
Promotion

Chapter Notes

DeathFrisbee221 says: "I would really like another mystrade proposal (dream (sherlocks this time) or Real -I don't mind) with Sherlock getting jealous because clearly if anyone should be getting engaged it is him and John. Just saying."

I like this idea, but I thought it was too soon to do another proposal scene...so does this count? Who knows, maybe there will be something else later on....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What do you think?” Lestrade asked, stepping up behind him.

Sherlock’s eyes gazed over the crime scene, taking in the body lying on the mattress and the pills spread about the floor. John crouched beside the victim, a young office worker who was found dead that morning in his flat.

“You said the neighbors heard fighting?” Sherlock asked.

The D.I. nodded.

“About twenty minutes before time of death.”

“Not a suicide,” John announced, standing up. “I’d like to take a look at his medical history, though.”

Lestrade glanced around the crime scene, clueless as to what he was missing.

“It’s eleven in the morning on a Tuesday, and our victim is at home fighting with a lover,” Sherlock explained.

He smirked at the stares that explanation received.

“John, care to take this one?” Sherlock offered.

He slipped out of the flat as John went on about the two wine glasses in the sink, the used condom clearly visible in the bin, and the lingering smell of a burnt dinner for two. It was only moments before Lestrade joined him in hall, shaking his head.

“How do I always miss those things?” Lestrade sighed.

“Because you’ve got your super intendant breathing down your back, the two members of your team you rely on the most had a row this morning, and they’ve brought the tension to work. Oh, and Mycroft’s ill and you’re worried about him. But there’s no need, my brother was always poorly as a child, even in the summers.”

“He’s sick because he went on some trip to Asia and got bit by some weird bug, of all things,” Lestrade laughed. “He’s in complete denial about it too. It’s nausea, vomiting, the works. It would pass over after a couple of days if he would just take it easy for a few hours.”
“Is Mycroft really the one to ‘take it easy’?”

They exchanged glances and broke out into laughter; he couldn’t remember ever laughing with Lestrade, especially about his brother. It eased the tension of the case, somehow.

“John had a dream that you two got engaged,” he teased, “now there’s a frightening concept. Mycroft, married.”

He expected Lestrade to keep laughing with him, but when his face went completely stiff he knew he hit a sore spot with him.

“He’s asked me before, you know,” Lestrade admitted.

Sherlock’s eyes went wide, but he didn’t protest, letting Lestrade continue:

“Oh don’t look at me like that! We were both wasted. Pissed. It was a late night after a very bad day. It wasn’t a real proposal. It was more like…”’would you ever marry me’. We’ve talked about it, a couple of times, but you’ve got to get some whiskey in him to do it. Not serious discussions just…where is this going. That type of thing. Then we just keep drinking and…you know…and then we wake up and can’t half remember what we did. We’re too old for that shit, really.”

“But you remember?”

Crestfallen, Lestrade’s eyes dropped to the ground and Sherlock got the feeling he just ruined the D.I.’s day.

“Look, ours is an odd relationship,” Lestrade said. “I suppose if we ever really wanted to think about marriage we’d have to be able to stay in the same country for more than twenty-four hours. I care about your brother, a lot. It’s just…difficult to explain. But it works for us.”

He nodded, admiring the fact that Lestrade was even able to be open about it. Deep down, it still felt awkward to be talking about his brother and love in the same sentence. He wondered if Lestrade meant he didn’t think his brother was man enough to go through with an engagement- that he wasn’t the marrying type. Or maybe Lestrade was worried he would be the coward.

But to think they had actually gotten as far as even joking about getting married made something boil inside him. What about he and John? Would they ever be strong enough to go through with it? If his brother and Lestrade were already making drunken proposals and having serious conversations about their future, why could he not even say an out-right ‘I love you’ to John? His brother, contemplating marriage…never in a million years would he have pictured Mycroft even thinking of getting married before he would. Especially not now that he and John were together. There was no way his brother and Lestrade would ever make it to that step before they did. Then again, was John even the marrying type? Was he?

He noticed Lestrade smile down at his mobile, and he knew without reading the text that he must have been checking in on his brother.

“How’s Mycroft doing?” He asked.

Lestrade glanced at him, stunned that he would ask.

“Better. Low grade fever. He went to work, of course.”

Sherlock only nodded as Lestrade pocketed his mobile and sighed.
“I’m up for a promotion,” Lestrade blurted out. When he turned to look at him, Lestrade’s eyes were darting around, out of anxiety. “They want to make me DCI. After the Rucastle case I guess they’re finally impressed with me. I’ll be under review for a few weeks, but it sounds promising. It’s wrong, though. That was your case.”

“DCI?” Sherlock repeated. Suddenly he felt guilty for all the times he got onto Lestrade about his investigative skills. “It’s not wrong. None of us would have made it out if you hadn’t of come out there.”

“Says the man who doesn’t even remember what the case was about,” Lestrade snorted. “Honestly though, I feel like I don’t deserve it. At first I was excited, but now I’m wondering…am I ready for this? And then there’s me and Mycroft. It’s hard enough being a D.I. and him being, well, you know. If I was DCI and it was discovered I was in a relationship with a high ranking government official, let alone a man, I’d be done.”

Sherlock nodded, pretending like he understood.

“Take it,” Sherlock announced. Lestrade studied him, unwilling to believe him. “What? If it’s not you it will be some prick who doesn’t like to hire consultants. You’ve got a shoddy team, but at least you’re a leader. Well, you try.”

He smirked and a small smile crossed his face.

“Thanks for that,” Lestrade mumbled. “I think.”

John burst out into the hallway, and Sherlock had never been more grateful for him to interrupt something. Between Lestrade’s confession that he and his brother had discussed marriage and his new promotion, Sherlock felt like he was missing out on something.

He just couldn’t figure out what it was.

“Asthma attack,” John said, breathless. “The victim died of an asthma attack. I’m certain of it.”

“Asthma?” Lestrade repeated. “Not drugs?”

“Not drugs. The amount of heroin found in the flat was enough to put him through hell for a bit but not enough to kill him. No, from what I can see he did a single dose of heroin, had sex with someone who’s probably younger than him- and most likely female- and died of an asthma attack after.”

“Asthma attack,” Lestrade sighed. Sherlock could tell the revelation did nothing to help the D.I.’s confidence issue. “I never would have thought of that.”

“He had all the right medications and inhalers in the flat,” John went on. “He has paperwork from a recent doctor’s appointment he made because his condition had been bothering him a bit more often lately. It also explains the blue tint to his lips and fingernails. I imagine the girl probably freaked out and ran off.”

“Why must they always run away?” Lestrade mumbled as he walked away to head back to the crime scene.

Turning to John, a wicked grin crossed Sherlock’s face.

“Absolutely brilliant, Dr. Watson!” He exclaimed.
“Oh come off it, you knew from the moment you walked into the room!”

“Yeah, but I wanted to see if you could figure it out for yourself.”

As they made their way down the staircase Sherlock resisted the urge to reach out and touch him. Police personnel rushed up and down the stairs, carrying equipment and relaying information to each other. He couldn’t help but to notice that John was also keeping perfectly still, trying very hard to not jump all over him.

“Lestrade might make DCI,” Sherlock said, for a change of subject.

“Really? That’s fantastic! I should go congratulate him-“

“No!” He caught John’s hand in his before he realized what he was doing, and he let go very quickly. “No, I mean, he’s just a bit nervous about it.”

“He’ll be fine,” John said, “at least it’s him and not some prick who doesn’t like to hire consultants.”

Sherlock smirked.

“That’s exactly what I told him.”

Chapter End Notes

You guys...your comments make me smile! Thank you so much for your support! I'm so thrilled you still like the story!
Right after they both dropped out of school, Luke got a car. Sherlock wasn’t sure how he could afford it, but he got one, and somehow that was the coolest thing in the world.

They spent the night of Sherlock’s twenty-third birthday driving around London, until Luke finally pulled over by an old hotel. A few lights were on in upstairs rooms, and Sherlock couldn’t help but feel nervous as he glanced around the shady-looking street. The block was filled with homeless men and prostitutes down on the corner by a liquor store, and the sense of paranoia the neighborhood gave him made him want to run away.


Sherlock stared up at him, but Luke only leaned forward to steal a kiss to his lips.

“It’ll be alright, love, I just want to visit a friend.”

“Your friend’s staying here?” Sherlock asked. “Wait, you have a friend?”

Luke smirked and kissed his cheek. His eyes were wild and awake as he dashed out of the car and locked him inside. Sherlock sank down into the seat and closed his eyes, thinking if he pretended he was asleep he would feel more comfortable being there.

He wasn’t sure how long he had been asleep, but his head jerked up as someone suddenly banged on the car and the driver’s side door flew open. Sherlock blinked as Luke dove into the car and immediately started it. He was panting and grasping his right hand, and Sherlock’s heart pounded when he saw blood pouring from his palm.

“Luke?” He asked, reaching out to touch it.


Tears were rushing from his eyes uncontrollably.


“I don’t think you should be driving.”

“Just shut up, I’m bloody fine, alright?” He shot.

Luke tried to grasp the steering wheel with his bad hand and gasped in pain. Sherlock’s stomach turn to knots as he glanced in the mirror and saw a man lingering by the hotel’s entrance. He was tugging a knife into his pocket.

“Luke-“

When they reached their flat Luke immediately rushed to the loo. Sherlock thought he was going to throw up, but instead Luke reached into his pockets with a shaky hand and withdrew a baggie full of drugs. He watched by the door as Luke prepared the needle.

“Your hand,” Sherlock pointed out.

Blood was dripping into the sink, but Luke didn’t seem to notice. He found a vein and injected himself, eyes falling closed on cue.

“Oh Christ,” Luke murmured; it was almost orgasmic.

Something stirred inside him, and Sherlock wrapped his arms around himself when he realized he was actually jealous of the drugs. Sometimes it felt like they had the same effect on Luke as he did.


He couldn’t tell if he was being serious or not.

“Who was that man?” He asked quietly. Luke closed his eyes and winced as he ran his bloody hand under water. “Luke?”

“Where do you think I get the drugs from?” Luke asked, letting out a hallow laugh. “I’m fine, Sherlock, I told you. He just needed more money than I thought he did.”

Sherlock made the mistake of snorting as he wondered how Luke could be so stupid. He gasped in surprise as he was thrown against the door by his own lover.


He rubbed his blood off on Sherlock’s flannel jacket and shook his head in exhaustion.

“Let me go with you next time,” Sherlock said.

Turning back to the sink, Luke grabbed the next needle. Sherlock shivered in anticipation as he watched his part of the dose be prepared.

“Here,” Luke whispered. He took his arm carefully and found a good vein. Sherlock tensed on instinct and Luke grabbed his other arm to comfort him as he stuck the needle in. “There. It’s gonna be okay, yeah? You don’t need to go anywhere. I can take care of us.”

Their foreheads rest together as they breathed carefully, letting the drugs rush through them.

“Does it hurt?” Sherlock asked quietly.

“It’s fine.”

Even as he said it Luke’s hand shook, and he clenched the bloody hand into a fist.

“Why did you buy the car?” Sherlock asked. “I know you can’t afford it. Look at the place we live in. Why is it important to have a car?”

Instead of answering, Luke grabbed onto his shoulders and pulled him into a sloppy kiss. Sherlock gasped as they broke apart, and he didn’t hesitate to plead into Luke’s ear:
“Fuck me.”

“O-oh,” Sherlock gasped as he shot up in bed.

He shut his mouth immediately as he looked down at John. He sighed, grateful, when he realized his boyfriend was still asleep. The last thing he wanted was John finding out he had nearly orgasmed while having a dream of his former lover.

Falling back down into the bed, Sherlock breathed hard as he raised his left arm and examined his old scars in the moonlight. He knew where each and every track mark was, where each white scar danced across his forearm. He traced them and shivered at the feeling of his fingers against his own skin.

He had almost forgotten about that night: the night he figured out that Luke wasn’t magic, that the drugs didn’t just come from nowhere. The night he got his first taste of what kind of danger they were really in.

Sherlock shot straight up, panting hard as he suddenly realized why he dreamed of that night. The hand, the cut. It was too familiar. He’d seen it recently, very recently.

It was on their latest victim.

It was him, all over again.

He reached for his mobile to phone Lestrade, but he was nearly overwhelmed with anxiety by the time the line began ringing. He hung up instead and grabbed his trousers and shirt from the floor.

The door quietly shut behind him as he headed into the night, deciding that it was time to visit an old acquaintance.

Chapter End Notes

I love all of your ideas! But Lestrade will be under review while he is considered for his promotion. He must first be challenged again before they can celebrate....

Thanks SO much for all your nice comments!!!!
Sherlock drew in a deep breath as he finally heard Lestrade’s approaching footsteps hit the café floor. His eyes were level with the trainers on the table, ignoring the annoyed looks from the waitress who clearly did not approve of the mud on the furniture.

“All this time, and you still never ask when I phone for a ride.”

“You didn’t phone, you texted,” Lestrade said as he sat down across from him. “At half three in the bloody morning!”

“You were up.”

He still kept his eyes on the shoes, studying the grime in the stitching, the dampness of the old laces.

“As requested,” Lestrade sighed, defeated.

A pair of much newer trainers were placed in front of him, and Sherlock grabbed the shoes, grateful. He didn’t explain as he put them onto his bare feet and was surprised when they fit perfectly.

“They’re my size.”

“Yeah, I used to keep them around,” Lestrade admitted, “you know…in case…I dunno. In case something happened to yours.”

Sherlock snorted. Lestrade had more paternal instincts than he would ever admit.

“What happened to yours?” Lestrade asked. His eyes roamed over him, but Sherlock knew he wasn’t seeing what he should be observing.

“Traded them.”

“Traded? Christ, this is about the Homeless Network, isn’t it?”

“Actually, I traded my socks,” he said, “but then I just felt guilty so I threw in the shoes too.”

“So you’ve been walking around London in bare feet?” Lestrade said. “I’m surprised they let you in the café!”

“I’m surprised they still let me in with shoes.”

The food here might have done wonders for him during withdrawal, and while he couldn’t remember most of it he would assume his behavior hadn’t been the most admirable of sorts.

“So you traded your shoes for some homeless kid’s?” Lestrade said. “Why their shoes?”
Sherlock stared at the shoes for a moment, imagining them hitting the pavement as the kid- Adam was his name, 23 years old- ran through the back streets of the city. Running from muggers, shifting through trash bins for food, pacing alleys out of restless anxiety.

“‘There's an awful lot you can tell a lot about a person by their shoes,’” he recited, “‘where they’re going, where they’ve been.’”

“Hang on, did you just quote Forrest Gump?”

“What do you see when you look at these shoes?” Sherlock asked, shoving them into Lestrade’s hands.

The D.I. gave him a strange look, like his behavior was more concerning than the shoes he was now holding, but nevertheless he began studying the shoes.

“They’ve certainly seen some hard times,” Lestrade said after a few moments. “They’re worn, and they’re too small for the owner. A dog got to them, not too long ago, and nearly chewed through the laces. But I suppose the question is, what do you see, Sherlock?”

Sherlock took the shoes back and turned them over, revealing the mud and dirt etched into the back of the shoes.

“The shoes are still fairly damp from being near water. Probably the Thames. They smell-” he breathed in deeply, sniffing them, “of fish. The owner’s allergic to fish, though. He was down by the water but didn’t want to be. He was visiting someone. It was probably earlier tonight, but not before midnight. He didn’t want to stay for long, it was just a quick trip. Judging by the kid’s twitching and anxiety he’d been shaken up pretty badly. I guess it would be stupid to hide from you that the kid does drugs, and he has a routine dealer he goes to. But tonight he went to someone new. Well, not someone new. Someone old. An old friend, who’s back in town.”

His eyes raised to meet Lestrade’s, and as what he meant hit the detective his own eyes widened.

“You’re not saying-”

“He’s back,” Sherlock whispered, lowering the shoes to the table.

At that moment the waitress came by carrying a bag of bagels and a plate of eggs. He took the food and the mug of coffee she offered and waited as Lestrade ordered some breakfast.

“How’s my brother doing?” He asked.

“Not too bad,” Lestrade said. He sounded like he didn’t believe it. “Up half the night again, but that’s not really too unusual. He doesn’t sleep much. I guess that’s a genetic thing.”

He smiled a bit, but he didn’t look too amused himself. Sherlock ignored him as he bit into a bagel and dove into the eggs. Being amongst some of his old homeless acquaintances made him grateful for the things he had now- access to food, someone to bring him new shoes, a ride home when he needed it. Safety.

John.

“Do you really think he’s back?” Lestrade asked as he watched him eat.

“I know he is,” Sherlock said. He didn’t dare to look up at his friend. “He’s back in the country, and he’s recruiting again.”
He couldn’t help but to slam down his fork in frustration, making some of the other customers jump. The waitress threw him another annoyed look, and Lestrade glanced around at them all with a fake, reassuring, smile.

“Sherlock, you know we can’t know anything for sure.”

“I do know!” He exclaimed. This time he did look Lestrade straight in the eye, begging for him to understand. “Luke may have been a dealer, and he may not have been the best person, but that doesn’t stop the fact that he was murdered in cold blood. Murdered in my flat, Lestrade! And the case is still unsolved.”

“There was no evidence pointing to-”

“There was evidence!” His voice shook, and he knew he was getting too desperate, but he didn’t care. “Me. You didn’t listen to me, you still won’t!”

“He disappeared out off the face of the planet!”

“No, you lost track of one of London’s most dangerous drug dealers!” Sherlock shot. “You just won’t admit it. He and Luke had a history, a bad history. Even Luke wasn’t as evil as he was. He’s back in the city, Lestrade. He’s looking for fresh blood, literally. Did you really not notice the mark on the victim’s hand yesterday?”

Lestrade glanced away, and Sherlock knew he did.

“Check the kid’s background,” Sherlock said. “I bet you anything he was homeless at one point. This guy goes after the most vulnerable. There could be others out there already, and if they’re not careful, if they get in too deep…there could be more bodies, Lestrade. You know it.”

The eyes across from him suddenly narrowed, dark and warning.

“I swear to god, Sherlock, if you get yourself involved in this again-”

“You know I have to.”

“No, you don’t!” Lestrade sighed in defeat. “I’ll look into it, alright? But don’t you dare go after him alone. I mean it, Sherlock! Don’t. Promise me.”

His chest tightened and his eyes diverted away. He couldn’t break a promise to Lestrade, especially not about the drugs.

“I still remember what it was like to be one of them,” Sherlock whispered. He picked up one of the old, ratty, shoes. Lestrade was right, they were far too small for Adam, but the shoes were probably one of the only things keeping him alive. “That wasn’t that long ago.”

“And you know how easy it is to mess up, to lose everything.”

He did know.

“Please don’t go after him,” Lestrade pleaded. “Promise me. We’ll do this the right away.”

“Can I reopen the case?”

Lestrade stared at him, looking a bit helpless.

“You know I can’t let you.”
“Fine.”

He looked away, not wanting to hear what Lestrade’s excuse was this time. His heart couldn’t take it.

“Can you give me a lift home?” Sherlock asked quietly. “I didn’t bring my wallet.”

“You didn’t-?” Lestrade sighed again. “I guess that means I’m buying, too?”

Sherlock smirked, knowing his plan had fallen into place completely.

“Thanks for being there,” he whispered.

Lestrade nodded.

“Yeah, no problem,” he didn’t sound too convinced, but they dropped when the waitress came by with Lestrade’s food. “Where did you find out about Forrest Gump, anyway?”

“I dunno. A hospital telly, I guess.”

He lied. John owned it and watched it one day. He had half-watched, listening as he pretended to read and not be interested.

“Does John know you’re out?”

Guilt sunk in as he realized John would probably wake up to him sneaking back in. It had ironically only been a few days since he asked about Luke’s killer, and now he might have to confess everything.

He shook his head and distracted himself with eating.

“You should tell him,” Lestrade said, “talk to him.”

Something twitched inside him, an old, hollow emotion he tried to ignore most days. With it came an overwhelming urge to visit Luke.

“Actually, I’m fine,” he said, knowing the cemetery wasn’t too far, “I need a walk.”

“You sure?”

Lestrade watched as he stood up: the concerned father figure.

He could only nod as he walked away, his old friend’s shoes in hand.

Chapter End Notes

Over 400 comments, 500 kudos, and 100 bookmarks. Guys, you are AMAZING! Thank you so much for your support! Writing this wouldn’t be nearly as much fun without it! I’m truly pleased you all are still enjoying this after 79 chapters and so many twists and turns. We’re about to go down another path and delve into Sherlock’s history of drugs and homelessness, not to mention his relationship with Luke and Luke’s death. I thought it was something worth exploring more, considering how much it means to Sherlock. Especially with John declaring his love for him, it’s time...
for Sherlock to confront some of these old demons.

I'd love to know what you think about it!
Adam

Chapter Notes

There's a tragedy at Baker Street, and Sherlock goes into panic mode...

Warning: this story arch will be a bit dark, with some violence and lots of talk of drug use

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was almost nine when he finally made it back to Baker Street, but it wasn’t until half-way through his trek across London that Sherlock realized how panicked John would probably be that he was out. Guilt ate at him as he turned the corner to head down to their flat, but his world shattered at the site of police cars and a coroner van situation outside his flat.

Red-hot pain flashed through him at the thought of something happening to John but no- nothing on his phone, and surely someone would have called him.

Mrs. Hudson, then? God no…

He broke into a run until he saw Lestrade hovering by his doorstep, clearly keeping an eye out for his return.

“What happened?” Sherlock demanded as he reached the door.

“Sherlock-“ Lestrade placed a hand to his chest, keeping him from darting inside the flat.


“Calm down!” Lestrade’s eyes fought to meet his, and Sherlock finally gave in out of desperation. “How old did you say the bloke you went to visit was?”

His body went numb as he realized who Lestrade was talking about.

“Twenty-three.”

Lestrade’s faced turned a sickening pale as he attempted:

“I’m sorry, Sherlock-“

He pushed past him and into the sea of detectives littering his front hall, but he stopped, frozen, when he saw the kid’s still body lying on the floorboards. Adam’s face was a ghostly white, and the rest of him was even worse- a freakish, gray, drained completely of life. The cause of death was obvious: a clot of blood gathered at his chest where he had apparently been stabbed.

But what intrigued him the most was the blood spattered on Adam’s arm, blood that seemed to spell something.

Rig.

“Rig?” He muttered.
“John said it spelled ‘right’ before he grabbed a hold of him for support,” Lestrade sighed, appearing behind him.

“John?” He turned around, suddenly realizing his boyfriend was nowhere in sight.

“He’s fine, but I think he’s a bit shaken up. Who wouldn’t be, with a body in their flat?”

Adam’s death and the meaning behind it faded away as the thought of John, John, John! took over. He took off into the living room, eyes dashing around desperately, and he was actually grateful when Donovan caught sight of him and pointed to the bathroom. The door was closed but he could hear water rushing behind it. Taking a deep breath, Sherlock tried to be quiet, not to startle his lover, as he called:

“John? It’s me.”

The water hitched and then turned off completely. The door cracked open just enough for Sherlock to take hold of it and slip inside. Once he was in their eyes met, and he realized just what kind of state John was in. He was pale, nearly as pale as the body in the flat itself. A stranger’s blood stained his hands, and the water rushing down the sink was dyed red. John’s pupils suddenly dilated, as though he finally realized what was happening and who was in front of him.

“Where the fuck have you been?” John hissed quietly. He took his arm into one of his bloody hands to shake him. “Sherlock, there’s a body in the flat! A fucking body. Someone just dumped him off like…like…and I was here and…and where the fuck were you?”

Sherlock swallowed, feeling even guiltier.

“I needed a walk,” he whispered. He tried to ignore how upset John was as he locked the door behind them, turned the water on full blast, and reached over to turn the bath on as well.

“What-?”

“Listen to me, John,” he said, taking John by the arms. He dragged him to the furthest end of the bathroom, stuffing them both in the corner and far away from the door. “Did you see who dropped the body off? Does anyone know you’re a witness?”

John shook his head.

“He wasn’t just a body when he showed up,” John said, his voice hollow. “He was alive, Sherlock. Well, he was dying. I tried to save him, I did.”

“It’s okay,” he rest his forehead against John’s and raised a hand to wipe some of the sweat from his face, “it’s okay, but you’ve got to listen to me. I’ve got to tell you some things.”

“The entire bloody Yard is out there!”

“I don’t care!” He raised his eyes so that they could meet, and John must have realized how scared he was because he fell silent immediately. “I know that person, John. He’s an old friend, back from the streets. Well, friend might be a bit of an exaggeration. But he was alright. He was really more of a friend of Luke’s. The thing is, I visited him this morning. I asked him for information. You know that victim we were investigating yesterday? He had this mark, on his hands. I realized I recognized it- it’s a mark of a local drug dealer.”

“What?” John cried. Sherlock placed a hand over his mouth, warning him to be quiet. Struggling, John finally slipped away and hissed: “You’re not making any sense!”
“The mark, the hand!” Sherlock said, raising his own palm. “It’s how he keeps track of his buyers. It’s a contract, written in blood. The victim had a contract with him. Asthma was the cause of death, yes, but that was no natural death. This is what he does, John, don’t you see?”

“No, I don’t! You’re scaring me, Sherlock. Who are you talking about?”

He wrapped his hands around John’s shoulders and neck to comfort himself and heaved a deep sigh before explaining:

“He’s an old drug dealer named Kirchhoff. He was very dangerous, and very powerful, some time ago, back when I used. When new buyers came to him he cut their hands; it was more of an act of power, a scare tactic, than anything. Amongst us young addicts on the street, we knew who anyone with that mark dealt with. Other dealers and gang members knew too. When someone got too in over their heads, or couldn’t pay up, Kirchhoff would find a way to make them disappear. It was usually a staged hit-and-run, or a supposed suicide, or a fire. He had people who would do his dirty work for him, but all of us knew who was behind it. The police were clueless, of course. They’d never listen to me.”

“You?”

A trace of pride lit up in John’s eyes when he nodded.

“You asked me if they ever found Luke’s killer,” he went on, “they didn’t, but I always knew who it was. It was Kirchhoff, but this time it was different. He killed him with his bare hands, John, in cold blood. I know he did. The police could never prove it because he was too careful and they were too stupid. To this day I don’t know exactly what happened between Luke and Kirchhoff to make him go after him like that, but he did. After that, he disappeared out of thin air. But he must be back, because that victim and Adam both had those same marks on their hands.”

“Adam?”

“The guy in the hall!” Sherlock snapped. “Do keep up! Don’t you see, John? He was dropped off here for a reason. Kirchhoff is trying to get to me because he knows I know! He’s back in the country, and he’s realized that I’ve become, frankly, a bit famous. He must know I know that he killed Luke. He’ll know that I know all about how he operated. He’ll know what I’m capable of.”

“Sherlock,” John breathed. His eyes darted away, avoiding him. It was John’s tell that indicated he didn’t believe him. “Don’t you think you’re being a bit paranoid?”

“A dying man was just dropped off at my door!” He shot. “And the message, the message on his arm! ‘Right’. ‘Sherlock’s right’. It’s what the message means, I know it!”

“Right about what?”

“He’s coming after me,” Sherlock said, “and he won’t stop until the job’s done.”

John gazed at him with the same helpless stare he was used to getting from Donavon and even Lestrade.

“Are you sure you’re well?” John asked. “You’re shaken, Sherlock. So am I. It’s okay to be upset about your friend, but this? This just sounds insane.”

“It is insane! Insane and real. For whatever reason, Kirchhoff is back in London. He knows I’m a threat. There was a lot of bad blood between Luke and Kirchhoff. Luke talked about him like he was…like he was the devil himself.”
“But why are you a threat?” He demanded. “Plus, I thought Luke was a dealer. What happened between him and Kirchhoff?”

Sherlock chewed on his lower lip. Just hours ago he was seated in front of Luke’s grave, talking to a dead man. For all the bad that was their relationship, he needed him now. He needed explanations from him. Explanations he deserved.

“I don’t have a clue,” he admitted, “but it’s time I find out.”
“Why does this feel illegal?” John mumbled as he stared at the white board Sherlock assembled in front of them.

The board stretched out in front of a wall in Mycroft’s study, and his boyfriend was already getting to work drawing out a timeline and referencing notebooks he brought with him.

“It’s not,” Sherlock promised, “but we will screw up Lestrade’s promotion if we royally fuck this up.”

“And sneaking police evidence and notes out of Scotland Yard, that won’t mess up his promotion?”

“These are my notes.”

Sherlock went silent after that, letting this sink in. John stuffed his hands in his pockets; he felt so uneasy about this that it was almost nauseating. He was almost grateful when the door opened and Mycroft and Lestrade descended into the room.

“You look well, Mycroft,” John commented, “feeling better?”

Mycroft simply offered him a firm smile.

“He still has a bit of a headache,” Greg said. He was obviously lying. “He’s not too talkative.”

Sherlock smirked but ignored him as he continued drawing lines and dates on the board.

“He just knows I’m right,” Sherlock finally said after a few awkward moments of them watching him work. “He’s been following Kirchhoff for years as a part of his government work. Kirchhoff has become a man of international interest ever since he became involved in the illegal drug trade in West Africa. Isn’t that right, dear brother?”

He swirled around to meet Mycroft’s wide eyes.

“How did you know he was involved with West Africa?”

“I read the news,” Sherlock spat.

“Please don’t start this,” John murmured beside him.

He was already concerned about Sherlock opening up old wounds. John wasn’t sure if Sherlock could see it, but this was clearly something Mycroft wasn’t going to be uncomfortable with, which would inevitably pull their relationship apart again. And they had been doing so well…

Well, at least they could be in the same room now.
“Meet Jonas Kirchhoff,” Sherlock announced, tacking a picture onto the board. It wasn’t a mug shot but something taken in secret on the street, while Kirchhoff was talking with a young man John recognized as Luke. “Currently forty-nine years old, originally from Berlin. He immigrated to England when he was thirteen. His family died in a car accident when he was seventeen, and he’s lived on the streets ever since. I first crossed paths with him on the night of my twenty-third birthday. I didn’t realize it at the time, but Luke became a buyer of his. He was simply that, for a while. We still had enough money left over from not finishing school to get by.”

The elder Holmes squirmed and took a step toward the door, but Lestrade grabbed his arm before he could make an escape.

“‘A year later, Luke began dealing. It was just something he did; I didn't dare to question him. I went out with him a few times, but after some time Luke became more protective of me. He wanted me to stay out of sight.’

John remembered what Sherlock said to him once about Mycroft claiming he felt safe around Luke. In a twisted way, John could see why Sherlock felt protected: Luke was becoming powerful, he at least had some money, he seemed physically strong, and he had friends in all the right places.

“When we were twenty-five, Luke was beaten up pretty bad,” Sherlock’s voice fell as he continued, and John recognized the story immediately, “I never knew what happened, but someone intimidated him. After that he became a bit…jumpy. He was more cautious about where he went, who he talked to. I never asked: I always just assumed he knew what was best. I trusted him completely. I was too afraid not to. Luke kept dealing, and we moved around place to place. Eventually we stopped staying in the shitty flats and took up home in abandon buildings, under passes, anywhere out of public eye. When we were twenty-seven we hit rock bottom. We were constantly in this circle of making deals and getting high- well, Luke made the deals. I just...anyway, I suppose he didn't actually make much money off of them. It always seemed that whatever he got went straight to getting drugs for us. We were pathetic. We just barely survived life on the streets, it was like he were hanging onto this rope that threatened to break at any moment. How we did it...I don't even know. We survived for another two years before things changed between us. Luke came so close to overdosing so many times that I was beginning to get scared. A lot of tension built up between us. Our friends were going missing, and they'd turn up dead after. I was so afraid that would be us."

Sherlock stopped to examine his timeline. His eyes narrowed, like he was determined he must have missed something. John knew the other two men were listening to how uneven Sherlock's breathing was, and he knew they both noticed how his hand trembled ever so slightly as it clutched the marker.

“You told me he began disappearing,” Lestrade spoke up quietly. He said it like he actually thought Sherlock might have forgotten. Surely Lestrade knows better than that, John thought. Surely. “You told me it started out as hours, then days, then-"

“I know.”

Lestrade was cut off so abruptly that he just stared, offended, but not daring to say anything.

“We began to fall apart,” Sherlock said. His voice began breaking up, and judging by his hollow eyes he was forgetting the others were there completely. “He became so distant...then there was that final fight and I...well, I ran away. I didn't mean to break up with him, I just went out for a walk and somehow I ended up- actually, it wasn't somehow. I got high, on my own, and then drugged myself with Rophynol. That was the night of the murder outside the club. It’s when I met Lestrade.”
He sat the marker down beside the white board, signaling the end to his knowledge of the story. John wasn’t sure he had ever seen Sherlock look so helpless, and he couldn’t help but to reach out and squeezed his shoulder for comfort.

“Something happened that changed things,” Sherlock said quietly, “and it not only led directly to Luke’s death, but it stopped Kirchhoff’s operation in London completely. The man disappeared. It’s like he went into hiding. The fact that he’s back…it means something. Something’s changed, again. On top of that, Kirchhoff is coming after me.”

“We don’t know that,” Lestrade sighed. “We don’t even have proof that he had anything to do with Luke’s death.”

Sherlock spun around so violently that Lestrade took a defensive step forward, ready to confront him.

“You have my word!” Sherlock spat. “I saw it!”

“You saw the aftermath, Sherlock!” Lestrade exclaimed. “You saw your boyfriend on the floor, dead. You were attacked. You were traumatized. Kirchhoff wasn’t even in the country by that point, not according to travel records.”

Suddenly Sherlock’s arm swung forward, and for a horrific moment John was afraid that he was actually going to hit the D.I. Instead he threw the marker at him and made to storm out of the door.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft warned, grabbing his brother by the arm.

“What does it matter?” Sherlock said. “After all this time and he still can’t believe me. Kirchhoff has been in hiding until now. He knows I know the truth. These deaths are going to keep happening until he’s stopped, and if he tracks me down-"

A mobile went off, and Lestrade cursed as he reached into his pocket and answered the call.

“Yeah, I’ll be there,” he said after a few minutes. He went pale as he turned to them and explain: “There’s been another body. A young woman this time, with a history of cocaine abuse.”

“Shit,” John whispered.

Sherlock turned away from them and threw the door open. He stormed out, leaving the three of them to decide who would pick up the pieces.

“Shit,” John said again as he followed him, carefully avoiding the eyes of the other two men.

He found Sherlock outside, frantically searching the pockets of his trousers.

“Fuck!” Sherlock shouted, kicking at the ground. John stepped up beside him, wrapping an arm around his shoulder. “I’m craving a cigarette.”

John looked to the ground, pretending he hadn’t heard. Sherlock had done so well quitting smoking that the two never even brought it up any more. The fact that this investigation had only just begun and Sherlock was already taking a step back terrified him. It made him realize even more how important this was to Sherlock- and what it would cost him if this turned out badly.

“I think Mycroft knows something,” Sherlock admitted. He looked down to John, desperate. “I know you think I’m paranoid.”
“I’m just worried,” John said, “are you sure you’re ready to face all of this again?”

Letting out a sigh, Sherlock’s eyes darted away- a tell that he knew John was right. To his surprise Sherlock smiled, and he leant down to place a sharp kiss to John’s lips.

“How do you want to go check out that body with me before Lestrade gets there?” Sherlock asked.

John couldn’t help it, he burst out laughing.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

He kept laughing as he made his way back to the car and called:

“Worst pick up line ever!”

Just imagining the confusion on Sherlock’s face made him laugh again, and it wasn’t too long before his boyfriend appeared at his side again.

“I wasn’t trying to-"

“I know Sherlock,” John said, grabbing his hand, “I know. Seriously though, are you okay?”

Sherlock shrugged as he opened the door for him to allow John to slide into the backseat of one of Mycroft’s sedans.

“Ask me that again when Kirchhoff is in prison.”

He watched as Sherlock eyes drifted to the window, signaling that he was no longer interested in what John thought. A cold shiver rushed through him. For a split second, John feared Sherlock was going to say when Kirchhoff is dead.

Chapter End Notes

John’s thinking it, you’re probably thinking it, and none of you are wrong- Sherlock IS being a bit paranoid. But he’s not wrong...something is definitely up with Kirchhoff.
And what does Mycroft have to do with all of this? Stay tuned!

You know I love knowing what you think...all of your comments really help me develop this story! Thanks SO much for the support!
Another Sister

Chapter Notes

We find out more about Luke...and so does Sherlock.

“What do you think?” Lestrade asked as they gazed over the body.

The young woman was in her twenties, about the same age as the man they found earlier that week. She wore raggedy clothes that were too big for, had no I.D., and the only items in her pockets were a cigarette and lighter.

“Homeless,” Sherlock said. He tipped one of her feet to the side with the edge of her shoe, revealing the wet mud caked underneath. “She has been for a while. It’s him again, I know it is. What did we find out about the other victim?”

“He was homeless, that was his girlfriend’s flat,” Lestrade admitted. “Well, ex-girlfriend. Apparently they had one last fling, and when she found out he still didn’t have a job she left him.”

Something inside him twitched- pity for this dead man he didn’t even know. He felt like all eyes were on him as he turned away, letting his own eyes roam over the crime scene. They were in an alleyway in central London, but he had a feeling the victim had visited another part of town before dying. John wasn’t able to determine an initial cause of death yet, but he warned it looked like another medical cause. Judging by the shoes and the darkened tent of the skirt she wore, she had been near water…something no one in the Yard had bothered to mention.

Before turning back to Lestrade, Sherlock noticed another young woman lingering just outside the alleyway. She had familiar blonde hair and blue eyes, a pale face, trousers that stretched past her trainers and a sweater with holes in the sleeves. Despite the fact that it was still summer.

Without explanation, he took off after and her. He followed her to a nearby carpark, where she wondered aimless in and out of cars, like she wasn’t quite sure where she wanted to be.

“Hey!” He called after her. “Hey!”

He ran up to her and stopped just short of reaching her. He was afraid to touch her, remembering how cautious he used to be of letting other people touch him.

“Do you know Luke Shephard?” He asked, all in one breath.

The woman froze, giving him his answer.

“You’ve fucked him enough times. Shouldn’t you know who I am?” His stomach turned to knots as she let out a harsh, cold, laugh. “Or did he never bother to tell you about his own sister?”

As she turned around he saw it, and he knew why he recognized her. It was in her face, her eyes, her nose- they were just alike.

“Older sister?” He asked, hopefully.

He wasn’t sure which stung more- the fact that he never knew Luke had a twin sister or the fact that she thought he was too cold to care. Yet as he stared at her wet eyes and truly took in her appearance, he couldn’t blame her.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

He felt stupid. Suddenly he wasn’t sure what to say, or why he had followed her. The more he studied her the more she looked like Luke, which only made his stomach burn even hotter. The way she held her arm over her abdomen, the way her shoulders hunched forward, the desperate way she gazed after him.

“Why were you hanging around the crime scene?” He asked.

Linda glanced around, and he couldn’t be sure if she were making sure they were alone or looking for help.

“I…I know you’re trying to figure out these deaths,” she stammered, “and I admire that. I know you think these deaths aren’t innocent, and you’re right. There are things you don’t know about my brother’s death. I never thought you deserved to know, but now I think you may be the only person who can help us.”


“Can I buy you something to eat?” He offered. She hesitated, and though he could practically hear her stomach growling from here he knew she was debating no rather or not she could trust him.

“Please?”

At last she turned and offered him a single nod.

After sending a quick text to John, Sherlock led them to the nearest pub that was open for lunch. They ordered a couple of sandwiches and chips, and he wasn’t surprised when Linda began digging into hers as soon as they received her food. He gave her a few minutes to eat, but he was too anxious to eat anything himself.

“So your Luke’s twin?” He finally asked.

“Yeah,” Linda said through a mouthful of food. “Some family we are. Luke ran out as soon as he turned eighteen. I didn’t even know he went to Uni until after he dropped out.”

“You didn’t go?”

She burst out laughing and stuffed more chips in her mouth.

“God no. I got a job, not that it did me any good,” she said, “our house burnt down. We lost everything. Luke left us for good- we didn’t have anything to give him. I stuck around with my parents, trying to help them out. My father used to go out, looking for Luke. I had no idea he was doing drugs until Dad came home one night, upset because he found Luke high and out of his mind. He said he was with some guy…it was you, I guess.”

Sherlock could feel his cheeks growing hot with embarrassment. He knew very little of Luke’s parents, mainly that they were well-off, middle class people until his father lost his job. He had always thought that triggered Luke’s poor decision-making skills in school, but he didn’t know about the house fire.
Or the fact that apparently he had met his ex-boyfriend’s father.

“Luke was always such a coward,” Linda went on, “our family went through hard times, and he didn’t stick by us through any of them. He only ever thought of himself. He always tried to say that our parents were shit and we didn’t treat him well. He was full of shit.”

“He said his dad gave him a hard time for being gay,” Sherlock admitted.

A muscle twitched in Linda’s face, like he was right but she didn’t want to admit it.

“Yeah, well, the point is…Luke didn’t have much to do with us from the time he left school until the day he died. His running away tore my mum and dad apart. Even years later, they still got upset, like they hoped he would magically come home. Then one day, he did. We didn’t have much of a place, just a shit flat that we all shared. Luke came banging on the door one day when my parents were out. I don’t even know how he knew where we lived, but he was desperate. His face was all beaten in. He had marks on his back and his chest, like he’d been tortured, and rope burns on his wrist from being tied up. I thought maybe he got himself into trouble on the streets, but he said the government was after him. He was looking for a place to hide. I considered calling the police, but he begged me- he was actually crying. They must have scared the shit out of him because he was properly frightened. I took him in, out of crazy hope that this would convince him to get himself clean, but he ran off in the middle of the night, back to you I guess.”

Sherlock stared at his food, which was getting cold as it sat on the table. He didn’t remember Luke ever coming home that beat up- there was the one night he got into a fight but the sex proved he was mainly hurt on his face and arms. But he did remember an odd period of time about a year before he died and things went to shit, when Luke suddenly stopped wanting to have sex. It wasn’t forever, just for a week or so, and he was very insistent on not being touched.

It was what started the tension that eventually led to them falling apart.

“Not back to me,” he whispered, “I never knew about that.”

“Yeah,” Linda snorted, “well, he was convinced the government was out to get him. I assumed he was just high out of his mind, but the next morning some guy in a suit came to our door asking if we’d seem him. He was asking for you, too. He said Luke was involved in a very serious international crime and you may be in danger. I told him I didn’t give two shits about you and slammed the door in his face. The bloke began following me, trying to get answers out of me, but I didn’t have anything to tell him. I didn’t know anything. Then not too long after that, Luke died, and I at first I just assumed the government finally got to him. Then they told us he had been murdered in cold blood and I realized no, they just failed at their fucking job.”

Sherlock only half heard the last part of her story. His world stopped at the mention of a man in a suit and Luke being wanted by the government. He wasn’t aware that his heart was pounding so fast he stopped breathing. He wasn’t aware that the world was going in and out of focus, and that even Linda was staring at him, wondering what was wrong.

Mycroft.

That’s what was wrong.

Mycroft.

He did know more. Of course he did.

Mycroft.
He slammed a hand down on the table, making Linda jump. Getting to his feet, he grabbed a napkin and wrote down his number and address.

“If you need anything, or if there’s anything else you can tell me, contact me,” he said, “I’m trying to get to the bottom of these deaths. I’m still trying to solve your brother’s murder. It wasn’t right, the things Luke and I did, but he didn’t deserve to die from it.”

Sherlock avoided her eyes as he stormed out of the restaurant and hailed a cab.

**Mycroft.**

Just the thought of his name made him want to punch his brother in the face, and if any of his suspicions were proven right, he may just do much worse than that.
As he stormed into the Diogenes Club, the members who were usually so quiet and reserved looked up at him in unison. It was like they knew what was going on.

In the back of the club, in his usual spot, was his brother. He held up a hand before Sherlock could even reach him, which only made him angrier. Mycroft got to his feet just as Sherlock stormed up to him, and without blinking he threw his fist forward, hitting his older brother squarely in the jaw.

Mycroft’s head merely tilted to the side, and his eyes were blank as his face bounced back toward him. Other members of the Club rushed to their feet, but Mycroft stopped them with a hand.

The room was deathly silent as Sherlock hit his brother again, hard enough now to send him tumbling over onto the armchair. Once he was caught off-guard, he offered Mycroft two swift punches to the gut and pushed him to the floor.

The law of silence was forgotten as three men dove forward to peel him off his brother. Mycroft reached up, grabbing his shoulders and glaring, determined to get through this without speaking.

“You bastard,” Sherlock whispered.

A chorus of gasps sounded off around him, but knowing those were the first two words to ever be spoken in this section of the Diogenes Club made him feel even better.

So he swung forward again. This time Mycroft grabbed his fist so tightly midair that he was able to push him back and lift himself off the floor. Sherlock gasped as he was suddenly yanked up by the collar, and he managed to shove Mycroft off as he led him back through the entry way and into the carpark.

“Get off me!” He hissed as Mycroft took hold of his shoulder again and held him in place.

There was a car waiting and a driver heading toward them.

“Mr. Holmes!” The driver exclaimed. “Are you alright, Sir?”

“Fine,” Mycroft spat, taking his mobile out. “My brother and I need to go to my office.”

The driver glanced between the two of them, as if he wasn’t quite sure Mycroft would be safe with him.

“Are you sure?”

Mycroft nodded, and the driver turned and pointed his key at the car.
They fell to the ground as an explosion shook the entire lot. Flames burst into the air as the car burst into pieces. Sherlock felt the world come to a stop as Mycroft shoved him to the ground, and his brother covered his back and wrapped his hands around his head, pinning his face to the ground as booms shook the ground and their bodies. Debris flew everywhere, and he could feel the heat of fire grace his back. Mycroft breathed desperately against his neck, his heart pounded against his back, and Sherlock felt permanently attached to the ground.

When the booms died out into the slick crackling of flames they dared to shift around.

“Are you okay?” His brother asked before moving off of him. He couldn’t answer at first. His ears were ringing, his head was pounding harder than it had since his injury, and his limbs were trembling. “Sherlock?”


Letting out a few raspy breaths, Mycroft rolled off him and sat up. He brought a hand to his face, and Sherlock watched as he brought back blood where glass hit his neck. He knew it wouldn’t mix well with the broken nose and bruised ribs he already sported, and Sherlock actually felt guilty for hurting him.

“I’m fine,” Mycroft finally said.

He looked around for his driver, and he let out a long sigh when he saw him unconscious not too far away. A crowd was gathering outside the Diogenes, and a few men were already making their way over to help them.

A half an hour later the fire was being put out and he sat next to his brother in the back of an ambulance, both with blankets around their shoulders and oxygen masks in their hands.

Mycroft glared when he noticed his brother wasn’t using his.

“You breathed in a lot of smoke very quickly,” Mycroft said, “use it. Don’t think I don’t know you’re trying to get some kind of high off the smoke because you’ve been craving a cigarette.”

Resisting the urge to shove his brother to the ground again, Sherlock only glared at him.

“I’m not,” he promised, sincerely. “Mycroft-“ he let out a round of painful coughs and realized he was right.

Instead of speaking he inhaled oxygen, grateful for the relief. Mycroft gazed at him for a minute, and Sherlock had a feeling he knew exactly why he had been treated to the bullying.

“It’s been years since you’ve punched me in the face,” Mycroft snorted. “Your technique is getting weak.”

Sherlock removed the mask long enough to snap:

“And you’re getting old.”

Mycroft actually smirked.

“Yes, I am,” he said with a sigh. “Before our boyfriends get here and throw a fit… I know why you came to see me. I knew it would only be a matter of time. But just know that I only ever did everything because I-“
“What the fuck, Sherlock?” They both looked up to find John and Lestrade storming toward them. John raised a hand to Sherlock’s cheek, brushing off some of the dirt. “You disappear for twenty minutes and nearly get blown up.”

“I’m fine,” he mumbled.

Beside John, Lestrade was thoroughly checking out Mycroft with his eyes, but Sherlock knew he didn’t dare touch him in front of the crowd of onlookers. Some of them, he knew, were his brother’s closest allies.

“How are you?” He asked quietly, instead.

Mycroft offered him a soft smile and met his eyes.

“Quite fine,” he replied. “The fire didn’t punch me in the face, though, as I’m sure you’ve gathered. If we’re going to do this investigation together, I’m afraid it’s time I admit some things. You won’t like it, Sherlock.”

He breathed into the oxygen mask one final time before letting it fall beside him. Shrugging off the blanket, he went to join John and Lestrade. All three of them gazed down at his brother, who suddenly seemed so small inside the ambulance. His ginger hair was a mess and stained with ash. His arms were as well, and Sherlock noticed the way he clutched at his side; the impact of both the punches to the gut and being thrown to the ground must have really shaken him. Very rarely did Mycroft allow himself to be seen affected by pain, rather emotional or physical, so he assumed there was some other recent injury bothering him. Or maybe it was just the impact of his recent illness.

“Let’s get you home,” Greg said softly, helping him stand. “Are you sure you don’t need-“

“I swear to god if you say ‘hospital’ I’ll punch you in the face,” Mycroft shot.

Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin a bit, though deep inside he knew his brother was right. He wasn’t going to like hearing the truth. In fact, he knew it may just change everything between them.

“Right, I’d like to see you try,” Lestrade teased.

“Someone’s really after you, then?” John asked Sherlock as he helped him walk to a nearby black sedan.

“They’re definitely trying to send me a message,” Sherlock agreed.

When he stole a glance to his brother and saw how nervous and even scared he looked, he knew this was much more serious than that.

Chapter End Notes

On a happier note, a bit more Mystrade...right?? I'm trying to throw as much as I can in there for you guys!

Thanks SO much!
“Did you really hit him?” John teased.

They were both leaning against Mycroft’s kitchen island, watching as his brother tried to ignore the swelling that was now his nose.

Sherlock only smirked.

He appreciated the comic relief, but even he couldn’t hide from John how nervous he was to talk about Luke.

“How about you? Are you okay?” John asked, turning to him. He sniffed his shirt. “You smell like smoke.”

“Fine,” he mumbled, sipping his glass of water to hide.

“Sherlock, John?” Mycroft called.

When Sherlock looked up he swore he hadn’t seen his brother look so serious since the day he told him about Mum. Taking a deep breath, he followed the other three to Mycroft’s study.

“The things I’m about to tell you cannot leave this house,” Mycroft began.

“Of course,” John and Lestrade replied.

Sherlock found a particular spot on the hardwoods to focus on throughout the conversation.

He listened as Mycroft triggered a lock on the trap door behind the bookcase.

“Those really exist?!” John exclaimed as Mycroft pushed opened the wall and slipped behind it.

“While I’m back here why don’t you ask Greg about the time he got stuck in here the first time he spent the night?”

John grinned and turned to Lestrade, whose face turned a distinct shade of maroon.

“I’m not telling that story,” Lestrade announced.

His brother emerged holding a single file that was about an inch thick. He handed it directly to Sherlock, who could only stare at it.

“Go ahead,” Mycroft said quietly.

His breath shook a bit as he turned the first page. The beginnings of the file was simple enough, but even seeing the old photograph of a twenty-something year old Luke made him queasy.

So young. How did he only make it to thirty?

John was practically leaning against his face, trying too hard to comfort him. He skimmed through the basic information he knew- birthdays, hair color, blood type. His heart skipped a beat at mention of a twin sister…just something else Mycroft knew.

Kirchhoff was one of my first cases when I began working for the government. At first I was put in charge of reviewing surveillance video from around London to keep tabs on Kirchhoff. I admit I used my position to keep eyes on you too, Sherlock. That’s when I found out that your partner was a drug dealer, and after further observation I realized the man who he was working for was one of England’s most wanted. After the cocaine trade opened up in West Africa, Kirchhoff was no doubt interested in getting involved. We increased our investigation into his operation and discovered that Luke was one of those who was recruited. And when I say recruited…”

“They forced him,” Sherlock whispered.

He remembered the night Luke came home so beat up, so shaken. The fingerprint bruises on his arms still haunted him, and to this day he wasn’t sure he really wanted to know what happened.

“Many of those who joined Kirchhoff were intimidated. They were threatened, physically themselves, or their families were threatened. Kirchhoff kept a close eye on his employees, and he wasn’t ready to let them go when he needed to go abroad for a while. When I realized Luke was one of those being recruited for the drug trafficking scheme, I requested to have him brought in for questioning. I insisted I could get through to him, being the brother of his partner. I was foolish enough to think that would work. I was young, eager to succeed, and desperately worried about my younger brother.”

At that moment Sherlock finally raised his eyes to meet Mycroft’s, and he knew his brother was sincere.

“Did you torture him?” Sherlock asked.

He stared back at the file, having just found the page that summarized Luke’s first torture session. It was a transcription of a recording taken during the session, and the thought that somewhere out there was a video- or voice recording- of this made him sick.

“Yes,” Mycroft said, his voice nearly a whisper. “The situation was becoming extremely dangerous, and Luke was our only link to Kirchhoff. Luke told us very little, despite the evidence we had against him. We threatened to arrest him, warned him of what he was getting into, and my employers even suggested threatening to bring you in. But I did something even better. During our second session-”

Sherlock’s fist tightened in his lap.

“I offered him full immunity.”

All three of them looked up, shocked. Mycroft’s eyes were vacant, as though he were fighting to not be affected by any of this. The transcript of the second interrogation in the folder confirmed Mycroft’s confession.

“I told him he could either help us and receive full immunity or continue to help Kirchhoff and be tried for drug trafficking. I offered to keep him safe and give him time to make a decision- again, against my employers’ wishes. But I knew I could no longer scare and intimidate him. The more I talked to Luke the more I was reminded of you. It was obvious that he was frightened, that he knew what a bad place he was in. If that wasn’t enough his drug abuse was killing him. He was worse each time I saw him- sleep deprived, malnourished. I insisted we stop torturing him and talk to him instead. We were desperate for information, but our methods weren’t working.

Luke still wasn’t cooperating. He disappeared, and we discovered he had gone to West Africa to begin scoping out the new game with Kirchhoff. He was officially arrested for drug trafficking,
and I gave him one final offer for immunity. He took it and told me everything. Funny enough it only took one trip with Kirchhoff for him to realize how in over his head he was. I offered him safety while we arrested Kirchhoff, but Luke panicked and left his safe house. That was after you left rehab and moved into your flat. It was the night of his death, Sherlock.”

That much he gathered from the final pages of the file. As Mycroft fell silent he realized how loudly he was breathing, and he realized that all eyes were on him. John placed a hand on his shoulder and Sherlock wished he wouldn’t; it made him feel even more helpless.

“I tried my best to help him,” Mycroft pleaded quietly, “I promise you Sherlock, I-”

He didn’t let Mycroft finished. He swirled around and stormed out of the room, too overwhelmed and upset to realize John was right behind him.
John found Sherlock in the car out front, slouching in the backseat. He almost smirked; he just looked so childlike, all pouty-faced and arms crossed. He slid in without asking for permission and waited quietly, allowing Sherlock to speak first.


He looked up at John, helpless and pleading for answers. John froze, not sure if Sherlock was looking for a psychological or medical answer.

Or maybe he was being sarcastic.

“Can I ask you something personal?” John said. Sherlock only stared, looking even more the child. After a moment, his boyfriend nodded. “Do you still crave the drugs? It’s okay, you can tell me the truth. I won’t be angry at you, not because of a craving.”

Turning a bit pale, Sherlock glanced away, searching for a way out. John was tempted to lock the doors just to keep him in place, but he didn’t want to intimidate him. He was grateful for the divider that separated the backseat from the driver up front.

“No,” Sherlock’s voice was uncharacteristically weak, barely a whisper. “Not since I’ve been with you. I promise you.”

Sherlock looked down at his hands, like he was actually ashamed of it.

“Then why do you want the cigarette?”

“I don’t want the cigarette. It’s just in my head.”

“Yeah it is,” John agreed. “Is that why you’re hiding in the car?”

“No.”

John scooted over so they were shoulder-to-shoulder. He could hear each shallow, shaky, breath escape his lover, and even though he wished they were in the comfort of their home somehow being in the car felt more intimate.

“I was so ready to hate him,” Sherlock admitted, “but he sacrificed his career, his reputation, everything. And I feel stupid for not knowing what Luke was going through. He was being hurt, intimidated, and he just hid all of that so well. Except he really didn’t. He became distant. He was very quiet. I once accused him of just wanting sex, but I think he just wanted someone to be there for him. I was completely blind, John. Even my own brother was able to figure out what was going on.”

“That’s because your brother had surveillance cameras and government files,” John said.

Heaving a heavy sigh, Sherlock leaned his head back against the seat and gazed at him.

“He tortured him,” he whispered, “I can’t even imagine.”
John didn’t want to admit that he could, thanks to some gruesome patient cases. He would never admit to Sherlock how badly Luke was probably hurt.

“‘My own brother’s capable of that,’” his boyfriend sighed. “And what he said about Kirchhoff, threatening him. And he went to Africa and didn’t tell me.”

Sherlock was so overwhelmed that it showed in his eyes, and John slipped an arm around his neck to pull him closer.

“I wonder how he felt when he died. What went through his mind...”

He sucked in a deep breath and fought to not look so stunned.

“Sherlock-“

“Sorry,” Sherlock said suddenly, breathing in deeply himself and running his hands over his face. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to be so...”

“Human?”

They stared at each other, and he noticed Sherlock swallowing, nervous.

“He came to me for help,” Sherlock said. “That night, he needed help. Real help. And I just... fucked him and was selfish enough to think that he just wanted to get back together.”

“Maybe he did,” John offered. “Maybe he wanted to come clean and get help, but he was too nervous to trust the government so he went to you.”

His stomach did flips when he saw how relieved Sherlock was to hear that theory. Sherlock shook away from his embrace and settled instead against the window. Their eyes remained locked, and John was uncomfortable when he realized that he was actually aroused.

“I love you.”

John stopped breathing. His chest felt too tight, the car was too small, and he wished, more than anything, that they weren’t sitting in front of Mycroft’s house. Nevertheless, Sherlock’s eyes remained locked with his. His boyfriend looked so sincere, so determined and suddenly so not afraid, that John knew he must have been holding back this confession for some time.

“After I walked away from Luke and agreed to go to rehab I realized how pathetic I was. I was afraid no one else would ever want me. When I began working with the police I found meaning in life again, but to everyone else I was just a freak. I accepted that, and I convinced myself I didn’t care. Until I met you. And suddenly I wanted to be wanted again.”

No one had ever said something that meant so much to him before. He never wanted someone so much, and he was so proud of Sherlock there was only one way he could express how he felt.

He leant forward so that he was practically on top of Sherlock and kissed him, long and hard. He wasted no time slipping his tongue in, teasing the roof of his lover’s mouth. John was aware of how aroused he was becoming, and he knew it just wasn’t the appropriate time.

Instead he rest on top of Sherlock so their eyes met again. He was at loss for words, too afraid that anything he said wouldn’t be good enough. John ran a hand through Sherlock’s curls, simply admiring him instead. His breathing was slightly off, and his eyes were wild, but there was a hesitation in them and John knew Sherlock was still thinking of their conversation with Mycroft.
Finally, he knew what to say.

“We’ll get through this together, yeah?” He said.

Sherlock nodded.

“At least I know why Kirchhoff is after me,” Sherlock said, his voice a bit strained, “and why he killed Luke. Luke had so much information on him, and he gave it all to my brother. John, if he thinks I had anything to with this we all might be in real danger.”

The thought shook him, but he refused to let Sherlock see. He leaned forward and kissed him again, caressing his face sweetly.

“I’m here for you,” he breathed, “so is your brother, so is Lestrade.”

Sherlock sat up as he deepened the kiss, but they were jolted back to reality as John’s mobile buzzed.

“It’s Lestrade,” he sighed as he checked his messages, “he wants to know if you’re alright.”

Echoing his sigh, Sherlock rested a hand on his shoulder.

“I don’t know,” he admitted, “that’s my answer.”

John pocketed his mobile; he admired Sherlock too much for admitting that to reply to Lestrade.

“I guess I should talk to Mycroft,” Sherlock said.

“Good,” John said, planting a kiss to his lips, “and you two have just begun to get along. Sort of. Please do try to be civil.”

With a wicked grin spreading across his face, Sherlock raised John’s hand in his and kissed his knuckles, just to show off the bruises that still graced his own.

Chapter End Notes

I was worried Sherlock was being a bit too cheesy with his "I love you" in this chapter, but really no matter how many different ways you write these kinds of things they always turn out like a bad chick flick :)

Thanks so much for reading!
John offered to babysit Lestrade while he talked to Mycroft, but as soon as he was alone with his older brother he wished more than ever for someone to be there with them.

Or at least for someone to make sure he didn’t hit him again.

Sherlock quietly slid into a barstool at the kitchen island and watched for a moment as Mycroft began picking vegetables out of the fridge.

“What are you doing?” He asked casually.

“Making stew,” Mycroft replied. “Here, you can help.”

Gee, I wanted to.

He had no choice but to accept the carrots as they were dropped in front of him and the knife as it was placed in his hands. A cutting board appeared next, and Sherlock just stared at it, wondering what it was all supposed to mean.

“You do know how to slice vegetables?” Mycroft teased.

Cheeks burning, Sherlock wielded the knife in one hand and held a carrot in the other. The objects didn’t seem to want to coordinate with his movements, and the knife slipped a bit even before he started.

“Here,” Mycroft sighed.

In a few swift movements, Mycroft had the entire carrot sliced up and in a nearby bowl in seconds.

Holy shit.

“I think I’m allergic to carrots,” Sherlock mumbled.

Mycroft smirked.

“You’re not, and that trick hasn’t worked since you were four.”

He turned his nose up, clueless as to what Mycroft meant.

“What did I do when I was four?” He demanded.

His brother was actually grinning as he explained:

“You used to pretend you were having allergic reactions to vegetables so you wouldn’t have to eat them. Mum panicked at first, until I told her I was pretty sure it’s not actually possible to be allergic to peas.”

“I’m sure it’s possible!” He protested. “That wasn’t fair, maybe I was really sick.”

Picking up the next carrot, Sherlock glared at it, determined to be able to do this correctly.
“Go ahead,” Mycroft said.

Sherlock looked up at him. Somehow he felt like the world was turning against him without warning, starting from his childhood.

“What?” He asked.

“You’re wielding that carrot like you want to throw it across the room.”

“Whatever,” he mumbled, shoving the vegetables away. “Who likes stew, anyway?”

“Gregory does,” Mycroft said, his lips turning up in a shy grin.

“You two are disgusting.”

Mycroft’s grin spread at the accusation, and he went on silently slicing up an onion. The sting from the vegetable was getting to his eyes, which didn’t help what he had to confess.

“I feel stupid,” he announced quietly. “I feel stupid for never knowing the trouble Luke was in. For never helping him. With him, I tried to trust him completely. He stayed out late, he disappeared, and I just assumed he knew what was best. I assumed he was out there just trying to help us get by. And he was, but the price he paid…I never would have asked him to do that.”

“No one asked him to do that,” Mycroft said. He noticed his brother purposefully avoiding his eyes and using the vegetables as a distraction. “He was intimidated by those he thought of as employers. He was threatened. He was protecting you, Sherlock.”

“I should have protected him.”

He spoke so softly that he hoped he had just thought that in his mind. When his brother looked up, mortified, he knew he was out of luck.

“You were homeless, Sherlock,” Mycroft said. “You spent most of your nights hiding, freezing, and starving.”

“Yeah, because I was weak.”

A heavy silence fell between them, and Sherlock knew Mycroft was reeling from the fact that it was one of the first times he’d ever referred to himself as ‘weak’. Even after he got off the streets and let Lestrade and his brother helped him, he spent most of his time with them in silence, refusing to truly talk through what he’d been through.

“Look at me, Sherlock.” He refused until he felt a hand on his chin, forcing his face and eyes upward. He gazed helplessly into his brothers eyes, and for a split second he longed for good advice from his older sibling. “It wasn’t your fault. You have no idea how dangerous Kirchhoff really was. Luke was doing you a big favour by keeping you in the dark. Even if you knew there would have been little ways you could have helped. Trust me.”

He knew Mycroft was referring to his own battle to get him off the drugs.

“I want to know what you did to him,” Sherlock said, shrugging away from his touch.

Mycroft’s eyes went dark.

“No.”
"I deserve to know!"

"No, you know I can’t!" Mycroft exclaimed. "And besides, Sherlock, Luke asked me not to tell you anything. If he were alive he’d be horrified to know what little I have told you."

"If he were alive!" Sherlock screamed, jumping up from his seat. The brothers stood face-to-face again, and Sherlock couldn’t make any promises he wouldn’t hit him again. "I saw Kirchhoff, after he stuck the knife in Luke’s chest. He attacked me, remember? I woke up and there was just… blood everywhere. He’s not alive. He won’t ever be. There’s no guessing what he would have thought, but I know, I know how things might have been different had I known what he was going through!"

"What would have been different?" Mycroft asked, crossing his arms.

"I…I would have talked to you."

Mycroft’s eyes narrowed, and Sherlock swallowed, determined to not look so nervous.

"Would you have?" Mycroft stated coolly. "Do you really want to know what I did to Luke? I was terrified he had gotten you involved with Kirchhoff. How was I to know that you weren’t a dealer too? I was afraid that I would lose you to Africa. Even worse, I was afraid that Kirchhoff would realize that you two were just young, desperate, poor kids who weren’t up for the risks you take when getting involved in drug trafficking. Luke was in over his head, but he tried to play it cool. I could see it in his eyes, Sherlock, the yearning to ask for help. But he refused to tell me about you. He refused to tell me about Kirchhoff, whose hold on London was getting stronger by the day. I had to scare it out of him. I decided to give him a taste of what it would be like to truly work for Kirchhoff, because you can bet that’s how he treated his own men.

I hit him to get his attention, and then I did it again when he smirked at me. He wasn’t taking it seriously enough. He was in the hands of the top government officials of England, of the world, and he was acting like he was being pulled aside for talking to loud in class. I knew the immaturity was just a cry for help, but I had to get it out of him. He broke after his first time and at least told me about you, that you were safe and out of Kirchhoff’s hands. Once I knew that I promised to help him, to offer him safety and immunity if he told me about Kirchhoff. I knew it wouldn’t be as simple as telling you to stay inside and not talk to strangers. I explained to him each thing that would happen once he agreed to this promotion of Kirchhoff’s. What Kirchhoff would do, what the traffickers and dealers who were already in Africa might do, if heads clashed, what federal officials would do, what would happen if he went to prison. I warned him that we would have cameras on both him and you and that we would follow his every move. I threatened that we could either watch him and keep him safe or watch him and arrest him the moment he stepped back into Kirchhoff’s lair.

The more I took him in, the more I questioned him, the more I could see how much I was breaking him down mentally. He was worried about you, Sherlock. He didn’t directly say it but I could see it in his eyes, in the way he rocked back and forth in his chair and the way he tugged at his jacket sleeves each time I mentioned your name. The more personal of questions I asked the more he twitched and became anxious. When he disappeared from our cameras I knew he had given into Kirchhoff’s offer, his feigned protection and caring. He was scared of me but he was even more afraid of Kirchhoff. He didn’t trust me enough yet. We picked him up the moment he stepped back on British soil, and I told him you were in rehab. All he asked was about you- how you were doing, how the withdrawal was, where you were staying. He wanted to see you and I wouldn’t let him. At last he told me he had some new information that he would only give up if he saw you. He claimed he only agreed to go to Africa because he knew he could obtain crucial information for our
investigation, though I knew that to be a lie.

I agreed to let him see you, and there was supposed to be a government official on him at all times. He panicked and ran, straight to you. Straight into the arms of Kirchoff. You’re lucky Kirchoff didn’t kill you that night, Sherlock. Extremely lucky. When Lestrade told me how shaken you were afterward I felt sick, and I vowed to make Kirchoff pay- not just for being the criminal he was but for being the sick bastard that he was. But Kirchoff dropped off the map, and after a few months we lost all signs of him. He wasn’t in Africa anymore. He gave up on that, unless he was using a very efficient alias- which he wasn’t. I felt so terrible for you, Sherlock, because I knew you had just lost someone you cared about. I felt terrible because you were in the dark through all of it, and I knew you might never understand. And god I was horrified, knowing that I let Luke down.

Knowing that I got a young, at risk, kid to trust me and I just threw that trust away. I should have made sure the official stayed with him, no matter what. Fuck, I should have never let him leave. I’ve felt guilty for his death ever since I got the call. I was so ashamed that I didn’t have the heart to talk to you about it. I just want you to know that I tried with Luke, I really did. And I’m sorry.”

Mycroft finally stopped and let out a low, shaky breath. He closed his eyes, and it was one of the few times he had ever seen Mycroft so emotionally exposed.

“I just can’t believe I never knew any of this was happening,” Sherlock rasped, running his hands through his hair. He grasped his curls tightly, wanting to feel that pain. “I was supposed to be his partner.”

“He was trying his best to protect you,” Mycroft stated quietly. “It was messy, it was risky, but he was willing to do anything, in the end, to keep you safe.”

Sherlock wrapped his arms around himself, feeling sick.

“Oh god,” he mumbled, closing his eyes.

It felt like the room was spinning. A hand landed on his shoulder to steady him, and Sherlock let out a trembling sigh.

“Can you help me prepare to fight him?” He asked, flashing his eyes open. “I’ll have to face him eventually, Mycroft. You know that. Help me.”

Mycroft studied him for a long moment, and when he never answered Sherlock knew he had won him over.

“I’m not weak anymore,” Sherlock announced. “I’m going to avenge Luke’s death. Maybe I couldn’t be there for him then, but I’m going to find out everything he went through. Kirchoff’s going to pay.”

“And how would John feel if he heard that?”

He spoke so low, so cautiously, that Mycroft must have known he was at risk for another punch to his face.

“Fuck you,” he spat.

“You have to think of him, Sherlock.”

God, he was right.

“He’ll be in danger too. Do you see how Luke felt now?”
He did, and fuck it hurt to realize that.

Instead of facing the truth he swirled around to storm out of the room, leaving Mycroft alone and disappointed.

Chapter End Notes

Sherlock's ready for a fight...but will Kirchhoff get to him first?

Thanks for reading!!! I'd love to know what you think about this story arch!
Sherlock was quiet the whole ride home, and nothing scared John more than when his boyfriend was quiet. He used to think the silence simply meant Sherlock’s mind was too busy focusing on a case to waste energy speaking, but now that he was closer to him John knew silence was a red flag that something was wrong.

When they reached Baker Street, Sherlock stormed inside without warning, and John stood for a moment just staring at the front door, wondering what he missed. Just an hour ago Sherlock lay back against the window of the car and confessed that he loved him. The confession was one of the most beautiful and sincere things he had ever heard Sherlock say. Now he seemed like he was back to his old, withdrawn, self, and John worried the confession was said in the spur of the moment. Maybe if tensions weren’t so high he would have kept his feelings to himself.

At last John drew in a deep breath, knowing that he had to be a man and confront his lover. He found Sherlock tuning his violin, and he knew if he didn’t act quickly he might lose him for the rest of the evening.

“Do you want to talk about it?” He asked.

He leaned against the doorway casually, arms crossed, and then switched to sitting on the sofa when he felt too much like someone’s dad.

“What’s there to say?” Sherlock replied, dryly. Not a good sign. “My ex worked for one of the country’s most dangerous drug dealers, and he almost agreed to take part in an infamous drug trafficking scheme. What’s there to say, John?”

“For starters, I’m trying to figure out who you’re mad at.”

Sherlock made a sharp movement as he swirled around and acted like he actually might throw his violin across the room. He stopped suddenly, in horror of what he was doing. His eyes were wild, and John swallowed nervously, wondering if he had chosen his words right.

“Everyone,” Sherlock finally mumbled.

“Does that include me as well?” John mused. “I’m an ‘everyone’.”

“Sod off,” Sherlock shot.

He began playing a low, sorrowful, tune, and John knew it was time to throw up the white flag. Letting out a dramatic sigh he crossed into the kitchen and took out a can of soup. It did no justice to his appetite, which was hoping for some of the promising-looking stew Mycroft had begun making. He began slamming things down a little too hard as he opened cabinets and moved dishes so that he could make his pitiful excuse for a dinner. Sherlock’s things were everywhere, and he was tempted to shove them all to the floor.
How can you do this? He wanted to scream. What am I supposed to believe?

One minute Sherlock was confessing his love in the backseat of the car and the next he was pushing him away. John tried to remember that Sherlock didn’t have a clue what he was doing: he had never been in an honest, healthy, relationship and still didn’t quite know how to act sometimes. He knew Sherlock was hurting because of the old wounds being forced open, but god if only the man would just talk.

Maybe if I get him into bed he’ll talk, he mused. Actually...

It wasn’t too bad of an idea.

John stuffed the soup back into the cabinets and darted back into the living room…only to find Sherlock gone. A note was in his place at the music stand.

John,

There’s been another body. It has to be the last one. He’s after me, and I’m the only person who can finish this. A message just came in through the Network. It’s time for me to step up and end this. I’m sorry, I couldn’t tell you because you would try to stop me. Don’t tell Lestrade. Don’t phone Mycroft. I want to ask you not to worry, but I know that’s not fair. Apparently there are some things I have to clean up.

I love you. I mean it.

Sherlock.

He was breathing loud, heavy, breaths by the time he was done reading. His hand shook as he ran it through his hair.

“Fuck you,” John whispered, letting the note tremble in his hands. He fumbled for his mobile, knowing if Sherlock asked him not to contact someone that’s exactly what he should do. “Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you!”

“Hello?” Asked a confused Lestrade on the other end.

“Jesus,” he answered, drawing in a few quick breaths to calm down. “Not you, Sherlock. Has there been another body?”

“Yeah, I just texted Sherlock. He didn’t answer.”

“That’s because he’s ran out!” John said. He read Lestrade back the note, and the few moments of silence on the other end made him worry even more. “Greg?”

There was a sharp intake of breath, and Lestrade’s voice was almost a whisper as said:

“Stay there. I have to phone Mycroft.”

“Greg-“

The other line went dead, and John resisted the urge to throw the mobile across the room.

“FUCK!” He exclaimed, kicking at the sofa so hard his toe stung when he pulled away.

Suddenly he remembered it was the 21st century, and connecting with Sherlock should be very easy. He took his mobile out again, and his fingers were red with anger as he frantically typed:
If you get yourself hurt again I’ll never forgive you.

He paused, hoping for a quick response.

Nothing.

Please don’t do this alone. This isn’t your battle.

Nothing.

Then the worst-case-scenario thoughts hit him. Maybe Sherlock had been forced out of the flat, and someone left the note on his behalf. Maybe he had been forced to write it.

Either way, if Sherlock was going into battle then so was he. He threw a quick glance around the flat, checking for any signs of someone else being there. When he was certain he was alone he ran into Sherlock’s bedroom and began searching for clues. Everything seemed pretty much the same; it didn’t look like he took anything.

Then a thought hit him.

If Sherlock was going into battle he would need a weapon. No, not the service weapon. Even Sherlock wouldn’t have the heart to take that without his permission.

But there was a knife Sherlock kept in the drawer of his nightstand. It was usually hidden by old journals and notes, but John knew he kept it there for a small sense of security. His breathing was shakier than ever as he slid open the drawer, but he immediately froze and closed his eyes.

This can’t be happening.

The knife was gone.

Chapter End Notes

*hides* I'm sorry! I promise things will get better soon! The next chapter should wrap up the Kirchhoff plot.

Thanks for being such awesome readers! I hope you aren’t too angry.
The Final Victim

Chapter Notes

WARNING: minor character death, violence, blood.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It always had to be an abandoned warehouse, didn’t it? Kirchhoff was textbook. He was so predictable Sherlock was ashamed he hadn’t figured it all out sooner. One, Kirchhoff was using a local company called Brighton Electronics to house his latest drugs scheme. Two, said company began setting up shop only a few months ago, and though their website claimed to be a leading vendor in the selling of used laptops, mobile phones, and televisions, the shipping room of the warehouse showed no signs of anything remotely resembling electronics. He was almost certain if he threw open any given box it would instead hold cocaine, though he had to hand it to Kirchhoff for mastering internet drug trafficking.

His contact in the Homeless Network told him Kirchhoff liked to linger around the warehouse at night, when he was least likely to be barged in on by police. After running away from John he hid in an alley behind the warehouse for a few hours, waiting for Kirchhoff to show. When sunset turned to blackness he was beginning to doubt his source’s reliability, but a car finally pulled up and his heart was sent racing.

He let his mind empty out as he entered the warehouse through the back door. He tried not to think of John, who was surely fuming at home and doubting his confession of love. Instead he only allowed himself to think of Kirchhoff and what he would do to the man when he got ahold of him.

His mobile was off inside his pocket, and for a split second he considered briefly turning it on so that anyone who might have to go looking for him could at least get GPS tracking. But he didn’t want to take any risks. Breathing quietly, Sherlock carefully stepped through the darkened hallway with his palm wrapped around his old knife.

The back hall led down to a main corridor, and he froze as footsteps neared his door. Shuffling to the corner, Sherlock hid in the darkness as the door to the corridor opened and a figure of a man burst through and headed for what looked like a staircase. Sherlock waited until he heard staircase door on the second level close before following him, but what he found when he opened the door took him by surprise.

His breath hitched when he realized the stairwell didn’t lead to a second level but an office. Sherlock ran directly into Kirchhoff, who was talking on a mobile and leaning over a desk. Biting his lip and trying his best not to breathe, Sherlock inched closer and closer.

Surely it’s not going to be this easy.

It wasn’t.

A hand flew out, but he reacted in just enough time to grab the wrist attacking him. Kirchhoff swirled around, sending papers flying off the desk. The office was only about the size of a cupboard, with a single desk, a computer, a chair, a filing cabinet.
And a man, bound and roped in another on the other side of the office.

Mycroft.

Shit.

*He closed his eyes and thought back. Brighton Electronics. Where did the website say the company was originally based out of?*

Afghanistan.

*That was a bit odd, wasn’t it?*

Afghanistan…major drug trafficking player…smuggled into Europe…Asia…Asia…why was Asia familiar? Asia…

*Mycroft was just in Asia!*

*He was sick.*

*Supposedly.*

*Clinging to his ribs, throwing up, ill…*

His eyes widened and so did his brothers. Mycroft was tied up and seated in a chair. His shirt was ripped open to expose his chest. His ribs were indeed bruised, as well as his chest. Marks were worn against the skin of his chest that looked like patches, like he had recently been hooked up to something.

*Tortured,* he realized.

*Now I’m going to be ill.*

In his panic he didn’t notice the gun to his head with Kirchhoff’s face smiling behind it.

“Figuring it out, aren’t you?” Kirchhoff sneered. His voice was rough, with a hint of a Middle Eastern accent, like he had been overseas for too long. “Now if local papers are correct, you were recently in hospital with a severe head wound. What do you suppose would happen to that fucking brain of yours if I were to do this-“

Kirchhoff swung the gun forward, but Sherlock’s reflexes were too quick. He could hear Mycroft’s breathing quicken as he wrestled with Kirchhoff, but the dealer was about three times his size. In the end the gun was forced out of his hands, and after that incident any ounce of concern Kirchhoff may have had for his head wound was gone. Holding onto the gun in both hands, Kirchhoff suddenly swung forward, effectively beating the weapon across the center of his face. He stumbled back but didn’t lose his balance, not until Kirchhoff through a fist into his stomach and sent him flailing back against the wall.

He gasped but refused to groan as he fought to keep his balance. Impatient, Kirchhoff grabbed him by the shoulder. He tried to fight him off but was beat as he was thrown to the ground. What felt like the weight of Kirchhoff’s entire body fell against his back. He finally grunted as he was held to the ground, and his eyes went wide again when his own knife was snatched from his hands and brought to his neck.

“You little bastard,” Kirchhoff shot. He spit on him, and he closed his eyes at the humiliating
feeling of saliva dripping down the side of his neck. “Trying to ruin everything for me for a second time, hmm? Nice try. Now to make sure you don’t get a third shot.”

He tried to squirm, but Kirchhoff’s weight was too heavy. He gasped at the sound of tape being ripped apart, and he gasped for breath while he could before the masking tape was forced across his mouth. With his breath abruptly cut off his body went into full panic mode, and on instinct he began flopping on the ground like a helpless fish trapped on a pier. The sound of clinging metal warned him that his hands were about to be bound, and in a final effort he struck his wrist backwards. He managed to successfully hit Kirchhoff in the forearm, only to have his own arm grabbed so tightly fingernails dug into the skin.

When he was done Kirchhoff jumped off of him and stormed over to his brother.

The tape was yanked off of Mycroft’s mouth and judging by the resounding gasp from his brother and the red skin where the tape once was that must have really hurt.

“Why don’t you warn him of what’s to come?” Kirchhoff said.

He patted Mycroft on the cheek twice before stepping aside to exit the office. The door locked from the outside, and the room was deathly silent for a few moments. Sherlock lay on the ground, breathing frantically through his nose. His mind was reeling from what just happened- from what he thought was going to happen and what could very well still happen.

“Breathe through your nose, Sherlock,” Mycroft said quietly. His voice was so soothing, so sympathetic, that it was a bit surreal. He blinked hard and threw his eyes open wide again, just to make sure he wasn’t dreaming any of this. He tried to obey, tried to keep breathing through his nose, but the rest of his body was in so much panic that he couldn’t control it.

He closed his eyes and tried to follow the directions. He knew what Mycroft was trying to do. His brother had clearly taken his share of psychology courses. He remembered the song he was playing earlier, his own tune that he wrote after Luke died. But that only made him think of Luke, and that only made him think of the last time he met Kirchhoff.

“He’s trying to gain power over you,” Mycroft said. “Don’t let him. Just close your eyes. This is more than you and Luke. It’s me, too, as I’m sure you just figured out. He’ll beat me either until he gets the information he wants or someone rescues us. I can’t give him any information, and I’m relying on my employers to realize I’m gone. Gregory knows what to do if I go missing.”

Mycroft’s face paled as he spoke of his partner, and Sherlock felt for him. As he took a closer look at his brother he realized he spotted bruises across his nose and under his right eye. Fingerprints ran all across his neck, like he had been choked. There was a tennis ball sized bruise on his left shin from being kicked, and his arms held similar fingertip-sized bruises. But all he could think about was the state of Mycroft’s chest and the fact that he had clearly been tortured. It hadn’t been tonight, but within the past few days.

His panic didn’t stop him from hearing footsteps near the offices, and Mycroft’s eyes softened. His brother truly felt guilty; he was truly empathetic.


The doorknob jiggled and Sherlock tried his best to stay calm as Kirchhoff pushed through. He was carrying a bucket of something that was sloshing around, and he didn’t realize until Mycroft was drenched with it that it was a bucket of water and ice. His brother gasped and began shivering madly; his eyes blinked rapidly and his skin turned a pale shade of blue. The bucket had emptied
over Mycroft so that meant nothing left for him, but he felt bad as he realized even just the impact of all that water and ice at once must have actually been painful. Ice dripped down his shoulders, through his hair, down his legs.

“Three hours, Mr. Holmes,” Kirchhoff sang. “I don’t think your people are going to show. Are you bluffing again? Because you know how I feel about people who bluff. Cowards.”

“My people are dismantling your operation in Asia as we speak,” Mycroft spat.

Kirchhoff let out a roar of laughter that bounced through the empty building, sending a trickle of shivers down his spine. He rushed forward, sending Mycroft and the chair against the wall roughly. His hands were on Mycroft’s thighs, holding him down tightly. Mycroft only stared straight at him, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to wonder if this kind of humiliation was someone his brother was used to in his line of work.

“This is why I hate legwork,” Mycroft sneered.

The comment earned him a slap across the face. Letting out a fierce battle cry, Kirchhoff punched Mycroft over and over again in the stomach until his brother was left panting. New bruises sprinkled across his body, and Kirchhoff stood back to admire his work.

While Kirchhoff was distracted with his brother, Sherlock decided to work on flipping himself over onto his back. He squirmed a bit at first, but he was finally able to overcome his own body weight and flip over. Kirchhoff immediately noticed.

His boot landed roughly against his bare chest, knocking the wind out of him. He was happy that at least Mycroft was getting a break, but it sounded like his own ribs were being crushed as Kirchhoff placed the entire weight of his foot and leg on his chest.

“Did I say you could move?” Kirchhoff asked.

He pulled back and kicked him swiftly in the side. Sherlock grunted against the tape and closed his eyes, trying to think. He thought that if he really concentrated on gathering his energy he could flip himself forward and onto his feet. But considering the effort it took just to roll over, he would have to attempt this soon. Turning away, Kirchhoff crossed back over to Mycroft and placed a finger on his chest. Sherlock’s body tensed up just at the sight, but Mycroft remained perfectly still, breathing steadily as the finger traced the water dripped down his chest.

“They did a good job on you in Afghanistan,” Kirchhoff murmured in a sickening low voice. “So tell me, Mr. Holmes, how did you find out where I was?”

Mycroft kept his eyes glued on the wall across from him, not blinking as Kirchhoff circled around him.

“Did someone tell you? Do you have another homeless spy? Or maybe you’re tapping my mobile and watching my while I sleep.”

A faint smirk appeared on Mycroft’s face, and though he didn’t add any comment he could tell it bothered Kirchhoff.

“Do you have any idea what you cost me, interrupting my operation in Afghanistan? But if only you were half as organized as I am you might have actually achieved something. I have bigger plans now, Mr. Holmes. So I’m going to give you a couple of choices. We can stay here, and I can torture both you and your brother until you’ve lost all your fingers and toes.” Sherlock’s eyes went wide at the threat. “Or maybe I can take your baby brother out for a chat and see if he knows
anything. I can pick up your boyfriend too, while I’m at it. But I really don’t like to get in the middle of two lovers. Romantic partners are always even more useless than business partners.”

Mycroft spat- he actually spat- into Kirchhoff’s face, and in return he was punched so hard and so fast that his entire head snapped back. The chair skidded back against the wall, but his brother only glared as it stilled.

“They don’t know you’re sharing a bed with another man now, do they?” Kirchhoff asked. He withdrew a large envelope from the desk drawer, and even Sherlock began panicking when he realized what was inside. From the narrowing of Mycroft’s eyes he knew his brother realized what Kirchhoff meant as well. He pulled out an 8 X 12 photocopy of a black and white picture showing his brother, laying shirtless in bed with Lestrade hovering over him. The duvet was barely covering Lestrade’s shoulders, and his brother was so exposed that he had to look away, feeling too uncomfortable and sorry for him. “What would happen to you career, if they know? Those conservatives, tight-arse, men. Would they understand? Or would they be upset purely because of your secret keeping?”

He suddenly grabbed Mycroft’s chin, forcing his head to tilt to the side so that he could admire the mixture of cuts and bruises blossoming cross his face. He looked from Mycroft to the picture and smirked before tossing both it and his face away.

“I bet you’re pretty good in the sack,” he smirked. “I was listing choices, wasn’t I? Right. Exposing your true self is one of them. And Sherlock I’m sure the public and the Scotland Yard would love to know you’re fucking around with your fellow consultant.”

They already think I am.

“Now if I do reveal your secret, Mr. Holmes, and if I let it be known who it is you’re sleeping around with, what would it do to both of you? I’m sure it wouldn’t do D.I. Lestrade any favours, not while he’s up for promotion. Not to mention there’s the fact that one would expect you two were sleeping around while you were originally trying to convict me.”

“Blackmail’s a bit beneath you, isn’t it?” Mycroft shot.

Kirchhoff gazed at him thoughtfully and then raised his hands to rip up the photograph.

“Yes it is,” Kirchhoff admitted. “I just like to see you squirm. I like to know what makes you tick. You’re very transparent, Mycroft. I’m sure you don’t realize it. Of course I’m not stupid enough to think exposing your relationship and threatening your career would be enough to make you give me what I need. No, your true demons are much more raw than that.”

He reached into the drawer again, this time pulling out a needle. Sherlock felt his heart quicken and his stomach churched when he realized what it was for. There were other drugs in the drawer too: baggies of coke and heroine, pill bottles. Endless torture.

I can’t do this. It was the first time his body had ever given up on him in a situation like this. It felt like he was shutting down, from his mind down to his toes. I can’t do this. I can’t do this again.

“Have you ever done drugs, Mr. Holmes?” Kirchhoff asked.

“You ask me that every time,” Mycroft replied dryly.

Every time?

Kirchhoff acted like he was preparing a syringe, and while Sherlock felt his heart pound faster
Mycroft sneered.

“That’s beneath you as well. You’re as unpredictable as ever.”

That earned him another hard slap across the face, and though his cheek quickly blossomed red his brother didn’t react.

“Fine,” Kirchhoff spat. He knew Mycroft was fighting the urge to smirk. “Let me tell you something you will want to know. I’ve been working with someone, yeah? You know that. That was part of your trip to Afghanistan, wasn’t it? How about this, Mycroft? How about I give you the name you’re looking for and you give me a head start back to Asia? I’ll leave London for good, if you want. This place is a shit idea anyway, I’ve told him that. I’ll give his name to you, if you’d like. He’s trying to be the new ‘me’ in London, and he’s very bad at it. Look at this place! It’s shit, I tell you. So how about it? Your people clearly aren’t going to show. I’ll put you out of your misery. I’ll even burn this place to the ground.”

It seemed like Mycroft was considering it, but Sherlock hoped he realized that if Kirchhoff was willing to give this person up it probably meant he was going to get rid of his ‘partner’ himself.

Mycroft offered a stiff nod, and Sherlock fought against his bonds in protest as Kirchhoff leaned forward into his brother’s ear and whispered something. His brother nodded again, and Kirchhoff smirked as he pulled away and withdrew a key from his pocket. He crossed over to where he was on the floor first, and Sherlock felt a great weight lift from him as his wrist were finally unbound. He ripped the tape from his mouth, ignoring the pain, and simply panted on the floor for a moment. Sherlock gasped and rubbed his fist together, hoping to get the feeling back in them quickly.

It was left up to him to free his brother, but as soon as Kirchhoff’s back was on him he acted on vengeance instead. The world seemed to fade out around him as he leapt forward, grabbing Kirchhoff’s hand and his knife before the man saw him coming. He knew Kirchhoff was too strong for him to fight, but all he wanted was to hurt him as much as possible. As Kirchhoff turned around he thrust the knife forward, sending it piercing into his chest, and the world came to a stop.

He didn’t hear Mycroft, screaming for him to stop. He didn’t hear Kirchhoff’s short, painful, grunts for air as he looked from him to the knife at his chest. He didn’t have any concept of the fact that he just stabbed a man in the heart- that he was as good as done for already.

Instead he pulled the knife back and stabbed him again. This time he heard the sickening choking sounds Kirchhoff made as he fell back against the wall. His eyes were already beginning to slip back into his head, and his skin turned white as he slid down to the floor.

He wasn’t aware of the blood that had already poured onto his hands, onto his clothes. He wasn’t aware that the man beneath him was no longer moving, no longer breathing.

All he could think of was Luke, lying there dead. The pain he must have felt when he was stabbed. The carelessness Kirchhoff treated his death with. The fighting, the shouting. Getting hit over the head when he realized what had happened. Sitting in the back of the ambulance, with Lestrade.

Then Luke’s face popped into his head, and it was all he could see. His face so pale, lifeless.

A very loud, very painful, noise erupted around him, and his first instinct was to throw his hands over his ears and make it stop.

The sound was Mycroft screaming his name at the top of his lungs, so loudly and violently his
veins stuck out against his bruised neck. It was his first indicator that something was very wrong, and Sherlock dropped the knife.

He closed his eyes, and the images of Luke faded away. They were gone now; safe now. He opened them again to find his hand on a knife. The knife and his hand were both covered in blood. So were his clothes. Shallow, haunting, breaths escaped him as he slowly turned to his brother, and he realized some of the blood even managed to get on Mycroft’s chair, on his trousers and shoes.

He realized Mycroft wasn’t tied up, wasn’t safe yet. His entire body began shaking for the first time as he stood and brought the knife with him, just in case. He grabbed the key off the floor and took hold of Mycroft’s bound hands.

“Sherlock,” his brother breathed, eyes open wide.

But he wasn’t going to hurt Mycroft.

His hands felt numb as he unlocked the handcuffs and set his brother free. Mycroft wasted no time in jumping up. At first he thought he was going to grab him by the shoulders and shake them, but no, his reaction was far worse than that.

Mycroft wouldn’t even look at him.

His eyes were roaming from the body to the blood now coating the door, the floors.

“Do you have your mobile?” Mycroft asked quietly. Sherlock just stood there, not entirely understanding. “I didn’t see him take it from you, do you still have it? He broke mine, Sherlock, I need a phone.”

When he remained standing, frozen, Mycroft ignored him completed and nearly jumped toward the office phone cradled on the desk. In the back of his mind Mycroft was barking orders. When he was done the sound of a phone being slammed down made him jump and gasp, and suddenly his brother was right beside him.

In a blur he was led from the wound to the corridor, which was suddenly bustling full of men in suits with guns withdrawn. For a moment he feared they were for him, but they fled past him, into the room where Kirchhoff’s body still lay. When he noticed his little brother was still gazing after the horrific scene, Mycroft placed a hand on his shoulder.

Another blur and he was in a sort of white jumpsuit without fully knowing how he got there. He was in a white room, with a table that he sat at alone. A door opened in the distance and John walked through.

He was wearing nice slacks and a dress shirt.

Why?

He looked sharp, he looked determined.

He looked like was being forced to say something quick and then wanted to run.

Sherlock stared at his hands as John gazed at him; the tension between the two was nauseating.

“Mycroft asked me to come make a statement,” John explained, “about you, about your behavior recently. I had to tell them everything. I gave them the note. I’m sorry, Sherlock.”
Then he began to understand. He knew what the white jumpsuit was for.

“Am I being arrested for something?” His voice was rough and hoarse; it was the first thing he’d said since snapping at John earlier that afternoon.

His eyes lifted to meet John’s, and he felt sick when he realized how sympathetically John was staring at him.

“No, you’re not,” John assured him, “but they do have some questions.”

“And did they send you here to babysit me?” He snapped.

It came out a bit more bitter than he meant, and he immediately felt guilty when John stood up and slammed his hands on the table.

“John!” He pleaded.

“Either you want me or you don’t, Sherlock,” John spat. He sighed, looking a bit gray in the face. “Either you love me or you don’t. I can stay here, with you. They’ve offered me that. It won’t take long. They’re not holding you. One statement is all they need from you.”

Sherlock glanced down and realized for the first time a sheet of blank paper and a pen were in front of him.

“Just give them a statement and let’s go home,” John said quietly. “Please, Sherlock. I don’t want to fight with you on this anymore.”

That was all the encouragement he needed. He abruptly picked up the pencil, wrote one simple sentence, and slammed the pen back down.

“Come on,” he whispered, standing up. Suddenly he could feel his body again as he stormed to the door of the holding cell. All sensation, all cells were coming alive again, and he wasn’t sure why he ever froze up to begin with. He pounded on the door when he realized it was locked, knowing his brother was right behind him. “Mycroft! Mycroft, let us out!”

“I must ask you both to sign this,” Mycroft said, appearing in front of them and shoving release forms in both of their faces.

They signed without question. He didn’t even bother looking his brother over; his mind wasn’t comprehending that he had gone through this ordeal as well. Instead he shoved the clipboard back into his brother’s chest and stormed toward the bodyguards waiting to lead them out of the building.

Chapter End Notes

I debated about the end of Kirchhoff for a long time, and in the end I had last minute doubts of Sherlock doing something like that. But his pain, his lingering love for Luke, the fact that he’s had no closure over these past few years- all combined with his usual anger and impatience- did not help. But in dealing with what he did and working through that emotional process, Sherlock does finally have an opportunity for some closure. Which only means becoming more devoted to John. I know this may be a controversial decision. Thank you for reading, and I would appreciate knowing what
you think about it.
Night Terror (part one)

Chapter Notes

To make up for some of the short chapters lately, here's a longer one split into a few different parts.

Disclaimer: I am not a medical professional!

By the time they got back to the flat it was nightfall. John felt drained, and knowing he had a long night of trying to get Sherlock to talk to him didn’t make him feel even better. His boyfriend had been silent and still the entire ride home. His face was even a bit paler than usual. He wore the trauma blanket Mycroft’s people had given him throughout the car ride while being under careful watch of the guard sitting across from them in the limo. Once Sherlock descended the stairs to Baker Street he began shrugging the blanket off.

“No,” John protested, grabbing the blanket before it could fall through the floor.

“Don’t need it,” Sherlock shot.

He went straight for the violin, and John grabbed him by the arm without thinking. His arm was already bruised up with fingerprints, and he could see the pain and frustration in Sherlock’s eyes as he swirled around to face him.

“You don’t need to babysit me, John,” Sherlock said, “you’re off the hook. I’m not in shock.”

John stared at him, wondering if they were standing in two different dimensions. Not only were Sherlock’s eyes wild and tormented, his hands were shaking, his faced was bruised up, and his wrists had been worn raw by handcuffs. He was walking a bit funny due from being so stiff from being tied up.

“Right now, Sherlock, you’re the very definition of in shock,” John said quietly. “Come here.”

He turned around and led Sherlock into the kitchen, where he grabbed a freezer bag and filled it full of ice. He noticed Sherlock flinch a bit when he saw the ice being poured out, as though the ice itself bothered him. John bit his lip, trying not to show how sympathetic he was to Sherlock’s slight whimper as he held the ice against his bruised face. A sharp, blue bruise cut across the center of his face horizontally; the skin around it was raw and red.

“Hold this,” John said. He got out two more bags and held them first to Sherlock’s hands, then to his arms. “Does that hurt, the bruising?”

Sherlock shook his head. John didn’t believe him. He didn’t miss the sharp intake of breath as he placed the ice on his arm, and the raspy breaths he was drawing in were worrying.

“What about your ribs?” He asked. “Mycroft said you were kicked. Can I see?”

His boyfriend shook his head again, but John placed his fingers gently at the edges of his t-shirt.
“Please, Sherlock,” he pleaded. At last, Sherlock nodded.

He bit his lip harder when he saw bruises the size of tennis balls shining against Sherlock’s skin. They were already angry and black, and Sherlock hissed when he touched them.

“Come here,” John said, leading him this time toward Sherlock’s bedroom. He flipped on the light and began undressing the bed. He caught Sherlock noticing the drawer opened, and he must be realizing how John found out what he did. “Get in bed, come on. Lie down.”

Sherlock obeyed without word. He slipped into bed, settling into the sheets as John fixed the pillows behind him.

“Will you stay here if I go get tea?” He asked. “Your voice and your breathing are still a bit raspy.”

Again, Sherlock nodded without word. He started up the kettle to make the tea as quickly as possible, and he was relieved that Sherlock was still in bed, gazing at the wall when he brought him tea and toast. He was turned onto his unhurt side with his arms wrapped round his stomach.

“Toast will help settle the nausea,” he explained when Sherlock turned and looked at the plate in disgust.

Their eyes met.

*Now who can observe?* He thought.

“Do you feel dizzy?” John asked as he sat on the bed beside Sherlock. Though he knew it wasn’t really necessary, he held a hand to Sherlock’s forehead. His skin was *so* cold. “Sherlock, you’re freezing.”

He jumped up and stormed to the closet, where he found a pile of blankets stashed away from winter. Sherlock didn’t protest as he threw three of them on top of him and one around his shoulders for good measure.

“Any headache?” He asked. He grabbed a small torch and shined it in each eye. He held up a finger and had Sherlock follow it, testing the tracking of his eyes. “Does your head hurt at all?”

Sherlock hesitated but shook his head no. Not believing him, John took the ice that had fallen from his face and placed it there again.

He just looked so *haunted*. John wanted to talk to him, question him. Yell at him. But he knew the best thing to do this soon after the incident was to give him space and take care of him.

“I don’t think your concussion is back,” John admitted, “but you should rest. You should…”

*Stay put, just for five damn minutes. And talk to me.*

“Thank you,” Sherlock offered weakly. John blinked; he had the feeling that Sherlock had been completely vacant this whole time. Apparently not. “Can you come here?”

John approached him carefully, remembering that all that rage was still churning in Sherlock somewhere. His body was exhausted from it, hence the lethargy. John was shock when Sherlock took him into his arms and pulled him down, so that he awkwardly set up next to where he lay in bed. Wrapping his hands around him, John let Sherlock rest his chin on his shoulder and simply hold onto him.
“It’s always about fucking Mycroft,” Sherlock breathed.

“What do you mean?”

They slipped apart, and John grabbed the ice to hold it against Sherlock’s face as he explained:

“He’s been assigned to Kirchhoff’s case for years,” Sherlock explained. He let out a rough cough, and John placed a hand at the small of his back to remind him he was there. “When Kirchhoff dropped off the face of the map after he killed Luke, Mycroft kept following him. I’d wager he began following me too, knowing I’d be the next target.”

“The cameras,” John realized.

Sherlock nodded.

“It seems that when Kirchhoff’s mission in Africa failed he set his sights on the Asia market instead. He’s been in Afghanistan, working the drug trafficking scheme there. Mycroft has been following his work, and recently he learned that’s where Kirchhoff was. That’s the reason why he has been in Asia. He wasn’t sick, John. He was caught by Kirchhoff’s men and tortured. He may have even been drugged.”

John’s stomach churned just thinking of the cuts and bruises on Mycroft’s face. Apparently that wasn’t even the half of that. He emphasized with him, having helped torture victims in Afghanistan himself.

“Mycroft has known where he is,” Sherlock said, “but instead of just cutting off the head of the monster and getting rid of him he’s been studying him. He’s trying to break apart each piece of the machine, but what has that done? So I had to…he was going to let him go. Even after he was tortured and humiliated himself. Kirchhoff has a name to give him, but if he was going to give up his own business partner then the man is probably already dead. I had to John I…I couldn’t see him go.”

He ran his hand up and down Sherlock’s arm; he was freezing and shivering.

“I couldn’t just let him go,” Sherlock said again. His voice was shaking. “He had all those people killed, John. He murdered Luke in cold blood. He hurt my brother. I couldn’t just let him go. It wouldn’t have felt right, we wouldn’t have been safe.”

He was shocked to hear Sherlock bring his own safety into account, but he didn’t have the heart to point out that Mycroft probably would have only agreed to the trade if he had plans in place to take down Kirchhoff.

At last Sherlock let out a shaky breath, as though he had simply run out of energy to speak.

“Thank you, for taking care of me,” Sherlock whispered, “but I’m fine, I am. I did what I had to do, John.”

Sherlock spoke like he was destined for this, and sharp pains ate as his stomach as he considered this would make it so much harder. He knew telling himself he did the right thing would only work so long for Sherlock’s conscience, and when he crashed, when he fully realized what he did, it might just break him.

Leaning forward, Sherlock’s lips gently trapped his own before he realized what was happening.

“It’s over now,” Sherlock breathed when he pulled away.
John wrapped an arm around Sherlock and held him closer.

No, he thought, it’s really not.

They spent the rest of the night side-by-side, watching old movies on his laptop. He was certain Sherlock didn’t enjoy any of them, and he didn’t miss the fact that his boyfriend jumped at every ring of the doorbell or close of a door on screen. John kept his arm around him until it began cramping, and somewhere around midnight he managed to slip away to sleep while Sherlock lay beside him, staring at the walls.

He was woken by screaming only a few hours into his sleep cycle. John jumped up, his body twisting awkwardly in midair as he tried to find Sherlock. Flipping on the light, he frantically turned around to find Sherlock writhing and twisting in his sleep, his mouth open to screams of terror. His hands fought with the sheets around him; it was like he was trying to pull the covers over his head and hide.

“Sherlock!” John exclaimed, trying to grab one of his hands. In his sleep, Sherlock cried out and fought him. “Sherlock, wake up. Sherlock, please wake up. SHERLOCK!”

At last his boyfriend’s eyes flew open wide, and for a moment Sherlock just breathed. He didn’t look around- instead he lay in shock, like he couldn’t figure out what was happening. Carefully, John placed a hand on his arm and squeezed it lightly. Sherlock’s chest heaved up in down, his breaths coming in violent gasps.

Instead of explaining, Sherlock simply rolled over. His entire body was trembling as he drew his knees to his chest and pulled the duvet over his head. But John wasn’t going to let him get away that easily. He slipped under the covers well and reached for Sherlock’s shoulder.

“Sherlock,” he whispered beneath the sheets.

“I’m fine, John, go back to sleep and turn off the bloody light.”

He was so demanding, so casual, that John blinked, wondering if he had just imagined that.

“You were screaming in your sleep,” he explained.

For a moment Sherlock remained quiet, and John wondered if he even realized what had happened.

“Can you tell me about it?” John asked softly.

Sherlock flinched as he dragged a hand over his shoulders and down his back.

“I’m sorry I woke you up,” Sherlock mumbled into the pillow.

John was left staring at his lover’s back for the next hour or so, when he finally fell back asleep himself. When he woke up next it was almost three A.M., and it was the sounds of someone being sick that brought him out of sleep this time. He could see the hall light on through the crack in the door, and for a moment he just sat there, listening. It all stopped a few minutes later, and when he saw the light switch off he shot straight up.

Sherlock was still shaking and letting out trembling breaths when he walked into the room.

“Are you alright?” John asked.
It was a stupid question, but he startled Sherlock by suddenly appearing there in the dark.

“Fine,” Sherlock rasped, dragging a hand across his mouth.

Even in the darkness John could see that Sherlock’s pyjamas were drenched through with sweat. When he climbed back into bed he turned away from him once again, and John had never felt more distant. The things that must be going through that man’s head right now - the images - made him shudder.

“Do you want something to help you sleep?” John offered.

Sherlock just shook his head.

It was six when he woke up for good, and John groaned at the sight of sunlight peering through the curtains. He felt like he hadn’t slept a wink. When Sherlock wasn’t screaming or being sick, he was kicking out in his sleep and tossing violently from side to side. Feeling around next to him in bed, John was frustrated to find the other half of bed empty. As his senses returned to him he realized violin music was flowing into the room, and when he stumbled into the kitchen in his dressing gown he found Sherlock roaming around the flat and playing an endless tune of scales.

“Jesus, how long have you been up?” John said.

Sherlock ignored him as he continued with the scales, going faster and faster each time.

“Still feeling nauseas?” He asked, noting the new plate of toast on the counter. Sherlock hadn’t finished it. “Is there coffee?”

Neither question was answered. Sherlock wondered back into the living room, violin still in hand and the sound of scales bouncing off walls. Someone knocked on the door, and John sighed as he glanced at the clock on the microwave and was reminded again how early it was.

He brushed his hand through his hair as he pulled the door opened to find Mycroft standing outside. His boyfriend’s brother was dressed in his usual suit but he looked slightly less intimidating than normal due to the numerous bruises and cuts dancing across his face.

“Mycroft,” he greeted.

“John, I was hoping I could speak with you in private.”

John led him up to his room. Clothes were pushed out of the way as he forced the door open, and his cheeks grew a bit hot as he realized the state of his bedroom. He was hardly up here even more except for getting dressed and storing things. Sherlock’s bed was much more comfortable for the two of them, and he didn’t miss Mycroft turning his clothes up at the clothes littering the floor and boxes sitting on the bed.

“Sorry about the mess,” he said. “I’m not really up here much.”

“I’ve come to speak with you about a medical matter, John,” Mycroft confessed, ignoring him. “I had hoped you could keep it confidential.

He closed the door as he glanced him over, noticing now Mycroft had an arm around his ribs, as though it pained him.

“Yeah, of course,” John said. He took the boxes from the bed to make room for Mycroft to sit.
“What’s wrong?”

Mycroft peeled off his suit jacket in response, wincing as he did. He sat on the edge of the bed and bit his lip as he began unbuttoning his shirt. He pulled it back to reveal a collection of bruises and angry red marks across his back, along with a bandaged one. The marks stretched across to his back. He remembered what Sherlock said about Mycroft being tortured, and his own stomach churned a bit at the thought.

“I was concerned about a particular mark on my back,” Mycroft explained as he shed his shirt from his shoulders. “I was worried it might be infected.”

He recognized marks from certain torture instruments, and as soon as his finger brushed against the spine Mycroft gasped.

“Sorry,” Mycroft murmured.

“It’s fine.”

John grabbed a medical kit from his closet and pulled out a pair of latex gloves. Gently, he pulled back a bandage that sat at the small of Mycroft’s back. He easily found the mark Mycroft was worried about. It looked like mark was caused by brass knuckles, and just the thought of someone’s spine being hit like that made him nauseous once again. He touched the wound gently through the gloves; the skin was warm to the touch. Mycroft drew in a sharp intake of breath, giving him the answer to his first question:

“Does that hurt?”

Mycroft offered a single nod.

“Have you had a doctor look these over?” John asked.

“I’ve been busy,” Mycroft replied dryly.

“How old are the wounds?”

“Most of them, about a week,” Mycroft said, “a few of them, about twelve hours.”

He knew he was referring to what happened last night, and it was painfully obvious which wounds were newer.

“I did have a private doctor look at them initially,” Mycroft admitted, “and I assumed they would be fine once they were cleaned and dressed. That one has particularly been bothersome.”

“Were the wounds like this when you were feverish and throwing up?” John asked.

“No.”

His voice was quiet and solemn, a sign he frequently saw in patients who felt guilty for not being more concerned about themselves.

“It’s definitely infected,” John said. “You’re lucky it hasn’t spread to your blood vessels. Are all your shots up to date?”

“Yes.”

“Are you diabetic, or do you have weak immune system?”
“No.”

He took out a prescription pad, scribbled down information, and handed it to Mycroft.

“You need antibiotics,” he explained. “If they don’t accept that, get your private doctor to prescribe them. Have your new wounds been properly cleaned?”

Mycroft hesitated, and he resisted the urge to shake him. He was just like Sherlock in more ways than the brothers would ever realize.

“They were last night,” Mycroft answered finally.

The wounds on his face weren’t very open, and there were mainly bruises and old scars on his chest.

“How’s your breathing?” John asked, checking his pulse.

He was relieved to find a normal heart rate.

“Did you experience any nausea last night?” He asked. “Or any pain, in your chest or stomach?”

“No,” Mycroft said. He said it in a quiet, dreadful, way like he feared it might happen again. “I had imaging done, when I returned to the country after the last time. There was no internal bleeding or abdominal trauma.”

“How badly were you hit last night?” John asked.

Mycroft stiffened. He pressed gently against Mycroft’s abs, and though he winced it didn’t appear to cause too much pain.

“Repeatedly,” Mycroft finally admitted, but no more than a dozen times. I have no major abdominal pain, John.”

“Just checking.”

For a moment he just stood over him, gazing at the man sitting on his bed and feeling sorry for him. Upstairs, Sherlock continued playing the same scales over and over, and the music seemed to only make Mycroft feel worse.

“How’s Sherlock doing?” Mycroft asked.

John closed his eyes, feeling exhausted from a night of restless sleep and concern about the Holmes brothers.

“He was up all night,” he sighed, “he was screaming in his sleep. He vomited. He was up, playing, when I woke up again. Just those same scales, over and over.”

“He used to play those scales as a boy, for our mother,” Mycroft said, his eyes glued to the bed he was on. “After she died he had terrible nightmares. After witnessing that murder on the streets, Sherlock stayed with Greg and had horrible night terrors. He was officially diagnosed with them later that year, after Luke’s death. Greg said he used to just scream in his sleep, like he was being hurt. It was part of why we thought it necessary for him to officially begin rehab and get professional help.”

“He refused to talk to me about it,” John admitted. “He just rolled over and went back to sleep. A few hours later and he threw up.”
Mycroft continued to just stare at the bed. He thought of a young Sherlock, crashing on someone else’s sofa and sleeping just to escape it all, only to be awoken by his own screams.

“Did he ever sleepwalk?” John asked.

The smallest of smiles appeared on Mycroft’s face.

“Greg said that once or twice he caught Sherlock simply walking back and forth from the front door to Greg’s bedroom. He was worried Sherlock was trying to escape. Sherlock’s therapist in rehab thought perhaps he was retracing steps of the murder in his sleep. Sherlock insisted he was simply bored and needed something to do in his sleep.”

John smirked.

“Sounds about right,” he teased. He felt a bit better, knowing he wasn’t the only one who had seen this in Sherlock. He also had a feeling that Mycroft came to him not because he didn’t want to see his normal doctor, but because he wanted an excuse to be close to Sherlock. “Did he ever receive medication for his night terrors?”

“No, his doctors tried to give him as little medication as possible,” Mycroft explained. “He went through intensive sleep therapy to try to fix bad habits, such as diet and sleep deprivation. For a while it seemed to work, but from my understanding Sherlock really simply took to trying to not sleep at all.”

“That’s how he was when I first met him,” John said, recognizing that now. “Christ, he must have been terrified.”

Mycroft just sat quietly. John made a mental note to have a chat with Lestrade and find out more. He knew Sherlock wouldn’t remember them; he probably didn’t remember anything odd that happened after he went to sleep just that previous night.

But when he thought of Lestrade, he realized:

“Does Lestrade know you’re hurt so badly?”

Because if he did, surely he would have dragged Mycroft to him, kicking and screaming, by now.

“He has enough on his mind,” Mycroft said with a grim smile.

He shifted on the bed, signaling that he was ready to leave. As he stood, he winced and grabbed his shirt and back simultaneously. He was beginning to show his age, with these wounds.

“Take care of yourself,” John said. “Take those antibiotics. I will tell Greg, if I have to.”

Mycroft glared at him, but by the time he pulled his shirt over his head he looked drained again.

“Take care of my brother,” he pleaded softly.

John nodded. Looking after Sherlock was one of the biggest challenges in all his lifetime, but being able to help him heal was the most important thing in the world to him right now.

“I will,” he promised.
Thanks for reading! There will be sexytimes again soon, promise! But personally I'm a big fan of doctor! John too.
Everything he saw in his dream that night was black, white, or red. He was standing in the living room in his old flat, looking around at red colored walls and black and white furniture.

It was all blood. More so than usual. More so than he remember.

Luke’s body lay beneath him, just as he remembered, eyes still open with horror- never closed.

And against the doorway was Kirchhoff, sunken to the floor and struggling to breathe.

The next thing he knew, Sherlock was sitting straight up in bed and fighting with John. Their hands were locked together in a fierce grip as John was clearly trying to get him to calm down. He couldn’t breathe, his chest hurt, and tears blinked in his eyes.

At last John screamed his name and that seemed to calm him down enough to turn to him and wait for explanation.

“You were screaming in your sleep,” John sighed.

Sherlock frantically climbed out of bed; the sheets were drenched with sweat. The bed felt disgusting and small, and the walls of his room seemed to be closing in on him.

“Sherlock!” John warned, jumping out of bed after him.

Closing his eyes, Sherlock breathed deeply in and out. Every time he woke up from one of his nightmares it took him hours to accept that he was out of it, that he was safe back in reality with John.

Suddenly he just couldn’t feel safe, because when he saw himself standing there, knife in hand, in the dream, a single thought began bouncing around in his head:

I’m a murderer.

I murdered someone.

“You look like you’re having trouble breathing,” John said, placing a hand around his wrist. “Your heart’s racing.”

Sherlock jerked away.

“I…” he tried to find his voice and had to swallow a few times to sound less hoarse. He assumed it was from the screaming, which he didn’t even remember. He never did. “Would you mind if I slept alone, for the rest of the night?”

He felt guilty for waking up John so much. He clearly looked exhausted and had been hoping for a better night of rest.

“Are you sure?” John asked, reluctant to let him go.

“I’m fine,” he lied. “You need rest. I’m just going to read, I don’t want to disturb you.”
John took a step forward and held out his hand. Sherlock hesitated, staring at it as his heart rate slowly returned to normal.

“How about a cup of tea instead?” John asked.

Tea actually sounded promising, so he offered a stiff nod, grabbed his dressing gown, and followed John into the kitchen. His eyes took a moment to adjust when John flipped on the light and turned the kettle on.

“I talked to Lestrade earlier,” John admitted, “he told me you used to have night terrors when you stayed with him. That must have been terrifying.”

He nodded and let out a long, shaky, breath as his body finally became in sync with the rest of the world. He saw that it was one in the morning, which only made him feel worse about waking John up. His boyfriend handed him a mug, and he turned it over and over in his hands while he waited for the tea to finish.

He knew what John was doing. He was finding any excuse to get him to talk, and he was getting good at it. Sherlock felt like his body was quickly disintegrating and heading down this dark path he couldn’t escape from. It felt like his brain was trapping him and forcing him to confront what he did, and that just made him so angry because before his mind was doing nothing but justifying the fact that he did have a right to go after Kirchhoff.

“I thought the nightmares would end after I took care of Kirchhoff,” he admitted. “Those memories just kept haunting me to the point where I knew I had to do something. The police weren’t doing anything. Mycroft wasn’t doing anything. It’s been so hard watching them just sit and wait all these years. I can’t do that, I can’t just wait. I had the means so I began investigating, and it didn’t take long to hear from the Homeless Network about where Kirchhoff was. I went there and found him. Mycroft was tied up already. I tried to fight him off, but he was so strong and I couldn’t help but to think…this is what Luke went through. Every time Mycroft got hit, or every time he kicked me or held me down, I just thought that he used to go through that too. Maybe even every day. And so did so many others. To see that, even after all that, Mycroft was willing to let him go I just…I couldn’t.”

John began pouring tea, and he offered a quiet thanks as his hands were warmed by the mug. The hot liquid did work wonders on his throat, and when he spoke again his voice was a bit stronger.

“Kirchhoff told Mycroft that if he let him trade information for his freedom that he would get out of London. He offered to burn his facility down, to flee the country. But still, it didn’t seem right. He untied me, and I had my chance. I went for his knife, and I sank it into his chest before he even realized what was happening. The shock in his face…it just made me feel so good. It made me feel good to know that I had surprised Ivan Kirchhoff, that at that moment, I was in control. Then I struck him again and I…I vaguely remember hearing Mycroft calling for me to stop. But for that single moment, I was outside of this world entirely. I was in a world where I was in control, where I was receiving justice for all I had been through. Then there was the blood, and…it’s all a bit of a blur after that, really.”

He sipped at his tea again and waited for John’s response. Though he avoided his eyes, he could see that John was completely still. He knew talking this explicitly about what he did was a risk, but he felt like at this point it was a risk he had to take in order to have any chance of normalcy.

“I wasn’t supposed to feel like this,” Sherlock admitted quietly. “There wasn’t supposed to be any guilt or pain. I was supposed to be at peace.”
“You want closure.”

Sherlock looked up at him at last and nodded.

“More than anything,” he whispered.

He sipped at the tea again and noticed John hadn’t even touched his.

“Why do you think you haven’t found it?” John asked.

He shrugged.

“I guess…I suppose…I still don’t forgive myself for what happened back then,” he admitted. “It happened in my flat, when Luke had been sleeping in my bed. He came to me for protection and for once, I should have been the strong one. I should have been stronger.”

He knew they had been through this before, but he still couldn’t get over it.

“You were asleep, Sherlock,” John said. He paused for a moment before carefully adding: “Do you think that’s why your sleep disorders began? Maybe you were worried about what you might be missing in your sleep, that there might be some sort of danger that you might miss.”

“Perhaps.”

His therapist had suggested that, in rehab, but it didn’t make any sense to him.

“I know that I’m not in danger,” Sherlock explained. “I just always feel that I am.”

“Understandable,” John said. “You lived on the streets for so long, without proper safety and security. I experienced something similar, when I came back from the war. I was always expecting something horrible to happen. For a while I saw danger and distress everywhere- my mind was still looking for it.”

Sherlock nodded; John was hitting it spot on. The fact that they shared this same experience made him feel closer to his boyfriend. They had done some talking about both of their pasts, but he had never given much thought to the similarities.

“I think you might also have a bit of survivor’s guilt,” John said. Sherlock looked up at him. That’s exactly what his therapist had said too, but somehow coming from John it made sense. “Deep down, maybe you still don’t understand how you came away from all that. But that’s not fair, Sherlock. Luke still put himself in that danger. He may have been intimidated or threatened, but there was a reason why he was sought out by Kirchhoff and not you. If you had been killed too it would have been as a witness. You were at the wrong place, at the wrong time. You didn’t actually know about a lot of the things Luke did. You weren’t really keeping secrets for him. You didn’t deserve to die too. No one deserves that kind of death, but you definitely deserved to live, and if any part of Luke truly cared for you he would have agreed.”

Sherlock forced more tea down his throat with a violent gulp, and he stayed silent for a moment as his mind wrapped around this. For years he had wrestled with the concept of being alive when the person who he thought had fought to protect him was dead. Even after finding out how deeply Luke was involved with Kirchhoff, he still somehow felt like he wasn’t punished enough. He was given help, he was given escape, and Luke was given a knife to the chest. It was just wasn’t fair.

“Look at me, Sherlock,” John pleaded softly. Sherlock raised his eyes to meet him, and he must have looked a pitiful sight because a small, sympathetic, smile fell across John’s face. “Tell me
that you think that. Tell me you’re happy to be alive.”

*But it’s just not that simple, John.*

“If I accept that, it proves how I weak I was back then.”

“It doesn’t!” John exclaimed, slamming his hand down on the counter. “You weren’t weak Sherlock, you were reacting to things as they happened based on the circumstances and support you had. You walked away when you knew things were getting too dangerous and you accepted help and that makes you strong. It makes you *so* strong.”

“It’s doesn’t, though,” Sherlock said, closing his eyes. “I should have gone back to save him. I should have gotten help for him. What if that is what I was meant to do?”

“Mycroft offered him help!”

“But what if he needed to hear it from me?!” Sherlock cried, his eyes flying open. “What if he was waiting for me to rescue him? He could have thought I abandoned him. Once I was clean it was like seeing the world through a whole new set of eyes. I should have been able to see that he needed help too. I should have gone back.”

“You can’t change the past, Sherlock,” John said quietly. “There’s no way to know what Luke was or wasn’t thinking. You could play ‘what if’ games until you go insane.”

“I feel like I’ve gone insane,” Sherlock mumbled.

John’s hand slipped over the counter to cover his, and a soothing warmth rushed through him as his hand was squeezed.

“You haven’t,” John promised. “What you did was extreme, and I think you’re realizing that physically getting rid of Kirchhoff doesn’t change the past. I think that you were so set on hoping that the idea of protecting London from Kirchhoff would make you feel better about the past that you jumped at any opportunity to go after him. I can’t tell you what Luke was thinking or what he was doing, but in the end your brother tried to protect him. He protected him while you were getting help. He offered help when he could and when you couldn’t be there, Mycroft stepped in. Do you think he would have been so determined to help Luke if he hadn’t seen how much you cared about him? Mycroft and Lestrade were on your side. I can’t justify not bringing Kirchhoff in or going after him head-on, but I’m sure there’s some crazy government reason. But when it came to you, to your life and safety, they had your back. They still do. We all do. What happened to Luke was a tragedy, but it’s not one that you can blame yourself for.”

He looked after John longingly, desperately hoping for more than that.

“But how I can find closure?” He asked.

John took his other hand in his and pulled him away from the counter and into his arms. Their faces were just inches apart, and he became aware of how disheveled they both looked, with both of their hair a mess and their faces washed with lines of exhaustion. A finger gently brushed across the new line of red bruising running through the center of his face, and Sherlock’s breath hitched.

“How do you think Luke would feel if he knew you were in a steady relationship, that you were love and protected?” John began. Something stirred inside him; he had really never considered it, probably because his relationship with Luke was left with so open-ended. Knowing that Luke had accepted help from Mycroft and having the suspicion that he only ran and was terrified was because of being spooked by the government made him feel a bit more confident that Luke’s
promises that he still loved him had been sincere. “How do you think he would feel if he knew you were running around and solving crimes and saving lives? How do you think he would feel knowing that you were bringing so many people to justice, that you were helping to bring closure to victims just like himself? That you still have a relationship with the Homeless Network? I don’t know about you, but I think he would be pretty damn proud. I think if he really loved you, he would feel solace, knowing that the city is being protected by you.”

As he gazed into John’s eyes he had some difficulty breathing, but not because of the horrific images flashing in his mind. It was because of the purity of John’s words, the fact that he had pulled this from his heart without much thought. John knew him so well; better than Sherlock realized he knew him.

“I love you,” Sherlock whispered. He managed to keep his voice steady, though it was still strained. Their lips were just barely touching. “I want you to know that I mean it. I didn’t just say it out of some rash, overwhelming bout of emotion. I mean it, John, I love you. You’re far too good for me.”

“Yeah, well I’ll try not to hold that over your head too much.”

A beautiful, shy, grin crossed John’s face at his own joke, and Sherlock wasted no time pulling him in for a kiss. He deepened the kiss by teasing John’s lips open with his tongue and shoving it down his boyfriend’s throat. John wrapped his arms around his back, pulling him close. His lover held onto him tightly as his throat was invaded, as Sherlock forced his way to exploring every inch of that mouth.

When he was satisfied with the taste he pulled apart to breathe into John’s ear.

“You are everything to me. I’d be nothing without you.”

They shared one more fierce kiss before pulling back.

“God I’m tired,” John whispered as their foreheads touch.

Sherlock nodded.

“Me too.”

He took John’s hand in his to lead him back to the bedroom, and though he couldn’t make any promises there was a slight chance he might actually be able to sleep through the rest of the night.

Chapter End Notes

Sherlock hasn’t moved on for good, but it's a step in the right direction. More Johnlock, coming right up! (no pun intended! okay, maybe...) Thanks SO much for being such amazing readers!
John was disoriented when he woke up the next morning. Sherlock’s bedroom was far too bright to be the normal time he was usually woken up, and the flat was warmer, signaling that it was late morning. With a soft moan he forced himself to lean over his lover and check the time.

“Shit, it’s almost noon,” he mumbled as he fell back down.

Despite what he just said, he felt no guilt in continuing to bury himself in his sleep. Sherlock groaned in response and rolled over, glaring at him for being woken up.

“So?” Sherlock shot.

“You’re awful grumpy for someone who just slept for nearly twelve hours,” John teased. He ran a hand through Sherlock’s hair, moving it out of his face. “You did sleep, right?”

“Yes,” he replied. “Now go away while I continued to do so.”

He wanted to point out that they had stuff to do (they didn’t really), food to eat (okay, not that either), and people to see. But after sorting through those options he could see why Sherlock just wanted to stay in bed. Instead of arguing he sank down into the mattress and crawled up so that he could lay against Sherlock’s back.

“John…”

It was a warning. He couldn’t help but to grin.

“Mmm,” John sighed in response. “You sleep. Don’t let me distract you.”

His hand shimmied up Sherlock’s back and across his chest. He tucked his fingers beneath his lover’s shirt, and Sherlock squirmed when they reached his nipples.

“Fuck you,” Sherlock snapped. “Next time someone asks me why I don’t sleep enough I’m telling them this is why.”

He considered begging but decided watching Sherlock squirm was much more fun. After teasing his nipples with gentle brushes, his hand snaked down so it could slip beneath the waistband of his pyjama bottoms.

“John!” Sherlock whined.

“You told me you loved me last night,” John said. He had to admit: as good as it felt to hear that in the car it felt even better last night.

“Really?” Head whipping around, Sherlock frowned like he was trying to recall something. “I don’t
remember saying that.”

John glared and placed his hand firmly against Sherlock’s cock, making him whine even louder until he finally threw himself to the other side.

“Do I win?” John grinned.

“I hate you.”

Even as he said it he grinned, and with his hand still on his boyfriend’s cock John found his lips trapped into a soft kiss.

“I’m sorry I’ve kept you up,” Sherlock murmured as he planted kisses down his neck. John felt his eyes roll back into his head and was so frozen he couldn’t answer for a full moment. “But thank you, for talking. We need more late night tea chats.”

“Any time,” John choked.

Sherlock suckled at a sensitive spot on his neck, and John’s arms shot around his biceps, holding on while he made his mark. Excitement raced through him. His muscles were warm and strong, and Sherlock’s felt the same. He rolled them over, meaning to put himself on top but he was apparently terrible at judging space. John had no idea how close they had been to Sherlock’s side of the bed, and instead of gracefully landing on top of him he sent Sherlock sprawling to the floor. He hit his head on the way down.

“Bloody fuck!” Sherlock exclaimed, rubbing the back of his head where it hit the side table. “Did you just throw me out of bed? If you wanted to wank by yourself you could have just gone to the shower.”

Leaning over the bed, John grinned as he gazed at his boyfriend. Sherlock looked ridiculous, almost child-like, as he sat with his hand on the back of his head and his legs all sticking out at lazy angles. As he lay there he realized how sweaty the sheets were from Sherlock’s restful nights, which made him realize how sweaty they were. Sweaty and smelly, because he could have sworn he still smelled the smoke from the car bomb on Sherlock.

“That actually sounds like a good idea,” he commented.

“What?!”

“A wank. In the shower.”

“Fine, at least I’ll get some sleep.”

“No!” John sighed. He slid down to the floor, landing unceremoniously next to Sherlock. With a quick kiss he trapped Sherlock between himself and the bedside table, and he kept his lips on his neck as he explained: “With you. Shower. Sex. Now.”

“Okay.”

The reply was shaky, and he could feel Sherlock growing hard when he placed his hand against him. He pulled down Sherlock’s pyjama bottoms, relishing in the squirming his lover once again subjected himself to. Next he pulled off his shirt, and Sherlock wasted no time relieving himself of his own pants.

John laughed.
“You better hope Mrs. Hudson’s not out there while you’re parading through the flat with your junk hanging out!”

Cheeks growing red, Sherlock reached behind him and yanked a dirty towel from the floor before standing up.

“You’re gross,” John teased. “Do some laundry once in a while, love.”

Sherlock slapped his own arse, and that about did John in right then and there. The water was already running when he stepped into the bathroom, and the rising steam was working wonders for his arousal. His boyfriend was already behind the glass by the time he peeled his shirt and pants off. Once he was in place behind Sherlock’s naked body, he reached through the steam of water to grab the shampoo. Before lathering it into his lover’s hair he ran his hand through it, sorting out the mess of split ends and greasy curls.

“Do you ever wash your hair?” John said. “You need to get it cut again.”

He began running the shampoo through Sherlock’s hair, over his scalp, and down to his neck. A low moan sounded from Sherlock, who grasped the shower walls for support. He kissed his neck as he worked his scalp, scrubbing harder and harder the further down his head as he worked.

“You did a good job before,” Sherlock said.

“Was that a compliment?”

As a reward he reached down, hand covered with foaming shampoo, and grasped Sherlock’s shocks. With only a few soft strokes he had Sherlock shuddering and pressing even harder against the wall. His right hand continued scrubbing Sherlock’s hair while his left massaged his cock, moving slowly up and down the shaft and down to cup his balls.

“You seem very…at peace,” John said. Sherlock moaned softly in response as he stroked him harder. “You’re not just pretending you’re okay so I’ll leave you alone, are you?”

He tilted Sherlock’s head under the stream of warm water, running a hand over his nipples as his did.

“If I am I’m doing a very bad job of it,” Sherlock replied, pushing back against him so that his arse bumped against his own cock. “I just…ugh…needed sleep, that’s all. Fuck, John.”

With only a shaky moan as a warning Sherlock came into his hand. As his climaxed died down into sharp little pants of breath, the sounds of the water streaming over them took over. They stood there in silence for a moment. John was painfully aware of how hard he was, how much he wanted to get off, but his subconscious kept going back to wondering why Sherlock was suddenly so content.

“You’re thinking too much,” Sherlock said quietly as he turned around.

Their eyes met, and suddenly John was finding it very difficult to breath. Sherlock’s hand was on his cock, gently leading him forward. He was hard, so hard, and god he wanted to get off. They stood with their chest touching and John practically pinning Sherlock against the wet shower wall. Taking him in hand, Sherlock began working his arse so that John’s cock dipped between his boyfriend’s legs. He shivered as he felt himself brush against Sherlock’s leg, his cock, the back of his arse, and back. He pushed forward harder and harder, faster and faster, and grabbed onto Sherlock’s shoulders for support.
“Come for me,” Sherlock breathed. “John.”

“Sherlock,” he shuddered.

It didn’t take long before he came, drenching the shower wall with his release.

Great. Cleaning the bathroom was officially on the to-do list for the day.

“I feel like it’s been a long time since we’ve done that,” Sherlock sighed as their foreheads collapsed together.

“Yeah,” John admitted quietly. “I’ve been worried about you. I am worried. Talk to me, yeah? I know you’re not going to be okay overnight.”

“Yeah.”

It wasn’t really a response but coming from Sherlock, it was enough. John held him close for a moment before giving him a sloppy, wet, kiss and reaching for the soap.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks, as always, for reading and for your comments! The next chapter should be a lot of fun. It’s time for John’s really gorgeous army mate to come into town, and Sherlock is not bothered by him. Not. At. All. (okay, maybe a bit) Also, it’s time for Lestrade to get/or not get that promotion. The chapter’s based on a mixture of a few different prompts that I have been looking forward to writing for some time!
The DCI

Chapter Notes

So this chapter marks a really important chapter in John and Sherlock's relationship—and in this story. Basically, I'm REALLY nervous about posting this, and I hope you all like it! This chapter was shaped by two different prompts!

bloodsoakedleather said:

“May I make a suggestion for a future chapter. We've seen Sherlock getting a bit jealous and insecure when he thought John was oggling a woman, but I'd quite like to see how he'd react if another man showed a clear interest in John. Perhaps the other man's attentions make John uncomfortable, perhaps he's flattered or perhaps he's oblivious. Either scenario is good.”

Isabel agreed this would be a good idea, and so did I! The other prompt will be mentioned at the end of the chapter since I don't want to spoil it!

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After spending the day figuring out a new tune on the violin in his bedroom, Sherlock descended into the flat to find the place…spotless.

He stopped as his eyes immediately found the culprit. One of John’s worst rock albums was playing, and John was singing to himself as he dusted the bookshelves. Unsatisfied that his entrance wasn’t enough to make John stop in his tracks and feel guilty, Sherlock cleared his throat and finally settled for turning the music off.

“Hey!” John shot. “I was listening to that!”

A grin swept across Sherlock’s face as his boyfriend swirled toward him, all arms crossed and feather duster dangling from his fingers. He looked like some angry house…husband.

“What?” John demanded.

“What did you do all this for?” Sherlock asked.

John glanced around, as though looking for something bad. Why couldn’t he see it? The place looked so different like this. So lifeless and…not them. Gone were the clothes on the floor, the random books lying about, the collection of laptops and mobiles and chargers on the table. In their place were plates and silverware, like they were to pretend they actually sat down and ate at that table. Dishes were out of the sink, hand towels were neatly placed throughout the room, and a Swiffer leaned against the doorway.

“Have the floors always been this color?” He asked when John didn’t say anything.

He fell to the floor, placing his check to it so his eyes could narrow in on the shiny new shade of dark brown the floors were.
“Yes,” John replied happily, “it’s a new color. They call it clean.”

“But why?!” Sherlock exclaimed. “We’ve been through this before: the flat is fine as it is. We can find things. We can have sex on any surface we please. Why do you always have to ruin it?”

John just stood and blinked, and Sherlock knew he had said something wrong. He stopped and swallowed nervously, already feeling guilty without even knowing what he had done.

“You’re joking?” John said mouth agape. This was not good. Very not good. “I’ve been telling you all week. More than a week! Michael’s coming into town.”

Very, very not good.

“You don’t have a clue who I’m talking about,” John sighed. “My mate, from the army?”

Oh.

And now he felt even worse because they had a whole conversation about this. Many times, in fact.

“Jesus, Sherlock,” John mumbled. “Look, you don’t even have to go with me. It will be very boring for you. Drinks, maybe a movie. Talking about our mates.”

Now I’m being sent home.

“John I’m sorry,” he said, sincerely.

John gazed after him, obviously feeling sorry for him. His boyfriend’s mobile buzzed on the table, and Sherlock waited while he went to answer it.

“Brilliant!” John exclaimed. “Lestrade got the promotion! He’s DCI.”

He kept his face straight, with his eyes avoiding John, and tried his best to hide his excitement. Lestrade wasn’t as sharp as he could be, but if anyone deserved that promotion it was him.

“Everyone’s celebrating at some copper’s pup,” John said, “They’re inviting us. That’s fantastic, we’re never invited. Sherlock, are you alright?”

He was really trying not to smile. All he could think of was DI-DCI Lestrade, kneeling down in that alley and checking to see if he was okay. Not accusing him of anything. Not even asking him questions yet. Just checking on him first because he could see before he even talked with him that he was a victim. The rest of his teams were just pricks. They still were.

“Fine,” he lied, “yeah, that’s brilliant.”

“Want to go?” John asked. “Offer our congrats. I can bring Michael, he’d love that.”

“Who is this Michael anyway?” Sherlock asked. “I want to be prepared.”

John typed something in on his mobile and held it up to him, revealing the Facebook page of one Michael Nolan. He was young, younger than John by about ten years. His cover photo was of him standing on some cliff in Ireland. In his profile picture he wore army regalia, as did the mate he had his arm around. Sherlock was surprised to see that it was a younger, smiling, version of John.

“Hey…” he said slowly with a grin, pulling the mobile.

“No!” John protested, yanking the phone away. “You had your chance to be Facebook friends. You
don’t do Facebook, remember?”

“But that doesn’t mean I don’t enjoy laughing at old pictures of you.”

“It’s not that old,” John said. His cheeks flushed a bit as he pocketed his mobile.

“He still has his pictures of you two up,” Sherlock teased. “That’s adorable.”

“Yeah, well I always looked older and more…more…more something than I always was.”

“Ugly is the word you’re looking for, I think.”

“Shut up!” John said with a grin, hitting him playfully in the arm. “Not all of us were born looking like a bloody prince.”

Sherlock’s own grin widened.

“So this mate of yours, Mika-“

“Michael.”

“Whatever.”

“No, not whatever! You’re learning his name before he gets here. If he has to learn ‘Sherlock’ then you can learn ‘Michael’.”

“Is Michael going to be introduced to Sherlock the weird flatmate or Sherlock the boyfriend?” He asked.

John stared at him, and Sherlock was left feeling guilty once again because it was clear he hadn’t given that much thought.

“Keep on like that and it will be the weird boyfriend,” John sighed. “I dunno, what do you want? On one hand I feel this is getting a bit extreme, all this secrecy. On the other…I dunno, I really I don’t know what he’ll think. I don’t remember him being particularly conservative.”

Sherlock thought back to his Facebook page, to the friends listed on the sidebar, his status updates, his profile picture…

Shit.

“He’s your friend,” Sherlock replied, “you know, maybe if people can’t start accepting…this…then we just leave it.”

“But I don’t want to,” John said, “it’s not fair. It’s like with my parents. I’m their son, and they still won’t talk to me. I don’t want to keep losing people just because you’re the person I want to lay in bed with at night.”

“I don’t have to go,” Sherlock offered, “I’m sure the rest of the team would prefer it that way.”

“Sherlock-“

“John-“

They just stared at each other.
“Fine, I’ll go,” Sherlock said, “do what you want, I promise it won’t bother me. Promise.”

As he swept past John he kissed him on the cheek before throwing himself on the couch. When he landed on his side his eyes flew open.

“John!” He whined.

“I know,” John sighed, “it’s too clean.”

“You’re going to fix it after he leaves, right?”

“Of course, love,” John said, whacking him over the head with the duster as he passed, “I have all the dirt collected in a nice bag, and after my mate leaves I’ll put all of it back where it was.”

Sherlock turned back toward him, hopeful.

“Seriously?”

His response was being his over the head again.

Eight hours later he found himself in the middle of a crowded pub full of Scotland Yard’s…well, finest might be stretching it. He was squished between John and some DC he didn’t know. The team had themselves a large booth in the back and between Lestrade’s team and the odd friend or two who came along for the night it was a bit too cramped.

It didn’t seem to bother John who, it turns out, was actually rather popular. Michael had met them at the flat, engulfing John into a massive hug before he even said anything. The two stood there like that for a moment, a little too long of a moment, before they just broke apart and stared at each other. Now they sat together, drinking matching beers as Michael told stories of their army days.

“So there I was, it was blazing hot out,” Michael was saying, “my entire face is just raw from the sun. I have this massive rock on my leg from the blast. We’ve got no clue where help is. My head’s bleeding, my entire body’s gone numb, and I’m just thinking…shit, this is it. There are so many moments when you think that, in war, and you just never expect it. You wake up every day wondering what’s going to happen next. But at that moment I really felt it. I was nearly unconscious when the helicopter finally arrived. Turns out the pilot had a fucking seizure mid-air and the doctor on duty took over the flight.”

“Mid-air?!” Donavon exclaimed.

Her eyes danced from Michael to John, who was blushing madly in his moment of heroism. Even Anderson looked mildly interested, though Sherlock was sure it was thanks to the two lagers the couple already had in their system.

“Mid-air!” Michael replied. He slapped a hand on John’s back and his boyfriend jumped, like he was being startled back into reality. Sherlock’s heart melted; while everyone else was in awe of the story, he knew John was reliving it.

“I thought army pilots were supposed to be in excellent health,” Dimmock said.

“Turns out the guy had a brain tumor,” Michael said. “He had no idea. No other symptoms.”

“Actually he had been having headaches,” John said, underneath his breath, “but he just thought they were, well, headaches.”
“Jesus that’s scary,” Dimmock mumbled.

“So anyway, the helicopter lands, and out steps this god. I mean, he seriously looked like an angel to me. Of course, I’m sure I was feverish by then and had been lying out in the sun for what felt like hours with this gigantic boulder crushing my leg so I’m sure my mind was exaggerating things.”

A forced, half-smile crossed John’s face as the comment earned a laugh from everyone around the table.

That’s when Michael did the first thing that Sherlock just could not approve of.

He slipped his arm around John.

Well, not really around him. Just above his shoulder, so that John’s head had to awkwardly rest against it. He noticed his boyfriend shift uncomfortably, and Sherlock had to look away.

“Sounds like you were quite the hero in the army, John,” Anderson remarked. He said it in a dry, disgusting way that emphasized in the army. As in, not now. God he could have just punched him in the face right then and there.

John didn’t reply.

“Drink?”

Sherlock jumped as Lestrade suddenly appeared by him, tapping his shoulder in a way that said I don’t care if you want one, come with me. He followed Lestrade quietly to the bar, and though the place was just as crowded as ever over here too, being away from the group felt like a breath of fresh air.

“They’ll order a round of shots next,” Lestrade said, “they’re like bloody teenagers. This isn’t really your thing though, drinking?”

“Not really.”

“Do you even know what that is?” Lestrade asked, grinning and pointing at his glass.

He stared down at his off-coloured drink, coming up blank.

“Someone ordered it for me,” he shrugged.

Before he could offer, Lestrade ordered them a couple of whiskeys. He took out his wallet, and Sherlock smirked when he noticed one of Mycroft’s credit cards sticking out. Apparently it didn’t matter which of them offered to buy, only one person was paying. When the shot of whiskey was placed in front of him Sherlock stared at it for a moment, wondering what he was doing. He wasn’t trying to impress anyone. He wasn’t trying to make himself feel better.

“I’ll drink it if you don’t,” Lestrade warned.

Taking the glass in hand, Sherlock threw it down his throat quickly. He immediately felt like he might be sick.

“Fuck,” he mumbled as he pushed the drink away. “Do you and Mycroft drink this stuff?”

“Mycroft says even the taste is better than what he’s feeling sometimes,” Lestrade said. He admired his own glass before taking it all down at once.
“And how is Mycroft feeling?”

Sherlock turned to him with guilt-ridden eyes. He had been so upset with everything he learned and felt so sorry for himself that he wasn’t even paying attention to the fact that throughout this his own brother had clearly been tortured at least once.

“Better now that the bastard finally has a night off and is getting some rest,” Lestrade gripped the glass and slammed it back down, signaling for a second. “Since Kirchhoff is no longer a threat to me I guess I have a right to know when my own partner has been tortured. I can’t believe he hid that from me. For days he wouldn’t let me touch him, claimed he was just feeling like death. He obviously was, but it was just such bullshit. Did you see his back? His chest? I nearly threw up when I saw him. And what that son of a bitch did to his face…if you didn’t stab him, I would have.”

His heart leapt a bit, and he felt like for once, someone understood.

“Is he still in pain?” Sherlock asked, voice uncharacteristically quiet.

“He’s on a few pain killers, but I’m not sure how much it’s helping,” Lestrade said. “You know him. He can’t drink while he’s on the meds so that’s killing him just as much as the pain. Fucking idiot…I hope this is a reality check for him. We’re getting too damn old to be beaten up at all hours of the night.”

“Good thing you’re DCI now, huh?” Sherlock teased. A small smile peered from his lips, and Lestrade laughed. “Congratulations.”

“Yeah, well I still feel like I don’t deserve it.”

Lestrade downed his second glass and stared at the empty space left inside it.

“Are you two celebrating?” He asked.

“We will.”

A faint smile fell across his face in a way that said with sex. With a heavy sigh Lestrade swirled around in his seat, placed his arms across the bar behind him, and gazed over at his team.

“They seem happy for you,” Sherlock said as he turned around too.

“Yeah, well of course they are,” Lestrade smirked. “They’ve been little shits since I got promoted. Donavon seems to think she gets to be DI now.”

“Will she?”

“Fuck if I know,” Lestrade said. “I don’t know what to do. They’re decent people. Well, they try. I kind of feel like I got stuck with the last picks in the draft. I know that’s horrible.”

“It’s not horrible. They’re terrible, and most of them aren’t decent people.”

“They’re not particularly talented,” Lestrade admitted. “They’re too entitled. A position opens up and they assume it’s theirs. A case comes across my desk and they fight for it like dogs fighting over a food bowl, just because they want their chance to impress.”

“You can’t blame them for that,” Sherlock said, “but they’re not separating the mindset of employee from copper. They just don’t care enough. You take them out on a case and they’re
worried about the rain, or rather or not they’ll get home in time for *Doctor Who*.”

Lestrade burst out laughing.

“I don’t think any of them are concerned about *Doctor Who*.”

“John likes it.”

“That’s *The Who*. You still don’t know the difference?!” Lestrade sighed, giving up. “Who knows, maybe he does. Point being, you’re right. They don’t care enough. Not like you do.”

“I thought you people thought I just got off on it?” Sherlock joked.

“Nah, I know different,” Lestrade said. “You take care of people. You don’t get emotional about it, not on a personal level, anyway. But you care about bringing people to justice and you’re willing to take a few extra steps to figure things out. You’ve been kidnapped, you’ve been beaten up. Fuck, you’ve been drugged. Donavan hasn’t gotten so much as a scrape in the past month.”

It wasn’t really a fair way to compare things, but Sherlock saw his point.

“God I’d kill to have you on my team,” Lestrade said. “I’d make you DI in a heartbeat. Hell, I’d give you my job and let you lead. You’d be better at it.”

Grimacing, Sherlock tried to write off Lestrade’s low self-esteem as nerves. Every now and then when Lestrade offered him a job he got excited- just for a split second- at the thought of having an official job. A steady paycheck. An office. A title. Then he thought about the madness he saw every time he entered the Yard, and the second was over very quickly.

“They don’t respect me,” he replied, “They respect you. Besides, I have a bit of a history. There is the whole drug addict part. Oh, and I just murdered someone.”

He fell silent. He didn’t mean to say it so violently. Something shook inside him, like some kind of creature trying to get to the surface, and Sherlock immediately raised his hand to order another drink. Well aware that Lestrade was studying him, the worried father that he was, he kept his eyes peeled to the floor as he accepted the whiskey. Instead of drinking it he just stared at it, wondering again what he was doing. He just felt so out of place, so outside reality, that it was like he was waiting around for someone to pull him back in. He thought things were better, with John and the talking and the tea and the sex, but those were only temporary fixes.

“John said you were having trouble sleeping again,” Lestrade said quietly, letting the music drawn out his concern. “Did he know you have night terrors?”

Letting out a shaky sigh, Sherlock nodded and sipped at the whiskey. It tasted as foul as ever, but somehow this time he didn’t mind as much.

“Had one once,” he said, “I have them sometimes…always about Luke. Always the same thing. This time it’s just…worse. And Kirchhoff is there. I just see him die, over and over again. And I see Luke dead.”

Maybe it was the three drinks he had in him, but he wasn’t sure why he felt like offering this up to Lestrade. A comforting hand fell on his shoulder, and he was relieved to know Lestrade didn’t mind.

“Don’t feel bad,” Lestrade said. “Do you know how many times I’ve woken your brother up? I’ll just be shaking like a leaf and sweating like I’ve been running all night. The thing about this job
The demons don’t go away. It feels good, when you can close a case on paper. But it’s never closed in your head.”

“And Mycroft?” He asked quietly. He couldn’t help it, he had to know.

“Yeah,” Lestrade mumbled under his breath. “Yeah he definitely has his fair share of sleepless nights.”

At least it wasn’t alone. Hell, maybe it was even hereditary.

“Fuck!” He exclaimed, suddenly realizing: “I haven’t called Laura. I bet Mycroft has.”

“Yeah…like three days ago. And every night after that. And again so that she knows he’s taking care of himself.”

“Fuck,” he mumbled. Why did he always have to fail at this? “Does that make me the worst person in the world?”

“No,” Lestrade offered, “just the worst brother in the world.”

Sherlock glared and Lestrade laughed and ordered them two drinks. Laughter roared out across the pub as well, as the team had, in fact, started taking shots. As John reached for his Michael’s hand brushed across his fingers ever-so-slightly. Michael’s eyes lit up, and he looked over at John, like he expected him to notice.

“For God’s sake!” Sherlock snapped.

“What?”

“John’s friend!” He exclaimed. “For starters, he’s been gazing after him all night like John’s a piece of meat. His arm has been around him. He’s been talking about him non-stop.”

A wicked grin spread across Lestrade’s face.

“Are you saying John’s army mate has a crush on him?”

Sherlock nodded.

“And John has no idea?” Lestrade continued.

Sherlock shook his head.

“Oh that’s brilliant!” Lestrade laughed. “I can see it now. Christ, he’s practically sitting in his lap. Doesn’t that bother you?”

With one sharp glare in his direction, Lestrade shut up.

“I wonder if he’s always liked him,” Sherlock said, “he talks about him like he’s a god. He even said he was! He must idolize him.”

“Well John did save his life. When did you start falling for John?”

He froze.

“When he saved my life.”
“John probably has a whole laundry list of patients who have crushes on him,” Lestrade said, “it goes with the territory of being in authority.”

“Oh, does it?” He shot. “So I’m sure loads of men are gushing after you while you’re trying to find their missing kids?”

Lestrade’s cheeks turned red, and he didn’t reply. At the same time, Michael and John began talking together, in low voices so that only they could hear. John jumped up, and Sherlock became uncomfortable as his boyfriend walked toward him. It was like he knew he was talking about him.

“Michael wants me to go with him back to his room,” John explained. Lestrade choked on his drink, and Sherlock nearly fell off his seat. His clueless lover, in the meantime, just looked between them both like they were mad. “Just to watch a movie, maybe order a few more drinks. Get a pizza. It might be awhile before I get to see him again so I figured, why not? You don’t mind, do you, Sherlock?”

He didn’t know what surprised him more, the fact that John couldn’t see what was going on or the fact that John was asking for his permission to do something. Either way, there was no way he could let him suffer any longer.

“He likes you,” Sherlock blurted out.

John’s eyes went dark, and Lestrade froze beside him.

“Actually, I think shots sound fun right now,” Lestrade said, quickly leaving.

He couldn’t believe Lestrade would leave him at a time like this, and when he was left alone with his furious boyfriend he became so nervous he didn’t know what to say.

“What the fuck are you talking about?” John shot.

“He…he likes you. He has a crush on you.” John just stared at him, face completely blank.
“Michael is gay, John.”

At last his eyes went wide, and John whipped around. He gazed after his friend, like he was staring at him for the first time.

“You’re insane!” John hissed.

“He’s been touching you!” Sherlock whispered. “His arm’s been around you. He’s asking you back to his room!”

He felt the need to grab John’s arm as he witnessed his breath quicken and his eyes dashing around, desperate for help.

“Oh shit,” John breathed. “Oh shit…you’re right. That does sound odd, doesn’t it? Fuck…why didn’t I see it before? He just keeps…looking at me! I just thought maybe he was just excited to see me.”

“He is! He probably thinks he’s getting off with you later.”

“Oh god.”

John sank against the bar, and Sherlock wasted no time in ordering him another drink.

“What am I going to do?” John said. “I don’t want to just get rid of him. I feel bad, like I’ve been
leading him on.”

“Well, you haven’t been telling him no.”

“Fuck you.”

Sighing, John accepted the drink and downed it quickly, rubbing an arm across his face when he was finished. His skin was flushed, his heartbeat rapid, and his hands were trembling slightly. A slow song suddenly came on over the noisy crowd, and Sherlock had an idea.

It was possibly the worst idea he’d ever had, but it was an idea.

“Kiss me,” Sherlock announced.

Eyes going wide again, John stared at him. He looked like he thought he might be trapped in some horrible dream.

“What?!”

Sherlock grabbed his arm and looked him dead in the eye. His own heart was beginning to race. Their pupils dilated. Around him, no one seemed to care that they were holding onto each other.

“We’re going to make ourselves miserable, until we just admit-“

“You don’t mean that,” John interrupted, “just think about this, Sherlock. Everyone will know. Everyone will find out. Lestrade’s team, the papers-“

“Fuck them. You need to be able to tell people who you are.”

“And who am I?” John demanded. “I don’t just define myself as gay. I don’t think it’s fair to have to worry about telling people, or what people think.”

“But you do! It’s just a fact of life.”

“I won’t accept that!” John said. He looked so hurt, so crushed, and Sherlock realized he must still be struggling with what he himself had always witnessed throughout life: friends and family not understanding him. “If it’s easier to just not tell people, then so be it.”

“John,” he pleaded, “it will be worse if you don’t admit it. What will you say to him, when you go back to his room and he tries to kiss you? Tell him that you’re in a relationship. If he’s really your friend, he’ll be happy for you.”

This obviously panicked John. He was breathing so fast, he was clearly couldn’t think straight. He looked like he thought the entire universe wrapped had itself around him, like everyone in the world was watching. Sherlock knew that was silly, but to John, this was obviously the most important decision he had to make.

“You’re bothered by it too,” John said. “Admit it. You like having privacy.”

“I do,” he confessed, “but I don’t want you to be miserable.”

John gazed up at him, like that was exactly what he needed to hear. Drawing in a deep, shaky breath, John threw a glance toward the group at the table. He swore he saw him wink at Lestrade, who was watching them closely, before he quickly turned back to him and planted a sharp, closed-mouth kiss to his lips. Sherlock’s body went stiff. He had to grab onto the bar for support as John continued to kiss him hard. His eyes were opened so that he could see the group of coppers at the
back table watching them, stunned. Then there was Michael, who looked absolutely crushed and
humiliated. John’s friend looked away before getting up from the table and storming to the
bathroom.

Sherlock felt so badly for John, who kept his eyes closed so he couldn’t see the drama forming
around them, that he held onto his arms to support him.

“John,” he breathed, bringing them both back to life as they pulled apart.

John gasped and brought his hand to his mouth. He was breathing hard, like he wasn’t sure what
had happened. Then his eyes darted around the room, from the strangers dancing around them who
didn’t even notice, to their colleagues who were still staring at them, mouths agape.

Anderson looked absolutely disgusted, and Sherlock knew he was going to have to punch him in
the face the next time he saw him.

“That was stupid,” John finally whispered. He ran a hand through his hair. By the way his feet
were shuffling and his eyes darted around in panic, he knew John wanted to bolt. Sherlock grabbed
onto him so he wouldn’t. “That was really stupid. Shouldn’t have done that. That was stupid.”

“John,” he murmured desperately.

His boyfriend’s eyes trailed up to him, so wide and afraid, and Sherlock felt terrible for suggesting
doing that. They were still being gawked at, and if they didn’t stop soon he was going to have to
throw something at them.

“Can we go get some air?” John asked. “Please?”

Sherlock nodded. As John slipped through the crowed and out the door he stormed over to
Lestrade.

“I think we’re just going to head out,” he announced. “Congratulations, again.”

Lestrade just nodded, looking completely taken aback.

“Yeah,” he said. “Okay. Thanks.”

He darted after John without another word. John was already taking off down the street by the time
he reached him, and Sherlock was almost grateful when Michael suddenly appeared out of an
alleyway adjacent to the pub. He then realized Michael hadn’t run off to hide in the loo; he had run
off to flee the pub.

“Christ!” John exclaimed, kicking at the ground as he turned away.

“It’s okay, you know,” Michael said quietly. His bright blue eyes shone brilliantly as he gazed after
John, looking sorrier for him than he did himself. “You could have just said.”

“I didn’t even realize!” John began. “I didn’t know.”

“It’s okay,” Michael said again, with a small grin. “Most people are surprised. I don’t really…
actively pursue men. I’ve still been with women, actually. I’ve just always admired you, John. I
really have. I think you’re a really great guy. You’re talented, you’re handsome. You’re kind,
you’re smart, you’re brilliant.”

“I’m really not,” John insisted.
Michael’s eyes lit up as they shot up to Sherlock, like he knew he would understand. Stepping up beside his boyfriend, Sherlock placed a hand on his shoulder to let him know he was there.

“That was your first time kissing each other in public, wasn’t it?” Michael said.

“I’m sure Sherlock has before,” John admitted, “but I’ve just been more…cautious, about it. We’re sort of public figures. Kind of. Not really, but enough to be stared at when we go out. Enough for people to notice. So we keep things quiet.”

“That’s respectable,” Michael said, “but he’s gorgeous. You should parade him around a bit more.”

He winked at Sherlock, and his own cheeks turn a slight shade of red.

“Don’t leave, on account of me,” Michael said. “DCI Lestrade seems like a great guy. You should stay, help him celebrate. I’ll go. I have to head home early tomorrow."

He was certain Michael was lying, and now Sherlock felt guilty that John’s friend was avoiding him.

“You two should hang out,” Sherlock said, earning surprise looks from the both of them. “Go to the cinema or something. Just…don’t have sex.”

John laughed, and he finally looked a little less tense.

“Are you sure?” John asked.

Nodding, Sherlock replied.

“Of course I am.”

“I’m sorry, if I made either of you uncomfortable,” Michael said. “I just thought…I hoped…you know a small part of me…”

“Wanted to take me to your room and fuck me into the mattress?” John teased.

Michael looked like he wanted nothing more than to melt into one of the cracks in the pavement.

“Something like that,” he mumbled.

“Yeah, well I’m flattered,” John said, “but how about we just stay friends?”

“Maybe a threesome?” Michael offered hopefully.

Both he and John nearly choked.

“Yeah, I’m not that drunk!” John laughed.

He looked completely embarrassed and out of place, but Sherlock nodded, encouraging him to go on.

“A movie sounds good,” John said, “or pizza or even another pub.”

“Pub sounds good,” Michael agreed.

Great, they’re both going to get so drunk they’re going to forget they agreed to not have sex.
He promised himself he was only joking with himself. They really were both gorgeous, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to think they may have made a great couple.

“Sherlock, care to join?” John asked.

He really didn’t. He really felt like he had overstayed his welcome around these two. And he really wanted to talk to Laura all of a sudden.

“I’ll be fine,” he said. “Go, have fun.”

John grinned.

“Thanks.”

He planted a quick kiss to Sherlock’s cheek, matching the one he offered John earlier that day. With a tight squeeze to his arm John slipped away again, laughing as he followed Michael down the road.

Inside, the pub was getting even louder. His mobile was buzzing, and he wasn’t surprised to find it was Lestrade. But he wasn’t ready to talk yet. Sherlock didn’t care if it was a lecture about public displays of affection around colleagues, or about the dilemma of having two consultants who were officially a couple, or just to make sure he was okay.

Ignoring him, Sherlock texted Laura instead.

*Skype tonight?*

His reply was a smiley face, and a similar one spread across his lips as he turned to hail a cab.

Chapter End Notes

The other prompt that helped shaped this chapter is this:

lets_shine_forever asked:

"I have a request? Somehow john or sherlock persuades the other to go to a club, where coincidentally the team are there to celebrate Lestrade's promotion and they start dancing and gyrating and fucking on the dance floor and everyone is staring and John winks at them and snogs Sherlock's face off and they become a public couple and John kisses sherlock in front of everyone?"

Since this is a party for coppers I didn't think the fucking part would work, but I REALLY liked the idea of this being how they become a public couple. So, if the people requesting the prompts don't mind, I combined those requests into this chapter.

For the next chapter, I'm extremely tempted to delve into some of the more...hardcore prompts from the 30 day porn challenge, but I'm trying to hold back since I'm not sure if they would be appropriate for this story. I REALLY want to find a way to make them work. But I'm afraid I probably shouldn't. Let's just say they involve Michael being here. So I will do this. If there's anything you'd like to see while Michael is still in town, let me know and I'll see what I can do!
I hope you liked it! Let me know what you think, and thank you so much for reading and for your comments!
His fingers danced against the floorboards as he waited for Laura’s face to pop up beside her screenname. Sherlock sat alone in the flat, with his back against the foot of the couch and a bottle of wine by his side. He wasn’t sure what made him more nervous- the guilt from not talking to her for so long or the excitement in seeing her again.

“Hey!”

He looked up at the sudden greeting. A smile crossed his face as his eyes fell on Laura, who was grinning at him through the webcam. Behind her he could easily make out the layout of her kitchen. It was very modern, very posh, with silver finishes, dark cabinets, and everything was just so new.

“Is that your house?” He asked. “It’s very nice.”

“Yeah, we finally finished remodeling!” She said. "Did you change the color of the floorboards?"

He let out a hollow laugh, embarrassed that he was apparently the only one who didn’t like the flat clean.

“John cleaned,” he admitted, “he has a friend in town. Some mate from the army. They’re out.”

“That’s nice,” Laura replied. “What’s the friend like?”

Sherlock grinned.

“He has a major crush on John.”

“No way!” And just like that, his nerves were gone. He could do this, this talking. Being family.

“And John never knew?”

“Not a clue.”

“Oh wow. That’s pretty adorable. I mean, incredibly awkward for John, but adorable. You didn’t deduce everything for him and ruin his night, did you?”

“Well…in my offense, his night wasn’t ruined. And John, um, snogged me, in the heat of the moment. We’re sort of an official…an official something now.”

“Couple is the word you’re trying not to say,” she teased.

“Yeah, that,” Sherlock said. He took a sip of the wine.

“Are you drinking?” Laura shot, leaning closer to the screen.

“Yeah, we went out,” he said. “Oh! Lestrade got a promotion. It was sort of a celebration for him.
The kind of celebration that’s very awkward and not really about him at all and more about everyone else trying to get a promotion too. He’s DCI now.”

“That’s amazing!” Laura exclaimed. Then she stopped, on cue. “I have no idea what that means.”

“Detective Chief Inspector,” he explained. “Step above DI. He has a bit more authority now, god help us.”

“That’s really great though, no wonder Mycroft seemed so happy.”

Mycroft…happy?!

“You talked to him?” He asked, feeling guilty again.

“Yeah, he called,” she said. She hesitated, like she had actually planned to try to not bring it up. “He told me you two were roughed up a bit, on a case.”

“It was more than that.”

“I know.”

“Sherlock…” she hesitated again. Her eyes darted down to the table, where her fingers were also tapping against the wood.

“Mycroft told you there was something we need to talk about,” he guessed.

Now she looked guilty.

“Yeah,” she admitted. “You don’t have to, if you’re not ready. I got the feeling when I first met you that you have a lot of baggage. I know we both didn’t have childhoods that were exactly fair. I just want you to know that…I want to know. I want to know all about you.”

You really don’t.

He swallowed, nervously. He’d been avoiding this for as long as possible. He was so worried Laura would find out, and at the same time he felt so guilty for not telling her. What if she was so upset and shocked she didn’t want him around Dan?

“Laura I…” he froze, but he knew he had to do it. They were brother and sister. It was only right. “Laura, when I was in university I started abusing drugs. I started with small things, at first, but of course I know now that when it comes to drugs nothing is small.”

Laura stared at him, and his stomach turned into knots when he noticed her eyes began to tear up a bit already.

“What did it turn into?” She asked, her voice suddenly weak.

“Cocaine.”

For a few moments they both stayed perfectly silent. He thought that he could hear the sounds of a children’s show playing on the telly in the background, and his heart skipped a beat at the thought of seeing his nephew.

If I had known back then everything I would have today…

“I had this boyfriend,” he went on, desperate now to be able to come clean, “and we both did
“He introduced you?”

He nodded, and her hand flew to her mouth. She looked like she might break down, and he knew she was thinking of their father and his history of drug abuse.

“Eventually we both dropped out of school,” Sherlock said. “We stayed in really shit flats for a while, but soon we were both so concerned with our drug habits that we didn’t care about anything else. We got kicked out of a couple of places. I began playing on the streets for money, and he…he dealt drugs.”

“Oh my god.”

He gave her a moment. She closed her eyes, hard, as though wishing it all away. All he could do was sit there and feel terrible. What made it even worse was that he was telling this to her through a screen and he hadn’t even been man enough to do it in person.

“We were really poor,” Sherlock admitted, “and because of our habits we lost everything. We refused help from our families. His parents didn’t approve of him being gay and he hated them so much for it he ran away. As for me and Mycroft, I was just always in complete denial that he was my guardian. So we began staying on the streets.”

“For how long?” Her voice was just a whisper.

“Years,” he whispered back. “The better part of my twenties.”

Biting her lip, Laura looked down at the table, clearly fighting to hold it together. He just awkwardly waited for her to reply.

“Did you ever overdose?”

He nodded.

“Yeah,” he said, “a couple of times. At one point, we began fighting. He was disappearing, I never knew where he was. He left me alone. I was becoming a bit terrified of my situation. I…I ran off, and I honestly don’t remember what happened that night. Lestrade found me, in an alley. It’s how we met. Apparently I had witnessed a murder and didn’t even know it.”

“Shit,” she breathed.

“Yeah.” He felt like that was all he could say, but he forced himself to continue with the rest. Just not before he sipped more of the wine. “I stayed with Lestrade for a while. He took me under his wing. He saved my life. He convinced me to go to rehab. When I got out, Mycroft helped me get my own flat. Things were actually okay for a while, but then my ex found out where I was. He was in trouble, and he asked for a place to stay so I gave it to him. That night someone came to the flat and he…he killed him. I walked into the living room just after it happened.”

“Oh god,” Laura said, choking back a sob.

She held an arm to her mouth, hiding her face. His own hand was clinging desperately to the wine glass, and it shook as he raised the glass to his lips.

“I relapsed after that,” Sherlock admitted, “I became this…this shell of a human. I eventually got better, but I was just wrecked, emotionally. I was never quite the same, not until I met John, that is.
I recently found out the kind of trouble my ex was in, and I…I attacked the man who killed him. I murdered him.”

From nowhere, tears formed in his eyes. He choked too as wet drops began pouring down his cheeks, and he raised a hand to his mouth in shock.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered. “I’m sorry, I-“

“It’s okay,” Laura said, sounding a bit empty.

*Why am I crying?*

“Did it have to do with what happened to you and Mycroft?” Laura asked. He could only stay perfectly still, perfectly silent, and breathed in and out until he could calm down. “Oh Sherlock…”

“I keep having these horrible nightmares,” he said. Once he started he wanted to open up about it all. “John says I wake up screaming, but I don’t even remember doing that.”

Laura’s eyes went wide.

“Dan’s been doing the same,” she blurted out, “ever since London. I hear him screaming at night, and we rush into his room and he’s just screaming and kicking and shaking. He won’t listen, it’s like he doesn’t realize we’re there. He’s so tired during the day and scared too. He’s always looking around, like he’s expecting someone else to show up. I have him speaking with a psychologist, but I feel guilty about it. He’s my little boy, Sherlock. I don’t like treating him like there’s something wrong with him. He’s not even five yet.”

She bit her lip, and her confession made him feel even worse. After a few deep breaths and another long sip of wine, he was finally able to pull himself together enough to speak clearly.

“It’s a good thing,” he assured her, “he needs to understand what he’s going through. He’s probably just scared. He doesn’t understand what’s real and what’s not. It’s a good thing he’s talking to someone.”

“And what about you?” Laura asked. “Who do you talk to?”

“John,” he admitted, “Lestrade, sometimes. He helped me through the night terrors back then. But there are some things…some things I feel like I can’t talk about.”

Another sip of the wine. He finished the glass and poured another.

“You can talk to me,” Laura offered, “always. I’m sorry, for what happened to you when you were younger. I don’t want to judge you for it. Shit, you should see some of the stuff I did. I had my first pregnancy scare when I was seventeen.”

His eyes went wide.

“Really?”

“I’ve never told anyone that before,” Laura admitted with a small laugh. “When I met Dan’s father I just thought I knew everything. I thought I had it made. I’ve let people push me around my whole life.”

“But you didn’t do drugs,” Sherlock pointed out.

“No.”
Her voice fell, like there was another point she was too afraid to make. Somehow he had a feeling what it was.

“I’ve wondered lately if I get it from him,” he said quietly. “If I’ve inherited some kind of…bad gene. If I’m truly my father’s son.”

Laura began shaking her head, and she wiped at an eye with her hand.

“Don’t you dare say that,” she warned. “There’s no excuse we can make for the stupid things we do when we’re young, not even when it’s something as big as what you did. Don’t go looking for stupid answers just to have one. You’re not him, end of story.”

That actually made him feel a bit better. If anyone would know about their father, it was her.

“I wish I could have been there for you,” Laura said. “I wish I could have shown you that someone loves you, that it’s okay to accept help.”

“It was offered to me,” he said. “I was just such an arse to Mycroft. To this day our relationship is still a bit rocky because of that. I’m sure he likes you much better.”

A small smile formed on her face.

“Well, he does call me every day.”

“Suck up,” he teased.

Did Mycroft really call her that much? His brother didn’t even talk to him that much, and they were in the same city! Not that he was jealous.

Because he wasn’t.

He drank more of the wine, finishing the glass. Immediately, he began pouring another.

“You look like you’ve had enough to drink,” Laura said.

“Screw it,” he shot, taking down more of the wine in slow gulps. “Sorry, I really wanted this to be a nice conversation.”

“It’s okay,” she said, “we needed to have this talk. I’m glad you told me. It’s a bit shocking, yes. But knowing how much you’ve changed and how much you’ve overcome just makes me admire you that much more.”

Admire me. She admires me! She admires me, her older brother.

It was still strange to think of himself as that.

“Look, I’ve got to go pick up Dan and Jason will be home soon and I have to go out and get dinner,” she said. “I’ll be on, later, if you still want to talk. Text me anytime. And call. Just…talk to me. And thank you, for telling me all of this.”

“If you need time or space or for me to get out of your life, just say.”

She stared at him, and he hadn’t seen her this angry since after her family’s kidnapping.

“You’re my brother, Sherlock,” Laura said. “I can’t judge you for things you didn’t when I didn’t even know you- when I didn’t even know you existed. Frankly, I don’t think anyone has a right to
judge you for things when they have no idea what you were going through. The only thing I can judge you on is the person you are now. So I’m sorry. If you’re looking for an excuse to not talk you’re going to have to do better than that.”

A sheepish smile crossed his face.

“I want to talk.”

“Good.”

She smiled back at him.

“Good night, Sherlock.”

“Good night, Laura.”

With a final smile she signed off, and Sherlock was left realizing just how empty and quiet the flat was.

He wanted John back.

He glanced down at his mobile and saw that it was only midnight. John would probably be out a few more hours, and that was if he didn’t decide to stay with Michael after all.

At that moment the door opened, and Sherlock jumped up when Lestrade, Michael, and John paraded in.

“Hey,” John said when he spotted them. “We decided there really wasn’t anything to do and that it’d be better to just come back here.”

“With Lestrade?” Sherlock said.

“Hello to you too,” Lestrade said.

Sherlock noticed he was carrying a pizza box, and each of them sported a case of drinks so he wasn’t going to argue.

“Is there supposed to be something to do in the flat?” Sherlock asked.

Michael took a deck of cards out of his pocket and asked:

“Know any good drinking games?”
Drinking Buddies

Chapter Notes

Clover wanted to see Sherlock having some bro-bonding time with Michael, so here you go! It's a start, anyway!

Drink responsibly! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Drink, Sherlock!” John demanded.

Sherlock blinked. The entire group was staring at him, waiting for his move. He’d lost count of the drinks by now, which was never good. He’d lost count of the hour, but it was somewhere after midnight. His head was beginning to feel all…not normal. The eyes staring back at him were all bloodshot, the faces wearing slopping grins, and the voices talking were uncharacteristically high pitched.

“Why?” Sherlock groaned.

“Because it’s the rules!” John sighed. “We’ve explained this to you like a dozen times.”

Sherlock blinked again and stared down at the card in front of him that had somehow decided his fate.

“But I don’t want to.”

The other three groaned.

“Maybe we should.” Lestrade began.

“No!” John said. “We explained what the game was. We made him say he understood and he did. So drink, Sherlock!”

“Fine!” Sherlock tipped the paper cup to his lips and drink down the last of the ale.

There were shots of whiskey waiting on the table for them next.

“Maybe we should take a break,” Michael offered. “How much have you had, Sherlock?”

“Not much,” he whined.

“Lies,” John laughed.

“Two whiskies,” Lestrade began.

“Laura texted me at least three glasses of wine,” John chimed.

“And a beer,” Michael finished.

“In the course of what, four hours?”
“One beer makes you tipsy sometimes,” John pointed out, “and don’t even get me started about you and wine. Where is that bottle by the way? Laura said it looked like good stuff.”

Abandoning his own lecture about drinking, John went looking for the wine.

“That market down the street is 24 hours, right?” Michael asked. Sherlock nodded. “I’m starved. Sherlock, want to get some air and come with?”

Sherlock stared at him, and even Lestrade and John turned to him, all of them looking at Michael like he had just popped in from an alternate universe. And he had, really. He knew nothing about their lives, and obviously he didn’t realize that people just didn’t ask Sherlock Holmes to go to markets with them.

“Anyone else want anything?” Michael asked.

“Ice cream,” Lestrade said as he sank into the couch.

The DCI threw his arm over his face, and a sloppy grin crossed Sherlock’s face. He guessed by the time they got back with his ice cream Lestrade would be out cold.

“John?” Sherlock called.

“I’m fine,” John said, “I’m guess I’m the only one remembering the pizza we just ate.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes and followed Michael out the door. The fresh air did feel good as he hit the streets. It was weird, being outside this late. Back when he lived on the streets he tried to lay low most nights, but eventually he got up the courage to wonder around. He got to know every alley, every building, and every intersection. And every creep who wondered around at night too.

“John told me you used to live on the streets,” Michael said.

He stared at him, shocked. It was the last thing he expected Michael to say, and John’s friend didn’t press it as he kept walking toward the shop.

“Yeah,” Sherlock finally admitted. “For a while.”

He decided to follow the ‘only answer what you’re asked’ rule of interrogation and fell silent.

“I was homeless, for a bit,” Michael said quietly.

Their eyes met, and a mutual respect passing between them. That wasn’t something a lot of people admitted willingly, and he had a feeling that Michael hadn’t been completely honest with John about this.

“After I first came back from the army,” Michael explained, “I had trouble getting a job. I had no place to stay. At first I stayed with different friends, but after a few months I got so embarrassed by my situation that I hid from them. I disappeared. I wasn’t on the streets long. I got sick with pneumonia and a stranger called me an ambulance. My emergency contact was still my sister… we’ve had a rocky relationship ever since my parents died.”

“Your parents died?” Sherlock asked.

Maybe they had more in common than he thought. Suddenly Michael was becoming a bit more real to him. He had an entire life story buried inside him.

“When I was twelve,” Michael said, “John said you lost your mum, around that age.”
He nodded.

“I have a feeling John carefully chose what he told you about me,” Sherlock said with a faint smile on his face.

“We have a lot in common,” Michael agreed. “It’s hard, isn’t it? Losing your parents that young. People just never understand. The worst is that you always miss them. It never gets easier.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock whispered.

He knew John wanted him to open up to this guy, but he was feeling too reserved. He just couldn’t be honest like that with just anyone- wasn’t his Skype chat with Laura enough? Why did John have to be so damn smart?

“It’s okay, you don’t have to talk about anything,” Michael said. “It’s just nice, knowing there’s someone else out there who has been through something similar.”

*You have no idea.*

“What do you do now?” Sherlock asked.

Michael turned to him, studying him long and hard, and Sherlock realized he was looking for his trust. For the first time he recognized that Michael was actually a good deal younger than John- he looked closer to Laura’s age, in fact.

“I do accounting,” Michael said. “I know it sounds boring. I still have interest in the army, when I’m able to deploy again. I really feel like that’s all I have.”

He couldn’t help but to wonder if John felt the same. How long would he have stayed the army, if not for his wound? If not for the PTSD? Did Michael struggle with that as well?

On the other hand, he’d rather watch paint dry for a living than be an accountant.

“It’s decent money though,” Michael went on. By now they were ready to enter the shop, and he was more than grateful for a distraction.

“I’ll get Lestrade’s ice cream,” Sherlock offered.

“Yeah, I’ll just be a few.”

He hung back by one of the front aisles as he watched Michael disappear. But John’s friend wasn’t heading toward any of the food seconds- he was heading toward the cigarettes.

He smoked.

That’s why he had been jumpy and on edge for the past hour or so. He needed a smoke.

Sherlock disappeared to the frozen foods section. He knew exactly what Lestrade liked: traditional vanilla, with chocolate syrup if there was some available. He picked up some just for the hell of it, on the off chance the DCI was awake when they returned. He picked up some crisps for him and John, along with some bread for the morning.

As he waltzed back to the register his head began to feel funny again. Michael was loitering by the doors, anxiously glancing out the windows as he waited for Sherlock. He checked out, ignoring the suspicious look from the clerk. He knew he had to look terrible. He certainly was beginning to feel terrible. The headache was beginning, as was the room spinning-ness.
“Here,” he said, shoving the bags into Michael’s chest. He received strange looks from John’s friend as well as he grabbed his head, focusing on keeping his balance as they wondered back down the street. The fresh air once again felt good; at this rate it was probably the only thing keeping him from throwing up.

He caught a whiff of cigarette smoke, and he threw a glare toward Michael.

“Oh, did you want one?” Michael asked, holding up his pack.

No, I don’t. I really don’t. Promise. Not. At. All.

“I quit,” he mumbled miserably.

“Oh shit!” Michael said, stuffing the pack into the back of his jeans. “Sorry, I should have asked before I lit up. I don’t have to-“

“Go ahead,” he said.

They didn’t talk as they reached the flat and ascended up the stairs. Sure enough, Lestrade was still napping on the couch while John was leaning over the kitchen counter, gazing intently at the tea kettle.

“Is the kettle on?” He asked.

“I’ll put it on,” John offered. “I’m officially cutting you off for a while. Doctor’s orders.”

They shared a quick kiss as Michael tucked the ice cream into the freezer. Sherlock broke open the crisps, but John grabbed them from his hands before he could even take his first one. He glared, and John only grinned.

“Oi!” John called into the living room. “Greg! Still with us? Or do you want a cab?”

“I’m here,” Greg called.

He sounded half-alive, and John smirked.

“He’s too fucking old for this shit,” John said.

“As are you,” Sherlock teased.

John slapped him on the shoulder and crossed back into the living room.

“Your stuff is in the freezer,” John offered as Lestrade sat up.

Lestrade just stared at them.

“What stuff?”

Letting out a dramatic sigh, Sherlock settled back into the table. Their kitchen table had been cleared off to make way for the card games, ruining John’s setup from earlier.

“So Sherlock’s being banned,” John said as he threw a crisp into his mouth. The others began joining him at the table as John went on: “That limits gaming options. How about a power hour?”

John was grinning ear to ear, and Lestrade only moaned again as he slipped into his seat.
“Noooo,” Lestrade moaned. “I’ll end up being called in on some horrible investigation in the morning, and I’ll spend my first day as DCI hung over.”

“Fine,” John sighed. He turned to Michael, and as soon as their eyes met they shared a similar twinkle. “Michael, are you up for it?”


“No, banned, remember?” John said. He grinned again as he explained: “A new game. Boxing.”

“But I’m an excellent boxer!” He pointed out.

“Not that kind of boxing, love.”

Sherlock’s cheeks went a bit red as he sank into his seat and pulled out his mobile for distraction.

“Do you have any dice?” Michael asked.

“Yeah,” John said, pulling some out of a nearby drawer. He also grabbed a couple of shot glasses and beer. “Sherlock since you have your mobile out you get to keep time.”

“Right, because that’s what everyone posts about when it comes to parties, keeping time.”

“Like you would post about anything,” John shot. “You need to pay attention though. Lestrade, want to be my corner man?”

“Sure,” Lestrade shrugged.

“Hey!” Michael exclaimed. “You’re sticking me with him because you know he’ll suck at it.”

John’s grin only widened. Sherlock, meanwhile, didn’t have a clue what was going on. The two friends sat at opposite ends of the table.

“Sherlock, what happens is we both roll the dice and whoever gets the lowest has to drink the shot. Then the ‘corner man’ fills up the glass again.”

He looked between the three men, wondering what he was missing.

“…and?” Sherlock said.

Blinking, John replied:

“And that’s the game.”

“What’s wrong with just drinking?” He asked.

The rest of them sighed, and Michael poured a shot glass full of beer.

“We do this for three minutes and then take a thirty second break,” John said, “if we play by the rules, that is.”

“You’re getting pretty old, so maybe we should stretch that break,” Michael teased.

“Thirty seconds it is,” John said, “Sherlock, are you going to keep time or what?”

Sherlock mumbled a curse under his breath as he set the stopwatch on his mobile. The funnest part of this game was going to be watching John drink shots until he threw up…which now that he
thought about it was probably the point.

“Alright,” Sherlock said, “go.”


“This sucks,” Michael mumbled as he took the second shot.

“At least it’s just beer,” Lestrade said, “I’ve played with far worse.”

“Try playing with far worse now, you bastard,” John shot. He still grinned as he rolled a dice, rolling a four.

Michael rolled a five, and John took the shot. Lestrade refilled, and they rolled. John lost again. And again. And again.

“Three minutes,” Sherlock called.

It was more like three and a half, but he was having too much fun watching John lose. He set the watch for thirty seconds.

“Fucking finally,” John moaned, holding his hands in his head.

“Feeling ill, doc?” Michael asked.

He grinned across the table, and John glared back.

“Okay, new three minutes,” Sherlock announced.

A two for Michael, a four for John. Then John lost again. Then Michael. Then Sherlock began to get bored. He yawned as he called time. John was losing miserably again.

“New game?” John whined.

“Your idea!” Michael exclaimed. “Sherlock?”

He stared over, but he agreed. This game wasn’t much fun after about ten seconds. Michael lost a couple of times, then John, then John, then John, and again, and then-

“Okay, I think I’m out,” John said, “and I’ll be right back.”

John bolted from the room, and Sherlock quickly excused himself as he chased after them. The bathroom door was closed in his face, but he forced his way through anyway to find John leaning over the sink and running water over his face.

“Overestimating your abilities, doctor?” He asked.

He leaned against the doorway and crossed his arms. John ran a hand over his mouth as he stared at him through the mirror. His skin was unusually pale and clammy, and his hands were a bit shaky.

“I’m fine,” John said, “maybe not as fine as I was twenty years ago, but fine.”

“It’s almost one,” Sherlock said, glancing at his mobile, “we could call it a night.”

“Nah.”
Suddenly a pair of wet, alcohol-flavoured, lips were on his and a hand behind his back.

“Too early,” John murmured into his ear.

His boyfriend offered one violent thrust against him before slipping away, and he immediately realized the comment had nothing to do with the drinking and everything to do with having sex.

As he followed John out of the bathroom he was suddenly feeling loads better than he had before.

Chapter End Notes

I ended up liking Michael more than I thought! I'm glad you guys like him too.

Also, no offense meant to accountants! I did have fun picturing Sherlock being one, though.

Thanks for reading!
Some time ago someone requested a food sex chapter. I tried to search for the comment so I can give credit for the prompt, but I can't find it and I feel so bad!! I know I'm just overlooking it. So if it was you, please let everyone know because thank you for the idea!

John moaned as he woke up. The very effort of opening his eyes and shifting his body weight made him feel like he was moving through thick ocean waves that were fighting against him. A bout of nausea hit him as soon as his eyes flew open, and the headache began on cue as he turned to look at Sherlock.

He had been sleeping on his stomach while his boyfriend slept soundly beside him, curled up on his side. The bed was a mess: sheets wadded up, clothes on top of them not on them, there was a suspicious smell in the room, and as he moved again he realized his naked body was scraping against wet cotton.

“Sherlock,” he groaned, tapping his lover on the face. He tapped him on the shoulder next, harder, when he got no answer. “Sherlock, wake up. Sherlocccck.”

At last Sherlock echoed his groan, and his eyes batted open.

“You’re naked,” Sherlock announced.

Shivering, John realized that the duvet was mainly on Sherlock’s side, leaving him exposed and freezing.

“I’m aware,” he shot. Then he noticed the sticky mess staining Sherlock’s chest, and he reached over. Sherlock’s nose turned up as he rubbed the mess away. “Did we have sex?”

He sat up and looked around for evidence. A condom sat on top of the trash in the bin beneath him. An open bottle of lube sat on his bedside table. As though that wasn’t enough evidence his eyes went wide when he realized Sherlock’s scarf was tied to the bed post beside him and wrapped around the headboard, leaving the other half dangling above his head.

“Sherlock, why is your scarf in bed with us?”

Sherlock looked around, disoriented, and John picked up the scarf and slapped him in the face with it.

“Probably for the same reason your tie is,” he teased.

Horror filled his eyes as his boyfriend held up one of his best ties, a satin light blue that looked the sharpest with his favourite suit. Now it was wadded up beside Sherlock’s pillow.

“That’s my good tie!” John exclaimed, yanking it from him and throwing it on the floor.
“Good thing it’s now on the floor.”

Sherlock leaned over and kissed him, clearly determined to calm his nerves. When they broke apart their lips lingered together as John murmured:

“I hate not being able to remember having sex.”

“Does that happen often?” Sherlock asked. “Do you wake up thinking ‘since when am I having sex with Sherlock Holmes’?”

John smirked as he stole more kisses from him.

“How do you feel?” John asked between kisses.


“Very…peaceful. Surprisingly.”

Wrapping his arms around Sherlock he pulled him closer, but when he dared to lift his lover out from the sheets the man beneath him let out a small cry and jumped away.

“And now I might throw up,” Sherlock whined.

He leapt out of bed before John could reply and fled into the hallway, stark naked. John couldn’t help but to burst out laughing as he grabbed both of their pajamas and followed him. He waited in the kitchen while Sherlock took care of himself in the bathroom.

The state of the flat shocked him, and he froze when he saw the cards and dice spread across the kitchen table, all among bottles of beer and liquor. An assortment of drinks lined the kitchen cabinets as well, along with a half-eaten bag of crisps.

“Feel better?” He asked as Sherlock slumped against the wall beside him.

“Didn’t throw up,” Sherlock mumbled.

“It’s a hangover, love,” John said. “You’ve had them before.”

“Coffee!” Was his response.

With a sigh, he began making a pot of coffee.

“You’re a very demanding drunk,” John teased. “I think you asked me to tie you up.”

“I didn’t! Why would I do that?”

John shrugged.

“You’re a kinky drunk too,” he grinned.

At that Sherlock smiled. He dipped into the fridge and freezer in search of food and pulled away with a new tub of vanilla ice cream. John watched as Sherlock took out a bowl, a spoon, and an unopened bottle of chocolate syrup.

“Are you really about to eat an ice cream sundae for breakfast in front of a doctor?” John challenged.
Ignoring him, Sherlock tore into the ice cream and began eating it straight out of the carton- one of John’s top ten flatmate pet peeves.

“Lestrade owes me for this,” Sherlock said. “He didn’t even eat it!”

“I live with a child,” John said. He sighed. “Even Dan doesn’t eat ice cream for breakfast.”

“He would if he lived with me,” Sherlock replied.

“I don’t get it. Either you’re not eating, or you’re eating like a bloody teenager. And look at you.”

He poked at Sherlock’s ribs, and just the sight, just one touch, of his sleek body woke up his cock.

“You like it,” his boyfriend teased.

Taking John’s hands in his, Sherlock pressed against his body harder. Then he raised their hands so they climbed up to his nipples, and John went stiff as their fingertips pressed against them.

“Fuck it,” John whispered.

He dove in for a kiss, pinning Sherlock against the counters. Without letting go of the ice cream Sherlock kissed him back, hot and heavy. They kissed once, twice, and again before his boyfriend pulled away, and a spoonful of ice cream was soon placed in his mouth.

“Mmph!” John exclaimed through a spoonful of the cold goo.

“Admit it, you’ve always wanted ice cream for breakfast,” Sherlock said.

Another spoonful dived into his mouth. John squirmed, but he didn’t fight too hard. From the corner of his eye he saw Sherlock grab the chocolate syrup, and somehow he knew what he was in store for.

The sauce squirted out onto his bare chest, and John yelped. He was force-fed more ice cream as his nipples were covered in the sauce, and the spoon was shoved into his hand as Sherlock fell to his knees.

“Oh god!” Lips were at his nipples, licking away at the sauce and sucking against his chest.

It was warm and cold all at once, and the mixture was just perfect.

Soon his pyjamas were being pulled down and those lips were engulfing his cock, offering a few long sucks between pulling off abruptly.

“Shit,” he stammered.

He was covered his chocolate, as were Sherlock’s lips and hands as he continued taking him down. Sherlock reached for the carton of ice cream and dove his finger down into it. A streak of vanilla traced down his chest, then another down his back and to the crack of his arse crack.

“Christ,” he whispered, throwing his head back.

His hands grasped the counter as more vanilla was smeared onto his chest. Sherlock reached for the syrup again, and a long stream dripped down his body, to his cock, and into the mouth sucking him off. It was unlike anything he had ever felt before: so slick and fast. With two fingers this time Sherlock dove into the ice cream and stuffed some into his own mouth before reaching up. His arms were just long enough to reach his mouth, and god vanilla had never tasted so good.
“Do we have any whip cream?” Sherlock asked.

“Don’t think so,” John gasped.

“Fuck.”

He agreed.

Because the only thing that would make this feel better was having a handful of cool cream stuck to his chest. His hands roamed around his nipples just at the thought of it, caking his skin in chocolate and vanilla. Below him Sherlock began to wank as he sucked, and as those lips and hands tugged at him harder and harder John realized how close to the edge he was.

“Oh shit!” He cried softly as he came.

A mix of cum, chocolate, and drops of vanilla fell into Sherlock’s mouth as his lips parted, waiting for the release. His boyfriend continued to pump him as he thrust forward, shoving every last drop into his throat.

After he let out one final groan John fell back against the counter and jumped up on top to sit and watch Sherlock finish himself off. With a small gasp his boyfriend grabbed his own cock and went at it, pumping fast. Sherlock’s body was now covered in chocolate and vanilla goodness too, and it didn’t take long before he let out a stiff cry and grunted through his orgasm. He sat on his knees, catching his breath for a moment, before carefully standing up.

Sherlock placed his filthy hands on John’s bare thighs and leaned in, trapping him into a kiss. They were both disgusting and sticky, and John could now add his ears ringing to the list of things going mad in his body. Though they were both breathing hard from their climaxes Sherlock kissed him harder, grabbing his back and holding onto him tightly while John steadied himself where he sat on the countertop.

“Back to bed?” Sherlock gasped as he pulled away.

John nodded. He made the mistake of running a chocolate-covered hand through his blonde hair, making even more of a mess of himself. A grin spread across Sherlock’s face, and John knew what he had to do. He reached down, grabbed a handful of the melting ice cream, and smoothed it into Sherlock’s curls. His boyfriend grimaced but held on as the cold, wet, dessert was smeared deeper into his hair. Sherlock’s mouth fell into an ‘O’ as John’s ice cream covered hand dipped down his neck and shoulders.

“Shower first,” John announced.

His boyfriend only nodded, shivering, and they both slipped (quite literally) out of the kitchen, anxious for the warmth of a shower.

Chapter End Notes

Have I mentioned that you guys are the best? Because you all are incredibly awesome and seeing your comments and kudos and seeing all the people who are enjoying this story really make my day!

Any more prompts? There are still some older ones I want to go through. We're getting
close to the 100th chapter so I feel like I want to do something big to celebrate!
The Second Stain (part one)

Chapter Notes

The next case is based on Doyle's The Second Stain. Only, I always thought it was weird that the Prime Minister and Secretary came to visit Holmes personally, so I sent his assistant instead. This case *should* be in three parts...and as a hint, I'll say it ends with someone getting sacked and someone going on holiday ;)

Also, Jill + Whitten wrote: "I am just curious as to what happened to Michael and Lestrade after last night. Did they get a cab home while they were plastered? Or did John and Sherlock just fuck in the kitchen while their guests were still passed out in the living room?"

Here's what happened to Michael! As for Lestrade? They'll talk to him soon enough.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John decided the only thing stupider than staying up all night, getting drunk, and having sex that you can’t remember was staying up all night, getting drunk, having sex you can’t remember and then having sex again the next morning whilst having a hangover. He and Sherlock lay in bed for the next few hours, curled up and staying as still as possible.

A TV show played quietly on his laptop as Sherlock slept next to him with his arms wrapped around John’s torso. The rest of the flat was quiet and calm for once, and his headache was just beginning to subside when Sherlock’s arm suddenly struck out, nearly knocking his computer out of his lap.

His heart leapt as he turned to Sherlock, who was now fidgeting in his sleep: grasping at covers, head turning side to side, and lips letting out soft murmurs of pain.

“Sherlock?” He asked, carefully placing a hand near his boyfriend’s body.

Sherlock screamed as though he hit him and jerked out of his sleep. He ended up sitting straight up, panting and sweating, even though he looked fine just seconds ago.

“Sherlock,” John pleaded.

As always during these “episodes”, he felt helpless. Sherlock’s eyes finally softened as he breathed in heavy, desperate, breaths. John placed a hand on the small of his back, knowing he could only wait until his partner was ready to talk.

“Sorry,” Sherlock stammered.

“You don’t have to be. You know that.”

“I just,” Sherlock gasped and blinked hard a few times, like he was making sure he was really back in reality. “I just…thought they were over.”

“You can’t control it,” John said.
Letting out a long sigh, Sherlock threw himself back into the bed and hid his face in the pillows. John sank down beside him to kiss his neck softly and ran a hand through his hair. He felt like there was something else he could say, but nothing ever seemed to make Sherlock feel better. The only thing that did seem to work was just being there for him and giving him silence.

“I’m going to get up,” Sherlock finally mumbled.

John caught his arm as he tried to leave the bed.

“Stay here,” John said, gazing into his eyes.

But his lover jerked away.

Before Sherlock could reach the door someone’s shouting made them both freeze in place: it was Michael, calling for John. Unceremoniously, they grabbed their clothes and were just finishing getting dressed when they appeared in the living room where Michael was waiting with another man.

The man looked to be about Sherlock’s age. He was tall, with short brown hair and a grey designer suit. He carried a briefcase in one hand and kept glancing at his gold watch on the other. His shoes indicated that he had been driven here, while the buttons of the jacket told him the man had a sleepless night.

John, meanwhile, was staring at Michael.

“Why are you here?” John demanded.

Michael just blinked.

“You told me I could stay,” he replied. “You said: ‘why bother staying in a hotel when you could stay here’. So I crashed on the sofa.”

Eyes wide, John turned to Sherlock in terror, and he knew images of being naked and covered in chocolate syrup were crossing his boyfriends mind. But clearly there were more important things going on--their new visitor was staring him down, sizing him up, and Sherlock could tell he was not impressed.

“You weren’t on the sofa this morning,” John stammered.

“No,” Michael’s face went pale. “It was a bit noisy. All that…street noise.”

Sherlock was only half paying attention, but he knew enough to realize Michael hadn’t been bothered by street noise.

“Is this a friend of yours?” Sherlock asked him. Michael shook his head.

“I’m here to ask for your help, Mr. Holmes,” the stranger explained, “but I need to speak with you alone.”

“Anything you need to say to me can be said in front of John and--” he stopped and glanced to Michael’s friend. In all honesty, he couldn’t fully trust him yet.

“I’m going to go back upstairs,” Michael mumbled.

The stranger smirked as John’s mate trudged back up the stairs.
“Before I say anything to you, I have to warn you that this is a matter of national security,” the stranger said, “and I will need your word that anything spoken to you about this case will not be told to anyone else.”

“We’re not signing anything,” Sherlock shot.

“It’s fine,” John said, holding up a defensive hand, “it’s fine, we can keep our secrets.”

The stranger still didn’t look convinced.

“My name is Lewis Abbet,” he explained, “I work directly under the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.”

“And you need our help?” John asked. He looked a bit star struck, and Sherlock bit back a smirk.

“No,” Abbet said with a twinkle in his eye, “though if I have to stay long enough I may ask for a drink. I need your help, Mr. Holmes, because we cannot go to the police. We cannot ask for help within our own offices either. The matter is too delicate. The public can’t know, government employees can’t know, no one can know.”

“Secretary of State?” Sherlock asked. “I think you have the wrong Holmes.”

He tried to turn around again, but Abbet spoke up:

“An important document was stolen from the Secretary’s office. The contents of the document are so crucial to national security that if anyone should read it or- god forbid- leak it to the media, it would be devastating for England. It would mean more war, a hit on the economy, and a constant threat to our everyday lives. The Secretary wanted to come speak with you himself, as well as the Prime Minister, but it is the 21st century. They can’t just waltz into someone’s…home.”

His eyes flickered around the flat again, and somehow he felt like Abbet knew exactly what had happened here in the past twenty-four hours.

Exactly.

“What did the document say?” Sherlock demanded. Abbet just stared at him, like he had actually hoped he wouldn’t ask. “I can’t help you if I don’t know what I’m fighting.”

“I can’t tell you what’s in the document,” Abbet said, “I need your full-”

“You won’t have any trust from me if you don’t tell me what’s in the document.”

“Sherlock,” John warned.

He grabbed his arm and dragged him back into the kitchen. John began pouring him a cuppa and clearing off the bottles from the counter.

“The government is asking for our help,” John said, “the British government is our client! And our flat looks like shit.”

“I think the stains on the kitchen floor are the least of his worries.”

“Fucking shit!” John hissed, grabbing for a cloth. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Dropping to the floor, John scrubbed at what was left of their breakfast while Sherlock gazed at the
cup in his hand. He felt like someone was playing a joke on him: why would someone with the British government visit him? Why wasn’t Mycroft involved? Did his brother even know?

He drew his mobile from his pocket and contemplated texting him, but he couldn’t get what Abbet said out of his head. The government itself could not know about this document. Whatever was inside could start a war, which meant the storm must already be brewing. The letter would simply be the spark that would light the match.

“Stay here,” Sherlock muttered. He stormed back to the living room, where Abbet was again glancing at his watch. His employers must have warned them about time. “What do I need to do?”

“Just wait,” Abbet said, “I will call you tonight to see if there have been any developments.”

“So I’m supposed to not do anything and find developments at the same time?”

A small smile peered from Abbet’s lips.

“People trust you, Mr. Holmes,” Abbet explained, “and if whoever took the letter happens to be overcome with guilt or fear, they will trust you over the police or their own government. Make yourself available to anyone who rings or comes to your door.”

“Who would want to steal the letter?” Sherlock asked, ignoring everything Abbet just said. “It was addressed to the Secretary, yes? Could we assume it was stolen by the group or person the letter is about? Or maybe the person who wrote it themselves, if they are having doubts about sending the letter in the first place? What about your top spies?”

Abbet remained silent, giving him everything he needed to know.

“Eduardo Lucas?” Sherlock asked. “He’s been making some news lately. Not him himself, of course, but the things he has accomplished for your department. Jayme Flynn has been stirring up rumors in America.”

“We’ll keep your suggestions in mind,” Abbet said. “In the meantime, keep your door open.”

With that Abbet turned and left without a goodbye. Sherlock watched him closely, noting the way he walked, and almost let him get out the door.

But he just had to say something.

“Is it relapsing-remitting or secondary-progressive?” He announced.

John appeared in the room beside him and threw a glance toward him; he knew John understood.

“Are you dismissing the other types so soon?” Abbet replied dryly.

“Relapsing-remitting,” John announced. “I guess you notice his eyes?”

“Yes,” Sherlock nodded. From the way Abbet’s hand trembled on the doorknob he knew they were getting to him. “Why don’t you have a seat, Mr. Abbet?”

“I’m fine. I’ll phone later this evening.”

He grabbed the doorknob with more force than necessary and fled the flat without saying anything else.

“Multiple sclerosis?” John said, impressed.
“He's clearly experiencing blurry vision,” Sherlock said, “then there's the tremor in his hand, and the gait. The way he was checking his watch- personal anxiety rather than work. This whole case is probably driving him mad with stress.”

“You almost sound concerned,” John said.

Shrugging, he replied:

“What can I say, I date a doctor. He’s corrupted me.”

John planted a soft kiss on his lips.

“Play nice,” he warned. “It’s the government. I don’t want them exiling us to Antarctica because you’re a smartarse. Michael, you can come out now!”

Upstairs, John’s bedroom door peered open and Michael crept out.

“Up for another pint?” Michael asked as he came downstairs. “Or a bite to eat?”

“Sherlock is under strict orders to stay put,” John smirked, “but I am. Want us to bring you back something, love?”

“The game is afoot once again, Dr. Watson,” Sherlock teased. “No time for food.”

“Great,” John groaned, turning back to Michael. “He gets like this. He won’t eat or sleep for days now. Do you want me to stay and help you…wait?”

Like he would just sit and wait. He was already pulling books from his shelf on foreign affairs and heading back in his room for John’s laptop. It was already well into the afternoon, but he had a night full of researching the current Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Research that would be easier without John asking him questions every few minutes.

“Go,” Sherlock said as he got to work. “Have fun.”

He offered his boyfriend a quick kiss on the cheek before throwing himself down on the sofa with the laptop and book in hand to research.

And wait.

Of course for what, he did not know.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't realize it had been so long since I updated! I'm so sorry! I hope you enjoy this case!
I consider this a sped-up version of The second Stain, since it's no longer 19th century and I figured police work might be a bit quicker now.

For the second time in the past twenty-four hours, John settled into a booth at the pub with Michael. He felt a bit more at ease this time: gone was the awkwardness of seeing a friend for the first time in years, and Michael seemed to be dealing with finding out about him and Sherlock well. They ordered a couple of pints, some fish and chips, and picked a seat with a good view of the telly to check out the match on.

“What was with the bloke at the door?” Michael asked. “Or is it top-secret government stuff?”

John glared at him, and his friend’s eyes went wide.

“No way!” Michael exclaimed. “Does this kind of thing happen to you often?”

“Well…” he debated telling Michael all about Mycroft. On one hand it would make a really impressive dinner story. On the other he might get locked up in solitary confinement for it. “Let’s just say Sherlock has some ties with the government.”

“Bloody hell,” Michael said, laughing through his bites of chips. “You’ve really established a crazy life in London. You have a boyfriend, you work with the police and government, your picture is in the paper. You write a famous blog.”

“It’s not that famous!”

“Are you kidding?” Michael said. “Do you not follow Facebook? Our mates from the army are always linking to your stories. After the Baskerville case you two were actually trending on Twitter! Before you know it you’ll be asked to join Strictly Come Dancing.”

“Oh god,” he moaned, “I can’t even imagine: Sherlock on a reality show? Or me on a reality show. Or Sherlock dancing. Or me dancing! They can’t be that desperate for good telly. Then again, seeing me fall on my arse might actually make for decent ratings.”

Michael laughed again as he accepted their drinks. They made a toast, and John was grateful for the warmth of the Guinness. He knew they were avoiding the inevitable talk about the fact that Michael was practically hitting on him the night before…not to mention the fact that he’d snogged Sherlock in front of an entire copper bar to avoid telling him he wasn’t interested.

“I’m sorry if I’ve made it weird between us,” Michael said, blurtting it out like he’d been holding that in all day. John pictured him sleeping up in his own bedroom (god that must have been awkward!) debating about how to bring it up.

“It’s fine,” John said, feigning a smile, “honestly. We’ll laugh about this someday.”

“You’ll laugh about it!” Michael shot. “I feel like I was an arse to you.”
John sipped more of the beer, suddenly wishing that Sherlock were here.

“You’re being way too hard on yourself,” John replied.

“Can I ask you something?” Michael had that hesitant ‘let’s talk about your sexuality’ look. He’d seen it enough from his sister and parents. He was not ready to have that conversation with Michael. “Is Sherlock the first man you’ve been with?”

He resisted the urge to sigh.

_Here we go._

“Yes,” he admitted.

A faint smile crossed Michael’s face as he nursed his beer.

“So if I had the nerve to tell you how I really felt about you in the army, I wouldn’t have stood a chance?”

He couldn’t help but to grin.

“Please tell me you haven’t fancied just me in the past few years!” John said. “God that would make me feel like a prick.”

“No!” Michael exclaimed, laughing again. “No, there have been…others.”

“Others?”

“You know. Women…and men.”

At least that made him feel a bit better. It wasn’t like Michael had been only pining over him. Then again, it made him feel kind of stupid to suggest he would feel that way.

“So what other guys have you been pining after?” John teased.

He downed more of his beer, and as the food arrived he began digging in as soon as it landed on the table. Somehow, seeing how little Sherlock ate always made him feel hungrier himself.

“There was this bloke from California for a while,” Michael said. His eyes twinkled as he emphasized: “An American. He worked for a tech company and had loads of money. Not that that’s why I was interested.”

“Oh, of course not,” John said through a mouthful of fish, “but I should point out that I’m a doctor, so your record of going after rich men is growing.”

“In my defense, you’re also a grown man living with a flatmate,” Michael pointed out.

“True.”

And he didn’t exactly have a real job anymore. In fact, he hadn’t been this poor since uni.

“Anyway,” Michael went on, “he was a great guy, but he had a little too much baggage.”

_We definitely wouldn’t have gotten on well then._

“The kind that involves old lovers and pity feuds,” Michael explained. “In the end I think he just
wasn’t that happy with England. I think he came here believing it would solve all his problems, but he just seemed so miserable most of the time. After about three months he went home and we called it quits. He was a great shag, though.”

John nearly choked on his food. He didn’t remember Michael being so open about relationships and sex before.

“What about you?” Michael said. “I know how you two met, but how did you and Sherlock become…you and Sherlock?”

His cheeks went a bit red as he thought back to that night. They had been through so many things since then that John rarely thought about it, but now that he stopped to remember, sitting on that peer, wet and freezing, with Sherlock’s lips on his for the first time just seemed so long ago. It seemed like a lifetime ago.

“There was this case that has us chasing some crazy guy down to a dock by the Thames,” John began. “I honestly don’t remember much about what the case was actually about, to be honest. I just remember this guy cornering Sherlock. I tried sneaking up on the guy but he caught me. He threw Sherlock back so hard that his wrist was messed up badly for a while, and I ended up unconscious in the Thames.”

Michael stared at him, a chip dangling in his hand, forgotten.

“No way!”

“The next thing I know my eyes shot open to find Sherlock bending over me,” John said. “We were back on the dock. It turns out he jumped into the river after me, managed to find me and pull me out, and gave me CPR that saved my life. He was shaking all over. I knew he’d thought he lost me. And then he kissed me.”

He glanced away, feeling awkward as Michael continued to gape at him. John went back to his food, hoping for a distraction. There was no way to describe to people how important that night was to him—how life changing. At last Michael announced:

“That has to be the most sickening romantic first kiss story I’ve ever heard.”

John grinned.

“I was in complete shock for a bit,” he admitted. “I had no idea he felt that way about me. It was weird too since we already lived together, but being friends just makes it that much easier. It’s been nice. Very nice.”

“That’s really good,” Michael said. He didn’t sound like he meant it. “I’m glad you’re happy. You deserve it.”

“Thanks,” John said, “and you’ll find someone.”

That might have been the worst thing I could have said!

Michael’s face fell, confirming his fears.

“Yeah,” he mumbled as his fingers shifted through his last chip crumbs. “I wish you had told me about him. Not because it would have made things a hell of a lot less awkward, but because you dropped off the face of the planet for a while there. I was worried about you after you got shot.”
They both fell silent, and John felt terrible. He really had been a crappy friend, but at the same time he had no idea there were people out there who actually wondered about what happened to him after he left the army.

“How have you been, other than your relationship?” Michael asked.

His eyes flickered toward him carefully, and John knew what he was getting at. He had been debating for days how much he should tell Michael, but then again besides Sherlock he was one of the few friends he had.

“I struggled after I came out of the army,” he confessed. “I was in therapy- both for my shoulder and for my mind. I had this psychosomatic limp that was just bizarre. Some days it got to the point where I didn’t know what was real or what wasn’t. I was having nightmares. I couldn’t trust anyone. I just felt so bloody helpless. Finding out that I couldn’t go back to the army was just a shock. It was really horrible.”

“Sounds like you could have used a friend.”

Their eyes met.

“Most people I knew were back in Afghanistan,” he said. “My family and I have never had the best relationship. My sister tried to get me to talk to her but I just distanced myself from everyone. Then I met Sherlock and…somehow he understood. Well, he didn’t pressure me about it, so it at least seemed like he understood my need for distance. It was like he was there for me and let me move on that the same time.”

Michael nodded, looking like he only half understood.

John let his eyes wonder, feeling the need for distraction. His attention turned to the news playing on the other telly, and his heart skipped a beat when he saw Lestrade giving a press conference on London’s latest murder victim: Eduardo Lucas. He instantly recognized the name and whipped out his mobile.

Eduardo Lucas is dead, he quickly texted to Sherlock.

Thanks for the tip :) - SH

He stared at the reply, wondering if he was supposed to do something. Then his mobile began ringing, and John sighed as he stood.

“I'll be right back,” he said, throwing an apologetic look to Michael.

As soon as he slipped out of the pub and answered Sherlock began spieling:

“I had an interesting visitor tonight, just as our friend predicted. The Secretary’s wife stopped by.”

“Wife?!” John hissed into the mobile. “The Secretary for Foreign Affair’s wife was in our flat?”

“Yes,” Sherlock said. If he didn’t know better he would have thought Sherlock sounded ever-so impressed himself. “She demanded to know what was in the letter. I was curious to know why she was so concerned so I pushed back-“

Wonderful. He's been yelling at the man's wife.

“I refused to tell her anything. I wanted her to bite first, but she ran. She begged me not to tell
anyone I was there.”

“Well, good thing you called me.”

He could practically hear Sherlock smirking.

“Lestrade is asking for our help. Care to join?”

John through a glance toward the pub, where Michael was waiting for him. He would have to understand- this was technically his job, after all, and not to mention it was apparently a matter of national security. His eyes trailed back to the street, and that’s when he saw it:

The latest edition of The Sun, with pictures of him and Sherlock splattered across the front. Famous Local Sleuths Turned Lovers was the headline, and as John’s eyes ran across the picture of the two of them snogging inside the pub, a close-up of his hand on Sherlock’s arm, a shot of them walking down the street shoulder-to-shoulder.

His hands began shaking, and after considering rolling the paper up and taking it with him to show Sherlock he instead settled for balling it up and throwing it hard into a nearby bin.

“John?” Sherlock was calling his name from the other line.

“It’s the fucking press,” he shot, “The story is out about us. Right there on the front page of The Sun.”

Sherlock snorted.

“It’s The Sun. They also reported we got engaged at Baskerville.”

“Well they have pictures this time!” John exclaimed. “They can’t just do this! Imagine what my mother will think.”

“I thought we were no longer concerned with what your mother thought?” Sherlock said. John fell silent. “It will be okay. I’ll get Mycroft to take care of it. No more photos in the papers, alright?”

Eyes closed, John forced himself to take a few deep breaths. Slowly his blood pressure leveled off and the adrenaline melted away. He tried telling himself it was no big deal, that the papers really did run this crap all the time. At the same time, he couldn’t help but to feel stupid about kissing Sherlock in public. This definitely wouldn’t help the situation with his parents any, nor their relationship with 99% of the people of Scotland Yard.

“John, are you okay?” Sherlock asked.

“Yeah,” he said, letting out a shaky sigh. “Yeah. I’ll be there. Text me the address. Give me a minute to get Michael a cab back to the flat.”

“Tell him to watch out for crazy, rich, blonde women.”

“Yeah, I’m not going to mention that,” John teased. “I’ll see you soon.”

“I love you.”

John froze. Those three words were usually only uttered during sex, after sex, or quietly into each other’s ear. Each time he heard Sherlock say those words it was like understood the meaning of them more and more. They both were.
And this time, those words meant that Sherlock actually cared that John was upset about those stupid articles in *The Sun*.

“I love you too,” he breathed.

The other line went dead, and John felt an odd sense of emptiness as he was left standing by himself in the street. He remembered his friend sitting alone in the pub, and he had to force his eyes away from the newsstand in order to bring himself to go back inside.

Chapter End Notes

I'm glad you guys like the case so far! As we get closer to the 100th chapter the story's going to turn into a new direction, with the Johnlock relationship being made public and Sherlock...well, you will see! That will be based on the books too ;)

There's also another idea I wanted to throw out there. Since way back in this fic I've considered doing a companion 30 Day Challenge type story about Mycroft and Lestrade that could go deeper into their story. It would parallel with the universe of this story but would be told in a way that anyone should be able to get what's going. What do you think? Would you be interested? No promises on this, but I've been brainstorming! I haven't had as much luck with Mystrade stories, but I love them!
Sherlock’s heart skipped beats when he saw John wonder into their victim’s massive living room. Their eyes met, and with one gaze he could see how much distress his boyfriend was in.

He could have punched the stupid ‘reporter’ who printed that story.

As soon as John stepped into the crime scene the entire team stopped and stared. All eyes were on John— not even Sherlock— but John, who stood, completely stiff. For a moment he thought John was going to say something, and part of him hoped he would lecture Lestrade’s entire team.

And part of him felt that maybe he should himself.

Up until now John’s role in cases had been relatively quiet as far as the rest of the Scotland Yard was concerned. He was just Sherlock Holmes’ flatmate who hung around the crime scenes because well…probably because of the same reasons he used to. It was a puzzle to solve, a person to help, and Sherlock knew he was the only one who would ever get that.

But now as everyone stared his boyfriend down with nothing but cold judgment in their eyes, he realized they disapproved of John more than ever. They were looking at him like he just didn’t belong. And yet not that long ago they were crowded around him at the pub, emmersed in war stories about him.

Bastards.

“Back to work!” The DCI barked before he had a chance to speak up.

Ushering John inside, they both headed over to Sherlock so they could catch up. For a moment his partner let his eyes roam the crime scene, which was a mess. Most of the furniture was pushed to one side of the room. Chairs were toppled over. One even lingered near the mark showing where the victim was found, indicating that he might have used it to protect himself. The murder took place in the dining room, which had at one time been nice considering the flat in itself was small and non-descript. There was a china cabinet in the corner filled with fallen plates and a bookshelf that once held the antique copies of classic novels sprawled about the floor. A marker stood in the doorway, as though indicating that’s how the door was found.

“So he knew his killer?” John asked.

He only needed one sweep of the crime scene to detect that, and Sherlock’s lips turned up in a small grin.

“Yes, that is what I’m assuming.” Lestrade replied. “Time of death was put between midnight and six AM. The body wasn’t discovered until about four hours ago when a neighbor happened to walk by and noticed the front door was slightly ajar. As you saw, the flat’s in the back corner of the corridor so it’s not surprise someone may have not discovered it earlier. Lucas himself does
administrative work for the government.”

Sherlock bit back a snort.

*Not* that kind of *administrative work.*

He began to realize that trying to respect the Secretary’s wish to keep his case private was going to be impossible now that the police were taking care of the murder investigation.

Lestrade led them over to the other side of a long, overturn, dining room table that was also pushed off to the side. A pale white rug decorated with red roses lay where the table used to sit, and as soon as Sherlock spotted this he knew what Lestrade was going to tell them.

Before he could explain, Lestrade glanced around to the rest of the team. Only Anderson, Donavon, and another constable were left to shift through the scene.

“Go ahead and clear the scene for now,” Lestrade announced, “we’ve got another press conference in an hour.”

The three just stared, as though they could clearly see through their DCI’s excuse to get them out. Anderson threw up his hands and stormed out. The other constable followed, but Donavan just stood, gaping at Lestrade.

“God forbid we try to do our bloody job!” She snapped.

Lestrade blinked, looking like a confused father as he watched her storm away.

“Jesus,” John mumbled.

Lestrade’s lips remained in a firm line, but he was clearly holding back his own comment. He led them to a stain on the right corner of the carpet closest to the door. The carpet was soaked through with blood.

“Most of the crime scene is cut and dry,” Sherlock said. “The victim knew his attacker. The attacker was a woman, one who is not skilled in fighting. She would probably claim the murder was in self-defense or out of sheer panic. Talk to neighbors, look at security footage. You should find your culprit soon enough.”

“I don’t need a consultant to tell me all that,” Lestrade snapped. Sherlock stopped, taken aback. He had the feeling he was feeling more than a bit of anxiety about his first day as DCI. “What worries me is this.”

He lifted back the carpet, and he and John both stared down as Lestrade revealed that the hardwood beneath the stain was completely dry.

“Why didn’t the blood leak through onto the floor?” John asked.

“That was the very first thing I noticed when looking through the scene,” Lestrade said, “but if you look over here, where the neighbor said the body was found…”

He walked them over to the corner at the other end of the rug and lifted it to reveal blood-stained floorboards. Yet the corner of the rug itself was completely dry.

“So the crime scene has been re-arranged?” John asked.

“Yes,” Lestrade replied, “and recently.”
Sherlock was too busy staring at his mobile; he had just realized why Lestrade had really called them here.

“There’s not a press conference in an hour.”

The DCI and his boyfriend turned, staring.

“What?” Lestrade spat; caught.

“There’s no conference,” Sherlock said, “you wanted your team out. You wanted to show us the crime scene in private. Donavan was pissed, and the other constable just wants to keep his job until the wedding’s over. So what did Anderson do now?”

From the look on Lestrade’s face Sherlock could tell he was right- and the detective wasn’t amused about it.

“He was the first one on the scene,” Lestrade said, “I give him one chance to show some leadership and he still mucks it up. I think he let an unauthorized person in.”

“Do you think it was intentional?” John asked.

“I’m not sure,” Lestrade admitted.

Sherlock threw another glance around the room. It just all seemed too easy. It was all too obvious.

“A woman was seen wondering around the building around the time of death,” Lestrade said. “She’s been identified by contacts in the French police as Mme Henri Fournaye. I have men out searching for her now.”

Then that’s not who Anderson let in, he thought, he would have recognized her. Even he’s not that stupid.

“You should go talk to Anderson,” Sherlock said. “Interrogate him, and I mean really interrogate him because he’ll hold back until you force it out of him. He won’t realize how big of a deal this is.”

Lestrade blinked, confused, and Sherlock realized that even he didn’t have a clue how big of a deal this is.

“I’ll phone you if I find out anything,” Lestrade offered. “Thanks, seriously.”

“It’s been a rough day,” John offered.

With a sigh Lestrade brought his fist to his forehead like he had a headache.

“You two have five minutes,” the DCI said. “No more, got it?”

They nodded, and Sherlock waited until he heard Lestrade’s footsteps disappear down the hall. As soon as they were alone Sherlock got to work.

“Help me move this,” he said as he began pushing the rest of the furniture away from the rug.

“What are you thinking?” John demanded.

“This can’t be a coincidence,” Sherlock said. He kicked away at the rug and fell down to the floors. He felt foolish as he began feeling at each and every floorboard, but he knew it was
necessary. “It’s just too impossible. Lucas must have had the note here, and someone must have
known. They killed him for it, John. It has to be here- ah!”

At last his fingers fell on a loose floorboard. Breathing hard, he threw it opened to reveal…

Nothing.

The small hiding space was empty.

“A woman did this,” Sherlock mumbled, “a woman wanted the letter. A woman who did not know
politics, but one who did know who Lucas was. John-’

Everything became so clear so suddenly that his hands latched onto his boyfriend as he stood up. A
wave of dizziness overtook him for a moment; there was just too much in his head. He blinked,
trying to clear some of it out- some of that necessary crap from drinking and cards and games. John
held onto him, staring at him and looking worried, but giving him time.

“Of course!” Sherlock exclaimed. He took out his mobile and quickly began dialing. As soon as the
other line picked up he said: “Abbet? It’s Sherlock Holmes. I know who has that letter. It’s the
same person who killed Lucas, and it’s been right here in front of my face this whole time. Oh it
was so obvious! But that’s just it, isn’t it? After all, when are the affairs of the government ever
obvious?”

“Affairs…Lucas…what?!?” Was Abbet’s reply.

“Text us the address of the Secretary,” Sherlock said, “we will meet you there.”

“You can’t just-’’

Sherlock hung up as Abbet began lecturing him about barging in on a man as important as the
Secretary. Without a care, he and John put the crime scene back as it was found and left the flat
with grins on their faces.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading and for your comments! I'm glad you all are enjoying the case.
Like said, this is a fast-paced version of it. I know Sherlock spends a lot of time in the
book not getting anywhere with the case and going crazy for it, but I just didn't see
how that would work with how investigations are run now.

Also, I won't be able to update for a few days. I'll try to put something up Sunday!
Sorry to leave you hanging, but it will be worth the wait!
“Holy shit I can’t believe I’m here,” John whispered as they walked through the grand entrance of the Secretary’s house.

Sherlock smirked, feeling a sense of pride from having impressed John yet again.

“You couldn’t just meet the man in his office, could you?” John teased quietly.

He only grinned as they stepped into the main room because it wasn’t the Secretary they were meeting. Outside the house appeared massive, taking over more than a couple of acres of land. With beautiful Victorian architecture on the outside and fine modern details on the inside, the house was definitely set to impress. Despite it looks the lot was surprisingly quiet, and echoes of footsteps were all that can be heard as heals approached them. The Secretary’s wife looked stunning in a dark blue evening gown; her hair was up in a tight bun and her face sparkled with just the right amount of makeup.

But her eyes were filled with horror and sorrow.

“Mr. Holmes,” she trembled as she approached them.

“This is Dr. John Watson,” Sherlock explained, “my…”

“I know,” she interrupted curtly. He couldn’t help but to notice she threw a dirty look John’s way, and even his partner seemed shocked. “Why are you here?”

“I’m sure you’ve heard by now of the death of Eduardo Lucas?” He asked.

“I’ve never heard of him.”

Her eyes flickered away, giving him everything he needed to know. The Secretary’s wife turned away from them. She wrapped her arms around herself and gazed at a tiny jewelry box on the counter. The box was locked with a tiny heart-shaped lock.

“Where’s the letter?” Sherlock asked softly. “I know it was you. Lucas was blackmailing you. What did he take from you?”

“So many questions,” she whispered, “I thought the police would be the ones interrogating me.”

“No,” Sherlock smirked, “even worse: you’ll get my brother.”

She actually shuddered at that.

“Lucas took something of mine,” she finally admitted. She let out a heavy sigh, like she had been holding it in for days’ worth of exhaustion. “He’s intercepted emails, text, letters. Nothing of
political importance, but god my husband would be embarrassed. It would ruin him. All of it is old, but you know politics. Nothing is old. Anything can become a story in an instant. The contents of those letters, it’s just…”

Her eyes fell closed, and beside him John looked away out of respect.

“I was an idiot, falling for his tricks,” she admitted. “I had no idea how important this letter is.”

Without saying anything else she walked over to the box, withdrew a key from the bag she had been holding, and opened the box to reveal a long, pale blue envelope. She walked back over toward him and placed it in Sherlock’s hands. A shiver of electrifying energy rushed through him as he thought of the power this letter held, and for just that moment he relished in being one step ahead of his brother.

“Take it, I don’t want it!” She exclaimed. “I didn’t kill him, though, I promise. Lucas’…girlfriend, or whoever she was, came by at the same time. I never saw what happened but she was there, I swear it.”

Of course. He immediately took out his mobile, snapped a picture of her before she could yelp in surprise, and sent it to Lestrade with the message:

*Ask Anderson if this is who went into the crime scene.*

“I believe you,” Sherlock said, tucking the letter safely into his jacket.

“Please don’t tell him I took the letter,” the Secretary’s wife pleaded. “I promise you, I was trying to protect him. Lucas claimed he could make our lives very miserable if I didn’t give it to him. He said he had more on us. He knew things…”

“It’s okay,” he said, offering her a kind smile. “We won’t tell a soul.”

“That’s that, then?” John asked as they made a later dinner together that night.

Sherlock stole a quick kiss from him as he grabbed a carrot to chop up. A gorgeous smile swept across John’s face as he continued cutting up the potatoes. After turning the letter over to Mycroft he made his brother swear he would simply return it to the Secretary’s office. The whole issue with the letter would play out as a terrible mistake.

“It was really quite a simple case,” Sherlock admitted. “Powerful leader’s wife gets blackmailed. Said wife panics. Unknowingly, she steals one of the most important documents in British history…though I’m sure our friend Mr. Abbet was doing some exaggerating.”

“I’m sure,” John said, rolling his eyes.

“Eventually she realized her error and snuck into the crime scene to steal the letter. The events of the murder really did happen as she told us; it was the French woman who did it, thinking that she, too, was sleeping with Lucas. Ironically enough, she could have just stolen her own things too, but they’re currently hidden under Mr. Lucas’ pillow.”

John’s face contorted into disgust.

“That’s just disturbing.”
The door to the flat opened, and Sherlock realized he’d nearly forgotten Michael was still there. Judging by Michael’s drenched appearance and the soaked, rolled up paper in his shivering hands, it had begun raining.

“John can I talk to you?” Michael asked, all in one breath.

His boyfriend glanced to him and Sherlock nodded, taking over cutting the potatoes for him. As soon as John disappeared his mobile rang.

“Holmes,” he announced.

“It’s Lestrade,” said the hurried voice on the other end, “you won’t fucking believe this, but I just fired Anderson.”

Sherlock was so shocked the knife slipped in his hand, nicking his finger just enough to draw blood. He bit down hard on his lip and brought the finger to his mouth, sucking down hard on it as he reached for a towel.

“What?” He hissed, ignoring the sting of fabric against his latest wound.

“I sacked him!” Lestrade moaned. “Day one of being DCI and I had to sack someone. God this does nothing for my reputation.”

“Damn your reputation!” Sherlock shot. “Back to the Anderson bit.”

“Right. The bloody twat really did let an unauthorized person into a crime scene,” Lestrade explained, “that’s enough right there- not to mention the mountain of stuff I have on him already. It was just his attitude about the whole thing, like he didn’t get why it was important. He tried to claim that he didn’t know this person wasn’t with the department. I showed him that picture and he said yes, it was her. But why does that matter anyway?”

A grim smile formed on his face as he tightened the towel around his steadily bleeding. Fuck, John was going to freak.

“The fingerprints will show a match to that French woman,” Sherlock said. “She was having an affair with Lucas. That’s your killer.”

“But what about the second stain? And that woman in the photo, she looks nothing like this French person! Who is she, Sherlock?”

And you call yourself Mycroft Holmes’ boyfriend, he thought to himself.

“No one,” he answered, “you did right by sacking Anderson.”

“I hope so,” Lestrade sighed. “He put our entire investigation at risk. But that’s not the only reason I fired him, and that’s not why I called. Look Sherlock, there’s something I’ve got to tell you. Someone from The Sun phoned me-“

But he didn’t have time to care. John appeared with Michael, the two of them looking utterly depressed.

“Got to go,” he said, hanging up before Lestrade could get in another word. “John?”

When John didn’t even comment on the bloody towel in his hand he knew something was wrong.

“I should be going,” Michael said quietly. It was only then he noticed Michael had his bags with
him. “It was good to meet you, Sherlock. Text, phone, whatever, if you want.”

He nodded.

“Likewise,” he said, shaking Michael’s hand without taking his eyes off John. His boyfriend was staring at the floor, clutching Michael’s newspaper in hand. When he saw which paper it was his heart sank with dread. After placing a comforting hand on John’s shoulder, Michael offered them both a sad smile and slipped out of the flat. Sherlock stepped forward and pried the paper away from John’s hand.

His body nearly exploded into pieces when he read the latest ‘headline’ about them:

Famous Blogger Spotted With A New Man…Yes, Already! Exclusive Inside!

It only took seeing one picture of John and Michael sitting together at the pub for him to let out a roar of frustration and rip the paper into shred. All the while John’s eyes remained glued to the floor, and when he was done Sherlock simple stood there, breathing hard.

“Sherlock, I—“

John stopped to swallow, struggling to find words.

“Stop,” Sherlock said. “Just…fuck them! Fuck them all.”

With another cry he pushed an entire stack of plates to the floor, and John jumped as they all crashed into pieces. His mind didn’t even register that that was their only set of plates, and they really belonged to John.

Then a small hand grabbed his, and Sherlock’s body melted at the warmth the touch brought him. John stepped up to him so that their mouths were only inches apart. His voice was small and desperate as he whispered:

“You know I would never-“

He didn’t let John finished. John didn’t deserve to have to make a statement like that. Instead he pressed his lips against his boyfriend’s, trapping him into a bruising kiss. His lover’s arms slipped around his back, pulling him close. Once they were together Sherlock reached over, turning off the stove.

“Your finger’s bleeding,” John announced quietly before kissing him again.

“Cut it,” Sherlock gasped.

“Why”

Another kiss, and he explained:

“Lestrade sacked Anderson.”

John kissed him with a force so strong he fell back against the counter. Sherlock felt his cock growing hard against his leg, and he thrust forward playfully, hinting that he too wanted to move things along quickly.

Quickly and roughly, he thought to himself.

Lips suddenly attacked his neck, sucking there desperately, and he gasped. He took John’s hand in
his and planted another deep kiss on his lips before leading him to the bedroom.

His mobile was left abandoned on the counter, and Sherlock didn’t notice the text that read:

_Anderson’s been talking to The Sun. I think he’s talked to others too. I’m so sorry, Sherlock._ - GL

Chapter End Notes

Yup, no more Anderson. Well, except for one final thing...

Chapter 100 coming up next! I'm so excited!
“Sherlock.”

He flexed his hips to meet the thrust of his lover, wrapping his arms around his back and pulling him closer as he did. Lips graced his, and Sherlock moaned when that mouth suddenly dashed to his neck.


His fingertips dug into Luke’s sides, and his boyfriend gasped. Their arses pounded against each other, giving Sherlock’s cock just the right angle to slip in out, in out.

“Someone’s been practicing,” Luke teased into his ear.

Sherlock mirrored his grin as he thrust harder and harder until an idea struck him. He grabbed hold of Luke and threw them around in one swift move, pinning him deep into the mattress.


Sherlock grinned as he began pounding, but when Luke screamed again and swatted his hands back toward him, he pulled out as he realized he was shouting in pain. Breathing hard, Sherlock flipped on the light and froze when he saw Luke’s back for the first time. They had been fucking in almost complete darkness, but as soon as the light hit his bare back Sherlock froze at the maze of cuts, and bruises.

Luke curled up against the bed, fist clenching sheets and eyes shut.

“Jesus,” Sherlock whispered. Carefully, he sat down behind him and raised a finger to-

“Don’t!” Luke gasped, hugging the pillow as he flinched. “Don’t touch me.”

“You should have said I was hurting you!” Sherlock exclaimed. “You should have told me. You were just going to let me-”

Spinning his head around, Luke gazed at him desperately. He gently lowered himself back down and Sherlock went with him. They faced each other, and he realized for the first time how tired Luke looked.


Sherlock brought a finger up to trace his face. A yellowing bruise stood beneath his eye, one he had noticed for a fleeting moment during sex but had assumed it was from one of Luke’s fights he tended to get into.
I should have asked.

“What happened?” He asked.

His boyfriend just shook his head, refusing to say. Sherlock caressed his cheek and Luke bit his lip, holding back a sob. He hadn’t seen him this vulnerable since that night he came back to their flat after being beaten.


“You have me.”

He scooted closer so that he could wrap an arm around Luke’s shoulder to hold him close. Both of their erections had disappeared, but as they lay this close, letting out desperate, shuddering, breaths, Sherlock wanted him even more. He wanted to be his again.

“Do you want to get clean?” He asked.

His heart skipped a beat when Luke nodded. At last he let out a trembling sob and admitted the last words Sherlock would ever hear him say:

“I can’t do it anymore.”

An hour later he woke up with a gasp. He couldn’t even remember falling asleep, but they must have out of sheer emotional exhaustion. His eyes darted around his room, and he couldn’t remember why the light was turned on. He was naked and sweating, but he knew he hadn’t gotten off. It wasn’t until he heard the sounds of Luke screaming before he remembered the scars and snapped out of it.

On instinct he leaped out of bed and, ignoring the fact that he was completely nude, dashed into the living room. His heart pounded when he realized the room was torn up- everything from the furniture to the books on the shelves had been slashed with a knife. There was blood everywhere.

He felt sick as his eyes flashed around and found his intruder. He was a large figure, wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt drawn up over his face. With the shadow of his face exposed Sherlock recognized him instantly as Kirchhoff, the same drug dealer Luke had warned him about so long ago. He remembered the horror stories, and as his wide eyes stared into the man’s fiery ones, he had no doubt they were all true.

That’s when he saw the bloody knife, and he nearly threw up. His eyes darted down to the body lying on the floor.

“No,” he whispered.

Luke was wrapped in one of Sherlock’s own dressing gown. Judging by the broken glass by his side he had gotten up for some water when he came face to face with Kirchhoff. He was sprawled on his back with a hand over his chest, clutching an obvious knife wound.

His eyes had already rolled to the back of his head, and his skin was a sickening gray.

“NO!” Sherlock shouted.

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He fell to the floor beside him with tears rushing down his face. Completely ignoring the villain
looming over him, Sherlock fought to grab hold of Luke’s hand. He gasped in shock and jerked away when he found his skin ice cold.

“No,” Sherlock whispered again.

He sobbed as the world around him seemed to crack and wither. He had never felt so impossibly alone.

*The one person in this world who loves me is dead.*

A foot connected with his bare back, sending him crashing to the floor. He tried to spin around to stop it, but he was too lightweight and scrawny compared to the muscles Kirchhoff sported. The foot flipped him over, and he landed hard on his back just in time to see the fist rushing forward toward his face. The single hit made him feel like he had been run over by a car and it only took one more punch before he was out cold.

When he woke up again he was in an ambulance. Judging from the view outside his window they were still in front of his flat building. He must not have been out for very long, though it still took him a few good moments to remember everything. He struggled against the wires pinning him to machines and the oxygen mask covering his face. Lestrade stepped in with a medic, who freed him of the mask.

“Take a few deep breaths for me,” the medic instructed. “Lestrade wants to ride with us, is that okay?”

Sherlock’s eyes found his friend hovering over him, his eyes hard and his face pale. He took in the fact that he was in a hospital gown now; his face fell completely swollen. The vision of Lestrade shifted in and out of focus as his head throbbed.

“Is there anyone I should contact for him?” The medic asked.

“His brother, but I can do it,” Lestrade offered, “and you should know his medical history.”

Sherlock stayed quiet as Lestrade explained his history of drug abuse and recent stint in rehab. He could feel the medic’s judgmental eyes on him, and he could practically feel how little the man cared about him the more Lestrade explained his past.

“Do you feel like you’ve been drugged?” The medic asked. “Or have you taken anything? Don’t bother lying, they’ll do a test at the hospital.”

He shook his head again.

“He’s telling the truth,” Lestrade said, “he stayed under my care until getting his flat set up last week. I made him get regular testing done.”

The medic didn’t look impressed.

Sherlock tried to sit up and was met with two sets of hands pushing him down. He realized he was wrapped in multiple blankets, but he was still freezing.

“Sherlock, I have to ask, and I’m sorry to have to but just from the state of you I need to know,” Lestrade took a deep breath, “were you raped?”

The answer was a definite no- *well, I was unconscious, wasn’t I? So who knows?* - but he couldn’t answer. He didn’t have time to deal with these questions, not when his life was currently being
ripped from under his feet.

“T’ve got to go back!” Sherlock choked. “Please let me. I want to go back.”

Lestrade exchanged worried glances with the medic, who began checking his temperature.

“Let the police take care of your flat, Sherlock. We’ve got to take care of you.”

“I don’t care about the fucking flat!” Sherlock explained. His eyes began to water and he was breathing so hard it was almost impossible to get a steady stream of words out. “I want Luke. I want him. I want to see him. Please let me. *Please.*”

“You’re going to the hospital,” Lestrade said; he just looked so sorry for him. “You need to rest Sherlock, your head-“

“I don’t care!” He snapped. He swatted at the medic when he tried to place yet another wire on him. “I need to see him!”

“Sherlock,” Lestrade’s hand grasped his fist, holding him in a tight, comforting, grip. “You’re in shock. Let the medic take care of you. Let me take you to the hospital.”

The fact that Lestrade was refusing to acknowledge him made him even more afraid. Sherlock knew deep down that there was no way Luke could have survived, that he already looked so far gone when he saw him. But he had to see for himself. He had to see him one last time.

His palm was offered another comforting squeeze, and Sherlock thought about being in bed with Luke, just hours ago. It felt so good to be near him, to be in him, with him, under him, on him… he’d *never* have that again. He’d never even be able to talk to him again. The doctors in rehab tried to give him all this shit about how bad Luke was for him, but being with him again just felt so right. Knowing that it was all over made him feel like he had nothing left.

Lestrade gripped his hand again and whispered:

“You’re going to be okay.”

Closing his eyes, Sherlock looked away in protest and fought back tears as the ambulance pulled away from his destroyed flat. His entire life was destroyed that night, and Sherlock couldn’t find room in his heart to believe him.

Sherlock jerked awake to find a silent and empty flat. No John beside him. No noise in the kitchen. As he looked around, in shock from his nightmare, he began to panic at the idea of waking up alone. Then he heard the shower suddenly cut off and he lay back, sighing in relief.

“Did you think I ran off?” John teased as he entered the room, with a towel around his waist and hair wet.

With a half-smile Sherlock gazed up at him, turned on by his looks.

“Are you okay?” John asked, frowning. “Was it a nightmare again?”

“Well I didn’t wake up screaming,” he admitted, “so I’m not sure what that’s supposed to mean.”

He grabbed John’s hand to lower him down to the bed. An overwhelming feeling of *dejavu* took over him as John crept closer to him and planted a kiss to his lips.
“Last night was good,” John murmured, slipping his arm around his neck. Sherlock settled into the touch and forced his body to relax. Instead of answering he just gazed at John, taken by his gorgeous eyes, his bashful smile, and the glow of his cheeks. “What?”

“Nothing,” Sherlock lied. “I just don’t know what I’d do without you.”

John stared at him, stunned, and Sherlock distracted him with a kiss. The touch brought him back to life. The stuffiness of the room, the brightness of the sunlight, and the silence of the flat felt like reality again, and the further he drifted from the memory the more surreal it became that this was his life now.

“Breakfast,” John announced, “only because I’m starving. But then more sex, yeah?”

A bark of laughter escaped him.

“If you’re going to put it so bluntly…”

Throwing a playful punch to his arm, John rolled over and shuffled out of the room so he could go get dressed. Sherlock found some trousers and a shirt that wasn’t too wrinkled and trudged bare-feet into the kitchen. He had already started a pot of tea and was getting out bread by the time John returned.

“Lovely day outside,” John commented, “I might go for a bike ride.”

Sherlock glanced up at the bike that still sat perched against the wall.

“Oh. I was beginning to think that was just for decoration.”

“I hate you.”

There was a soft knock on the door, and Sherlock cut off the pot and followed John. His heart yearned for another case, so he felt a sharp jab to his face when he opened the door to find Anderson, of all people.

“Nope,” Sherlock announced, slamming the door in his face.

“Sherlock!” John groaned. He caught the door just before it could close and demanded: “What? Anderson’s eyes dashed between the two, sizing them up and debating how trustworthy they were.

“Get on with it,” Sherlock shot, “you’re ruining my tea.”

“I wanted to talk to you,” Anderson admitted.

Sherlock realized that Anderson was wearing street clothes for a change: jeans and a simple t-shirt that looked like it hadn’t been worn in ages. His tennis shoes looked like they didn’t fit quite right either. This was a man who was officially unemployed.

Letting out a dramatic sigh, Sherlock stepped aside to invite them in. He watched as Anderson’s disapproving eyes roamed the flat and caught his sneer at the state of the living room.

“Tea?” John asked. When Sherlock glared he said: “Might as well. You made too much.”

“Maybe I wanted more,” he mumbled. “What do you want, Anderson?”

One glance around the kitchen spooked Anderson away from leaning against the counter tops so he
stood awkwardly in the middle, arms crossed around his chest.

“I wanted to say I’m sorry,” he said, “I wasn’t thinking when I talked to that reporter. I didn’t know who she was-“

“Lies! You were sleeping with her.” Anderson’s eyes went wide with panic, and Sherlock smirked: “Obviously.”

His nerves seemed to melt away, and Anderson’s face seemed to suddenly glow with hatred.

“You’re right,” he said, “I actually don’t feel too bad about it, but Lestrade suggested apologizing would make my case look slightly better on my record.”

Sherlock snorted.

“Why, were you planning on using me as a reference?”

John grinned beside him, and Anderson only looked angrier.

“Yes,” Anderson replied. He took a step toward Sherlock and lowered his voice to what he probably thought was a threatening tone. “I wanted to warn you that you don’t have as many friends as you think you do. I know what happened in that warehouse with Kirchhoff. I know what you did, and I know you got away with it.”

“It was self-defense!” John snapped.

Anderson’s eyes flashed to his boyfriend, and Sherlock felt a bit sick as he said:

“Was it? This stuff in *The Sun* is just the beginning, Holmes. Once people get to know the real you they won’t be so quick to worship you. There’s an entire cabinet filled with rules you’ve broken in Lestrade’s office. There’s enough to put you away for life if anyone cared to look into it. This city thinks you’re protecting it, but you don’t give a fuck about this city. What would they say if they knew you, the real you? What would they say if they knew you spent most of your youth as just another homeless junkie? If they knew who your ex was? You just think that you’re so clever and cool.”

“Yes,” Sherlock grinned, “I always go around talking about how cool I am, don’t I John?”

John grinned as well, and Anderson became so red-faced he looked like he might explode.

“Fuck you!” He spat. “It’s the likes of you who have ruined that department. London doesn’t stand
a chance.”

He didn’t think, he didn’t say anything, he just did the first thing that came to mind: pin Anderson down with his chest over the counter top. His fingers inched toward a knife, and he didn’t hesitate to bring it to Anderson’s throat. He didn’t have a clue what he was doing, but it was like his body was attracted to the knife. Like it was calling him, telling him this was the right thing to do. A shiver of hesitation went through him, but a voice in the back of his mind egged him on.

“You fucking cun-“

“Sherlock!” John exclaimed before he could finish.

“You know what he means, John!” Sherlock shot.

“I know!”

John’s hand was on his shoulder, but Sherlock shoved him off to dig the knife deeper into Anderson’s neck. The scrape of the blade against his skin drew speckles of blood, and Anderson yelped.

“‘The likes of me?'” Sherlock shot, slamming Anderson hard against the counter.

That must have finally ignited some kind of defense mechanism in Anderson because he drew his elbow back quickly, burying it into Sherlock’s ribs. The blow was so slow, so insignificant, that Sherlock almost laughed—until he was suddenly thrown back into the kitchen island.

“You’ll pay for this!” Anderson roared as he brought his finger up to his neck. “You sick, twisted, bastard. I don’t regret for one moment what I told The Sun. You can both burn in hell for all I care. You ruined my career, you’ve caused countless families unnecessary grief—" Sherlock let out a loud snort.

“You have no respect for the law,” he went on. “Not only that but you’re allowed to bring in your unqualified, talentless pet. Do you know how many cases could be overturned if the courts knew your lack of procedure?”

“Well luckily most of my cases end in murderers being put in prison, so I doubt they’ll care.”

“Disgusting!” Anderson snapped. “You’ve got Lestrade wrapped around your finger. Though I’m not surprised, your lot seems to stick together, don’t they?”

He didn’t hesitate to smack his fist across Anderson’s face— and this time John didn’t protest.

“Do you want to have any other discriminatory remarks on the tip of your tongue?” Sherlock said. “Care to comment on my hair colour or the fact that John is ridiculously short?”

“Hey!” John complained.

“You, Anderson, are a useless, disgusting, dirty, smelly, child stuck in the body of a pathetic, sad, grown man. What did it take to get that reporter to sleep with you? A few made up headlines? I’m a bit disappointed she couldn’t come up with them herself.”

Anderson just glared between the two of them before he slammed his fist down on the counter.

“You attacked me!” Anderson said. “You’ll pay.”
He reached for Anderson again, but John grabbed his arm, throwing a glance toward him to warn him not to. Anderson simply threw up two fingers and stormed out, slamming the door of the flat as he did.

“Child,” John whispered, shaking his head.

Sherlock barely heard him. He let out a long breath, grateful to have finally gotten out of that one. He sank against the counter with his head and his hands and his eyes on the knife. It felt good to yell at Anderson like that, but the attack…that wasn’t him. That was automatic. That was robotic. It was inside him, ready to launch the moment he got the chance. It was unnecessarily violent, even for a bastard like Anderson.

“Sherlock?” John asked, worried.

All of a sudden he felt extremely tired.

“John, I-“ he swallowed nervously, struggling to find words. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be,” John said, “he provoked you.”

“I attacked him, John. He could go to the police.”

“He was just fired from the police! Sherlock, are you okay?”

He stared at the knife, heart pounding. He had been ready to attack Anderson with it, without reservations. His body flowed with hot adrenaline as he breathed deeply in and out, trying to calm down. Voices were floating through his mind at top speeds, telling him that it was okay, telling them that he was allowed to do this.

I am the exception to the rule, the voices said.

But he wasn’t. The sight of the knife made reality float away. It brought him back to his flat, to Kirchhoff, to standing over Luke’s dead body. He hadn’t told John that his dreams of Luke had a lot more blood in them lately. He didn’t tell John that he seemed to notice the colour red stick out no matter where he was. He didn’t tell John that he jumped at his own reflection in the mirror or that he had begun seeing Kirchhoff’s face in the eyes of strangers.

He didn’t tell John about the adrenaline, about the rush of anger and rage that seemed to be pent up inside him. He didn’t like it anymore. He didn’t enjoy this.

“Sherlock?” John asked again.

From the corner of his eye he could see John’s fingers inching toward the mobile in his pocket. To phone Mycroft with, surely.

“I shouldn’t have attacked him,” he admitted.

“It’s okay,” John said, “let’s call Lestrade.”

Instead Sherlock stormed past him and back into the bedroom, slamming the door in John’s face when he tried to interfere.

The next day he would be introduced to Dr. Moore Agar, who would force him to rethink everything.
Happy 100th chapter! I'm SO excited to have gotten this far, and I would have never have gotten here without support from everyone. Thank you so, SO much for reading, for the kudos, for your comments. Knowing that you guys enjoy the story makes me smile every day. I'm sorry I don't respond to each comment, I need to get better about that! But know that I truly am thankful for the support, encouragement, comments, suggestions, all of it.

Extra kudos to you if you know what story Dr. Moore Agar is from. That is your hint as to what happens next!
In March of that year Dr. Moore Agar, of Harley street, whose dramatic introduction to Holmes I may some day recount, gave positive injunctions that the famous private agent would lay aside all his cases and surrender himself to complete rest if he wished to avert an absolute breakdown.
-Dr. John Watson, "The Devil's Foot", Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

“I don’t want to be here.”
“I don’t care.”
“But I don’t want to!”

“Sherlock!” John sighed. He pressed his fists to his forehead and breathed in and out for a moment, trying not to lose it. “Lestrade sanctioned it. You heard him: at least three thirty minute sessions before you can work another case. Considering he could have arrested you, I’d say that’s a fair deal.”

His lover still wasn’t convinced. Hesitating, Sherlock let his arms wander around the massive corridor they were waiting in. The medical building was high class, nothing like what John was used to working in. They were seeing some doctor Mycroft recommended to Lestrade- some Dr. Moore Agar.

“What kind of first name is 'Moore', anyway?”

This coming from someone named 'Sherlock', he thought miserably.

“Sherlock, love,” he grabbed his boyfriend’s hands and held on tight. “I’ve been through this many times. Sometimes therapy actually helps.

“You’re a doctor,” Sherlock pointed out, “why can’t I just talk to you?”

A pang of guilt fell him as they gazed at each other. John felt like he was negotiating with a scared, desperate, child.

“I want you to,” John said, “and you know you can, any time. But Sherlock, you told me yourself that you didn’t feel in control when you hit Anderson. We’ve both been through a lot this year. This has all been very…new to us. And it’s been hard, hasn’t it, keeping everything to ourselves? How about we let someone else in?”

Sherlock hesitated again, and John knew he was getting somewhere. Just to show him he leaned forward and placed a quick, soft, kiss to his boyfriend’s lips. Their skin flushed a bit at the excitement of doing that in public, and when they pulled away and the world didn’t end, they both shared small smiles.

“Sherlock Holmes and John Watson?” A voice announced.
They looked up to find a secretary smiling at them from the doorway. Taking a deep breath, John followed Sherlock through the waiting area and into a small office. Their therapist was Dr. Agar, a man in his fifties with graying hair and a frail frame that suggested he might have recently gone through an illness. Judging by the abundance of family photos that lined his shelves and desk, and the fact that there were a stack of files in a folder dated from nine months ago, John guessed cancer but didn’t dare bring it up.

“You two are partners, yes?” Dr. Agar asked.

He and Sherlock exchanged startled glances.

“Yes,” they both replied.

“In every meaning possible, according to the papers,” the doctor said. He finally looked up at them and offered a kind smile. John’s stomach felt a bit lighter when he realized he was just being hard on them. “They’re annoying bastards, aren’t they? Don’t feel too bad. Half of them have daddy issues and haven’t had sex themselves in years.”

Sherlock grinned and John choked on his own breath.

“Young brother recommended me to Lestrade after he requested the sessions,” he went on. “Fine bloke, your brother. I’ve seen lots of great men in this office, from the bottom of the food chain all the way to the top. You would be surprised what rumors can do to a person, but when the rumors are true, that opens up a whole new can of worms. Do you think you would have ever told anyone, if the papers didn’t out you?”

John was so stunned all he could do was sit. He wasn’t used to therapist being this direct; Dr. Agar was acting like he already had them all figure out. And maybe with all the news about them lately he did.

“It’s funny, isn’t it?” Dr. Agar asked. “How quickly they turn? Just last month you two were international stars when you saved that girl. How were your cases before that? Anything exciting?”

“It’s been a rough year,” John admitted.

“I’ll say,” Dr. Agar said. He began shifting through files, and John realized he had a folder full of newspaper clips and copies of police reports. “Shot at, nearly drowned, drugged, kidnapped, lost memory, head wound, and something about an estranged sister. Tell me about that, Sherlock.”

Sherlock opened his mouth and closed it again; it was like he had hoped they would have forgotten he was there if he kept quiet enough.

“One of these cases involves your ex,” Dr. Agar went on when he was given no answer. He raised his eyes to gaze at his patient, and he seemed sincerely sorry for what Sherlock was going through. “Now you don’t have to tell me about your sister but I would like to know about this, Sherlock. The last time I saw you it wasn’t under the best of circumstances. Lestrade tells me you have been having night terrors again.”

His boyfriend made to get up and John grabbed his arm. Suddenly he knew why he had been allowed to participate in these sessions.

“He’s been waking up at night screaming,” John explained. “He never remembers anything.”

“How often does this happen?”
“Almost every night,” John replied.

Sherlock glared at him, betrayed, but John found that he didn’t care.

“He’s not doing very well, Doctor,” he went on. “I’m worried that he’s not himself. When he attacked Anderson it almost seemed like he wasn’t in control.”

“Is that how you feel, Sherlock?” Dr. Agar asked. “Like you’re not in control?”

He was afraid Sherlock might lash out again. His eyes were so red and angry that they spoke volumes about what was going through his head. His hands gripped his seat roughly until he pushed himself out of it.

“Sherlock!” John called.

But it was too late.

John turned back to the doctor and offered him a grim smile.

When he reached the flat he let out a scream of frustration when he found Sherlock was already in his pyjamas. He lay on his stomach on the sofa, with his hands wrapped around the pillow.

“You bastard!” John exclaimed. “Do you realize how stupid you made us look? We’ve got to do this. Thirty minutes. Three sessions. You agreed!”

“I was forced!” Sherlock shot, mumbling into the pillow.

“We got through ten minutes!” He said.

Letting out a loud, dramatic, sigh, Sherlock threw himself onto his back and gazed at the ceiling.

“I can’t do it, John. I can’t sit there and tell a stranger how I feel.”

He stepped over his boyfriend and stared down at him. Sherlock looked so broken lying there, with his hair disheveled and a foreign look in his eyes.

“You attacked someone, Sherlock,” John said. “Like I said, he could have arrested you.”

Sherlock just ignored him and threw himself back around so that he could bury his body against the sofa cushions.

The next day they went back to the office. They sat in the same spot, waiting for the doctor to look up and greet him.

“Dare I ask how you talked him back into coming?” Dr. Agar said.

John grinned.

“I threatened no sex for a month.”

Sherlock looked horrified, but Dr. Agar let out a quiet laugh.

“You’d be surprised how often I hear that,” he admitted. “Sherlock I changed my mind, I would like to know about your sister. What’s she like?”
He nudged his partner in the arm, reminding him that eventually he would have to participate. John narrowed his eyes to remind him of his threat.

“She’s like me,” Sherlock admitted, “just better. Younger. More…stable. She has a kid and a husband.”

“Do you keep in touch?”

Sherlock nodded.

“Do you wish she lived in England?”

His boyfriend hesitated and then nodded again. John’s heart tore; he had hardly given thought to the idea that Sherlock truly missed his sister. After all, they hardly had time to really get to know one another before she had to leave.

“Does she accept you two?” Dr. Agar asked.

John froze.

“Of course,” Sherlock replied.

“Not ‘of course’!” John shot.

He immediately closed his mouth as all eyes fell on him. He looked away as he was reminded of his sessions with his old therapist, and he suddenly felt bad for getting angry at Sherlock about wanting to come.

“John’s parents disowned him,” Sherlock said, his voice nearly a whisper.

And there is was. The shocked look from the doctor that said I’m sorry.

“I’m so sorry, John. Have you talked to them at all since?” He shook his head. Isn’t that what ‘disowned’ meant? Dr. Agar spent a few moments writing notes before he looked at them both again. “You know, I can often tell a lot about my patients just by asking them one simple question. I have a feeling I can ask you two this and it will sum up everything I need to know about you. If I ask you this, will you two be completely honest?”

He and Sherlock exchanged glances; neither had a clue what they were getting themselves into as they both nodded. They were both holding their breath when they turned back to the doctor, who started at them for another moment before asking:

“Sherlock, what is your greatest fear?”

Holding his breath, John dared to steal a glance toward his boyfriend. He couldn’t decide if Sherlock was thinking very hard about the question or thinking very hard about how he could escape the room. He’d never thought about it: Sherlock’s fears. Sherlock had a lot of demons…but fears?

Then suddenly Sherlock turned to him and announced.

“I’m afraid I’m not good enough.”

He turned away just as quickly as he blurted out the confession. John opened his mouth to say something and then closed it, finding himself speechless. Part of him wanted to yell at Sherlock, to shake him and tell him that was a ridiculous thing to worry about. But part of him wanted to know
“Good enough for what?” Dr. Agar asked.

Sherlock didn’t answer, but John knew.

“What about you, John?” The doctor asked, when no one said anything. “What is your greatest fear?”

John closed his eyes as memories began attacking him: the war, getting shot, Harry fighting with his parents, Harry getting drunk, Sherlock getting hurt, them getting shot at (again and again), waking up in the hospital and hearing that some crazy old man had kidnapped him…

Fear was something he had learned to live with. In fact, it was something he didn’t even question any more. Fear was just something he had to accept, and he had to learn to live with it.

Sitting in Dr. Agar’s office, with two sets of eyes on him and the therapist’s pen ready to write, he realized for the first time ever that maybe this is not normal.

“I’m afraid…” he stopped for a moment, trying to figure out how to word what he wanted to say. Raising his eyes to meet his lover, he confessed: “I’m afraid of the fact that you scare me, Sherlock. I find out these things about your past and I just don’t like it. I can’t think of you being homeless and on the streets. I can’t think of you with a needle up your arm. I can’t think of you fucking him and being in love with him. I’m afraid of… I’m afraid of the past coming back to haunt us both. I love you, Sherlock, but I know there’s just so much I still don’t understand. I guess what I’m trying to say is, I get scared when you hide from me. It’s not that I don’t accept who you are and what you have done. I do. I want to. I’m…”

“You don’t,” Sherlock whispered. “You can’t, you can’t accept it, and you’re afraid that’s wrong. You’re afraid it makes you a bad person. It doesn’t, John. It makes you normal.”

He may not have intended for it to come out that way, but the words stung so badly that John winced.

“You two have a very unique relationship,” Dr. Agar began softly. “Not only did you live together before becoming partners, but you worked together. Now there’s a lot that I would like to talk with both of you about, but I think it needs to wait.”

They both looked up at him, with the hopeful eyes of children who had just gotten out of doing chores.

“I’d like for you to take a week and get out of London. Go to the beach, go abroad, just go somewhere and breathe some fresh air for a change. Take some time to talk to each other and decide what you want out of these sessions… forget the sessions, what do you want out of your relationship? And I have two tasks for you—"

“So much for a holiday,” Sherlock mumbled.

“Sherlock, you play violin, yes? I want you to compose a song for John,” Dr. Agar said. They both blinked; John wasn’t sure which of them was more embarrassed. “And John, I want you to write something for Sherlock.”

Their eyes trailed to each other, uncertain about treading into this territory.

“There’s only one rule on this holiday,” Dr. Agar continued, “no cases.”
“So if there’s a serial killer on the loose I’m supposed to not help so I can write a song for John?”

John tried to not be offended.

“Well don’t expect any poetry from me, either!” He shot.

Dr. Agar held up a hand in defense.

“I’d like to keep seeing you both, individually and together, once you are back,” Dr. Agar said. They opened their mouths to protest, but he ignored them. “I’ve already spoken with DCI Lestrade, and he agrees that it is a good idea. You two have been working some dangerous, high-profile, cases. It’s not unusual for investigators to talk with therapists.”

“If I had to visit you every time I solved a case you would be hiding underneath your desk by the end of week one,” Sherlock announced.

He bit back a laugh. Then he realized the doctor actually was offended; the man’s face hardened, and Sherlock immediately shut up.

“I don’t think you have any idea how much you need this, Sherlock,” Dr. Agar remarked, his voice suddenly low and dark. “You’re not sleeping. You’re having constant flashbacks. You wake up screaming at night. You just attacked someone over an insult.”

Sherlock’s hands clenched into fist so tight that his skin became red, and John swallowed nervously, realizing that Dr. Agar really wasn’t far off from the truth.

“And I know what happened at that warehouse. You’re heading down a dark path, Sherlock,” the doctor went on. “I’m afraid that if you don’t confront what you’re going through soon you may break down completely. Can you sit here and honestly say that you’re not afraid of the same?”

When Sherlock didn’t answer, a pit developed in his stomach that would settle there throughout the next few weeks. Maybe he had been underestimating the amount of trauma Sherlock was going through. Maybe he hadn’t taken the warning signs seriously enough.

“That’s why I think the first thing you should do is get away from all of this,” Dr. Agar said. “Give the press time to forget about you. Give yourself time to begin healing. You’re not superhuman. You have both been through unthinkable trauma over the past few years, and I think you have both finally found the right person to help you through it.”

“But we've taken time off before,” Sherlock pointed out, ignoring the last part of the doctor's statement. “After some of our biggest cases this year we took a few weeks off.”

“And you stayed in London, correct?” The doctor asked. John just stared, and he was met with a soft smile. “You would be amazed at what a change of scenery can do for the brain. Trust me on this. Go away for a week and then come back and see me when you return. Lestrade will make sure you do. He’s a good man; you should listen to his advice.”

With that the doctor straightened his papers on his desk and reached for a business card. He handed it directly to John and looked him in the eye as he explained:

“Day or night. Don’t hesitate.”

He wasn’t sure why the doctor thought he needed this, but somehow he had a bad feeling the man knew what he was talking about. Maybe Sherlock really was in trouble. After all, he took another man’s life and had hardly talked about it. He attacked Anderson and hid in his room.
Silently, the shuffled out of the office and walked down the long corridor to the exit. Once they were on the street John was grateful for the sun and traffic noise. It seemed to bring him back to life.

“I’m not going crazy, John,” Sherlock said.

His boyfriend turned to him, and John felt even more nervous when he realized how scared Sherlock looked. It was like he was realizing Dr. Agar was right.

“I know, love,” John whispered.

He ran a comforting hand up and down Sherlock’s arm before signaling for a cab. Sherlock didn’t talk the entire car ride home, and when they reached the flat he immediately resumed his retreat into his bedroom. John wasn’t invited in. Instead he got on his laptop and began searching for beach properties.

His mobile buzzed an hour later, and he had to fight the urge to toss it across the room when he saw it was Lestrade.

*How did it go?* - GL

John drew in a deep breath, desperately trying not to lose it, and answered:

*We’ll see you in a week. -JW*

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for being so wonderful :) I really appreciate your comments, kudos, and the fact that you’re still reading the story.
Chapter Notes

Thank you so much to DeathFrisbee221, who beta and brit-picked this chapter! Hopefully with her help John won't find anymore bags of eyes in the freezer. ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Why not tell them of the Cornish horror- strangest case I have handled."

-"The Devil's Foot" Doyle.

John gasped for breath as he shot up on the sofa. A shaky hand swept across his sweaty face as he breathed in and out slowly. He fought to recall what happened, where he was, and then he remembered: cottage, Cornwall, Sherlock.

The sun was up now, and his mobile read it was nearly four in the afternoon. He threw himself back against the pillows. Giving up, he got to his feet to make his way to the room where Sherlock was staying. The door was closed; not a sound came from the other side.

“Sherlock?” He called, knocking once; twice.

He glanced around the cottage, looking for clues before barging in, and he didn’t have to look far. From the corner of his eye he could see Sherlock a quarter of a mile down the beach, walking by himself along the shoreline. John breathed in sharply at the sight of Sherlock in jeans, rolled to his ankles, a black t-shirt, and his trainers in his hand as his bare feet dragged through the mud.

The smell of salty sea air hit him immediately when he stepped outside. It was a welcomed relief from the stuffy, dusty cottage. As he looked around he still found himself mesmerised by the place: a small cottage on the shore of a Cornwall beach. It was off the beaten path, surrounded by miles of beach in front of them, while moors swept around them on the other side.

Footsteps planted tiny shapes in the sand where Sherlock had walked for miles. It was all he had done since they arrived earlier that morning. He studied Sherlock carefully as he walked along the beach. As John approached him, Sherlock turned toward the sea. His eyes were hollow, vacant, as he appeared next to him.

“Sorry, I guess that twenty minute nap turned into a siesta,” John said. No response. “I thought I might go into town, search for some food. You up for that?”

Sherlock’s mouth opened slightly, like he was considering speaking, but after a moment of hesitation it closed again.

“Have you been up for long, then? I noticed all the footsteps in the sand.” Still no response. “It’s beautiful, this place. I came here as a kid, once.”

Still no answer, and by this point even John couldn’t be sure where the conversation was going.

“How long are we going to do this, Sherlock?” John asked to the serenity of the ocean. Sherlock gazed ahead, but he could tell the wheels were churning. He was listening. “I’m sorry you were
forced into this, but I know you’re still haunted by what happened with Kirchhoff. You barely had
time to wrap your head around finding out about Laura, Dan, and your father, but then bringing up
your past with Luke on top of that? It’s a lot to process. I’m glad we’re out here. Just you and me,
the ocean…”

He looked over and took a moment to examine his boyfriend a little more closely. His hand drifted
toward Sherlock’s, but when their skin touched he didn’t react. Sherlock had been like this since
leaving London: silent, distant, inconsolable. John couldn’t tell if he was just getting back at him
for making him go on this trip or if he really was that upset.

“Do you remember the first day we met?” He asked. Sherlock didn’t reply, but their eyes met. He
knew the exact memory that was running through the other’s mind. “Remember how you knew I
had been through war, that I was depressed?”

“I never said you were depressed.”

The raspy voice tore through the sound of the crashing ocean waves, striking him unexpectedly.
John exhaled deeply. He knew he had to take advantage of having Sherlock’s attention.

“I still don’t understand what happened, and I don’t know exactly what you went through,” John
admitted. “But you’ve been through war, and it’s fair to say you might have some form of PTSD.
That’s not something you should go through alone. Maybe you thought it would all be over when
you left rehab and got clean, but it’s never over, is it?”

A flicker of shock illuminated in Sherlock’s eyes, as his old friend was obviously surprised by
John’s ability to understand. Sherlock looked away, his hands buried deep into the pockets of his
trousers.

“We could go into town together,” John offered. “They have some old shops. I even saw a rare
bookstore that looked pretty cool.”

This didn’t impress him.

“Right, well you stay here and do…whatever it is you’re doing,” John said. “But I need to eat. Are
you sure you don’t want to come?”

No reply. Sherlock’s eyes were already latched to the distant spot where the ocean met the pale
grey sky.

“Suit yourself then,” John mumbled.

He knew he shouldn’t leave Sherlock alone, but he wanted to at least see some of the scenery here.
Being stuck in a cottage with Sherlock giving him the silent treatment was like riding a never
ending roller coaster of anxiety. He felt like he was doing something wrong- and at the same time
he didn’t know what else to do.

The twenty minute walk into town led him straight to a moss-grown church. His eyes trailed up the
ancient church, which stood in the dead center of town. A row of shops sat opposite the church;
they almost looked lopsided in the middle of this old village. The bookshop, café, and market
looked out of place, though with carefully planned architecture they might as well have been there
for centuries.

On the sidewalk locals were beginning to give him strange looks, as though they could smell the
stench of London on him. He offered a nod to an older couple before ducking into the shop,
grateful to be able to hide amongst the rows of bread and pastries. From the corner of his eye he
could see the shopkeeper eyeing him.

*Wonder if he recognises me,* he thought, and to his horror he noticed an outdated newspaper display with a copy of *The Sun* with his and Sherlock’s faces plastered across it.

The slamming of the shop door drew his attention to the front of the store, where even the shop owner looked surprised to see a plump, sweaty, man rush into the shop. The man was breathing heavily, and with a shaking hand he reached for the nearest display to rest against. His face was a sickly pale; his thinning hair was caked with sweat. Wild eyes scanned the shop, and John couldn’t help but to be relieved when the shopkeeper finally approached him.

“Mortimer?” The shopkeeper asked.

Mortimer’s white knuckles gripped the display as he tried to keep from collapsing.

“My…my sister!” Mortimer rasped. “My brothers!”

“What happened?” The shopkeeper demanded, grasping Mortimer’s arm to steady him.

Mortimer turned paler than death. His voice dropped, low and spooked by some unforeseeable evil. John glanced at the shopkeeper, who was ignoring him entirely. At last, Mortimer croaked:

“My sister’s dead, and my brothers…my brothers have gone insane.”

At last the shopkeeper turned to John. Their wide eyes met as his heart began pounding at a sickening pace. Mortimer finally collapsed, his eyes falling close immediately. John moved forward quickly and took his pulse. Then he let out a shaky breath when he discovered the man was still alive.

He was already taking out his mobile to call Sherlock as he sank to the floor himself. His head resting against the shop window as he began to type out a text and thought to himself:

*So much for no cases.*

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is a teaser for the mystery to come. I hope you enjoy it! I gotta admit I'm a big fan of this case!

Thanks!!!
In the centre of the village Mr Mortimer Tregennis lived with the vicar of the town’s church in a modest villa. The vicar, Mr Rounday, was an older man whose eyes lit up as soon as two new faces wondered into his home. The lodger and landlord were an odd pair, not that John was in any position to poke fun at odd roommates. Mr Rounday was a man of history, of archeology, and was able to recount to Sherlock the history of Cornwall dating back hundreds- thousands- of years. Mortimer was a plump, short bachelor who did himself no favours by living with a man twenty years older than him. While Rounday discussed various historian views of Cornwall with Sherlock (who was talking for the first time since going on holiday), Mortimer paced the room and tried to put into words what happened the night before.

“Every Sunday night my brothers and sister come over and we play cards and drink,” Mortimer explained. He kept scratching his hair with his hands; a nervous tick. “This Sunday was perfectly normal. There were a few lagers too many so I turned in, but then this morning…oh god.”

He choked back a sob as he trailed off and waved John toward the dining area.

“Sherlock,” John called.

Sherlock excused himself away from the vicar and cautiously followed John into the crime scene. His boyfriend was perfectly silent once again, but John had to resist the urge to reach for Sherlock’s hand as they entered the room.

The dining room was small and simple, with creaky old wood floors, a case full of china that looked as old as the century-old house. The small table was still lined with half-empty mugs and plates of uneaten biscuits. One chair was toppled over, two were pushed against the wall like they were forced back, and one was neatly pushed up to the table.

“They took my sister away this morning,” Mortimer whispered. “They say she probably passed around six. My brothers are alive, but they’ve completely lost it. I wanted them to stay! I can’t do this without them, I can’t.”

A shaky hand wiped across Mortimer’s face, and John turned to him to help calm him down while Sherlock accessed the scene.

“You’re brothers are in good hands,” John said, though he had no clue whose hands his brothers were in. He placed a hand on Mortimer’s arm, and the lodger jumped. “He’s probably just in shock over what happened. It could be temporary.”

“Their eyes were just…” Mortimer gasped for air.

“Let’s go outside,” John offered.
They met the housekeeper on the way out. John couldn’t help but to be reminded of Mrs Hudson: she was the same age but her eyes were sharp and unwelcoming. She carried a bag of groceries filled with comfort food: plenty of tea bags, tissues, crisps, and ingredients for baking.

“Oh I’m sorry, if they’re still investigating-“ the housekeeper said.

John smiled, thinking again of Mrs Hudson.

“It’s quite alright, Mrs Porter,“ Mortimer said. “Here let me help you.”

“No you won’t, you’ll stay out here and get some air. The fresh air will do you good.” Mrs Porter said. She struggled to offer him a smile, but John could see she was still disturbed by what happened. When her eyes fell on John they went wide. “You’re the boy from the papers. Is Sherlock Holmes here?”

He grimaced, determined not to be jealous.

“Yes,” Mortimer said. “We were very lucky that Mr Holmes happened to be in town.”

“Surely you’re not bothering the man while he’s on holiday!” Mrs Porter said. “He’s probably hiding from the bloody press!”

This time his face went red, and he struggled to find his voice as he assured her:

“It’s alright, he doesn’t mind. Yes, I’m Dr Watson and Sherlock Holmes is inside that house. We’re trying to wrap our minds around what happened.”

“So am I!” Mrs Porter said. “It was horrible, Dr Watson. I’ll need to be prescribed something for the rest of my life if I ever hope to be able to sleep again. I came into the room, you see, to check on the lot and there they were: the sister, dead! The brothers: singing and chanting without a care in the world.”

“Chanting?” He asked.

“Non-sensical things!” She cried. “And singing horrible, happy, tunes. I fainted on the spot. I had to throw the window open to let the air in when I came to; I just couldn’t catch my breath.”

Sherlock stepped outside, his face scrunched up like he was being tortured by a horrible smell. His eyes were dark and uncharacteristically vacant. John couldn’t help but to feel like he was hiding something- apart from the case.

“What happened when you left the party?” Sherlock asked Mortimer.

Mortimer’s eyes drifted to the neighbourhood around them. They lived in a cluster of houses just down the street from the church. His eyes swept across the empty walkways and curtains drawn over windows. Whatever happened last night had gotten out already, John realised, and the entire town was spooked.

“Nothing out of the ordinary,” Mortimer finally replied. “Although…shortly before I left I noticed George staring out the window. I turned to see what was so interesting and for a moment I swear to God I saw something move outside. I asked him what was wrong, and he too said he saw something. Neither of us thought much of it. We were both pissed, and I’ve been sleeping very badly lately. I considered that a sign that I’d had a bit too much and I took off to go upstairs. This morning, like every morning, I went for a walk and as I was heading back I noticed police cars heading toward the house. Then an ambulance. I broke out into a run until I got home, and then I
saw…I saw…they said she had already been dead for two hours. How could I not have known? I was right upstairs!”

Bringing a fist to his mouth, Mortimer burst into a fit of sobs. John placed a hand on his arm; he had to close his own eyes for a moment. He’d been through this too many times, and this part never got easier.

“Something…something is wrong with them, Mr Holmes,” Mortimer finally gasped a few moments later.

“Oh Mortimer, don’t start!” The housekeeper protested.

“It has to be!” Mortimer said. He turned back to Sherlock and John with red-rimmed eyes and did his best to keep his cool. “They said there are things about this village that just aren’t right. There are stories- everyone grew up with them. There are things out on the moor, beings that shouldn’t be.”

“Are you telling me this town has ghosts?” John asked quietly.

All he could think of was that they were staying just off the moor, but Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“Worse than ghosts,” Mortimer replied, his voice shaking. “Evil spirits. Nothing can make a person just snap like that. It can only be the work of one thing: the devil.”

Sherlock burst out laughing, and John had never been met with such an urge to hit him. Even the housekeeper looked offended as his boyfriend laughed so hard his face turned red. He brought a hand to his mouth to try to calm down; his laughter rang through the empty streets like an eerie tune from a horror film.

“Oh come on!” Sherlock exclaimed. “The devil? Is that why you’re wearing a cross around your neck even though it’s been twelve weeks since you’ve stepped foot in a church? You live with a bloody priest, and you think your family has been possessed?!”

“Sherlock!” John cried, slapping his arm. His eyes flew wildly to the church that hovered over the town, just down the street.

“Don’t tell me you believe in this bullshit?” Sherlock said. John just gaped at him as he realised in all their time of being together they had never once discussed religion. “I would have felt better if you had said ghosts!”

“Stop it!” John said. “Just stop doing that!”

“Doing what?” Sherlock grinned. “I suppose I’m giving us bad karma? Have you not been reading the papers lately? Apparently we have enough bad karma to last us a lifetime.”

Closing his eyes tightly, John tried to not consider that even Sherlock was now acting out of control. Sherlock, who up until now hadn’t spoken a word to him on this holiday.

“Come along, John.”

Sherlock spun around so fast he tripped over a flower pot. Mrs Porter’s face turned petrified as her pink roses spilled over onto the concrete. Even Mortimer looked disgusted at his boyfriend’s behaviour.

“Aren’t you interested in the case?” John asked.
“No cases, remember?” Sherlock called as he took off down the street. “Doctor’s orders!”

John was fuming inside his head the entire walk back to the cottage. He was grateful for the solace of the ocean and the silence of their little home-away-from-home, but as soon as he got inside he rounded on his partner.

“What the bloody hell were you thinking?” John exclaimed. “This town is tiny, Sherlock. In case you didn’t notice the entire village surrounds the church. This place reeks of faith, dating back centuries. You can’t just go around and insult people’s religious beliefs!”

“Oh I wasn’t insulting anything and you know it!” Sherlock spat. A half-smile crossed his face as he began making some tea. On the bright side, he thought, it was the first thing Sherlock ate or drank since arriving into town. “My thinking it’s ridiculous that this man believes his brothers are possessed by the devil is not the same as me telling them how I feel about their religious beliefs. Though I can tell you that too, if you’d like.”

“Please don’t.”

He settled into a chair at the table and pulled out his laptop. Although he knew there was no internet connection he planned to spend a lot of whatever free time he managed on this trip writing.

Sherlock smirked as soon as the computer powered up.

“You and your laptop,” Sherlock snorted. “You couldn’t bring paper like a normal person?”

“Says the person who once made me use a webcam to show them around a crime scene because they didn’t want to bother getting dressed!”

For a moment they just stared at each other until the tension broke out as grins across each of their faces. John felt a load lift off his chest; it was these moments he loved the most- the ones where he finally seemed to get through to Sherlock.

“Just please, be careful,” John said. “There are two kinds of people in towns like this: people who are loved and people who are hated. Did you notice something when we were out there? There wasn’t a soul in the street.”

“Because they were afraid the devil is on the loose!”

“Because they didn’t want to be involved!” John pointed out. “They were staying away. Not one person came forward to say they saw something or heard something. No one was trying to get a peek at the crime scene. The people in the shop barely took notice when Mortimer burst inside. He is clearly not a very well-liked person.”

Sherlock stopped for a moment, teapot in hand, as he let that churn in his mind. Before he could say anything else John’s mobile rang.

“I barely have a signal in here,” John sighed, “I’m going to step out for a second.”

There was no reply from his boyfriend as he stepped outside and took a deep breath, relishing in the fresh air. The ocean smelled wonderful compared to the London pollution he was used to. He saw that it was Harry and closed his eyes, bracing himself for the worst.

“Hey,” he greeted.

“Hey,” Harry replied. She sounded happy, which either meant she needed something or was drunk.
His heart knotted a bit. He couldn’t deal with this now, not on top of everything else. “I just wanted to call to catch up, if it’s a good time.”

He let his eyes trail to the ocean and tried to become entranced by the never-ended collage of waves and blues and grays of the water and sky.

“Yeah,” he lied. “Yeah, what’s going on? How’s the job?”

Silence. He closed his eyes again; he knew what that meant.

“I lost it,” Harry mumbled, “turns out they never intended for the position to become full-time and decided they needed to cut down on part-time employees. I’m just so frustrated, John! I know I’m not stupid. I know I’m not incompetent. Why can’t I find decent work?”

*Because you have the work-ethic of a twelve year old and the smell of a sixty year old whiskey-addict.*

“You’ll find something,” he said. Coldness stung him as lie after lie escaped him. “It just takes time, you know? You knew it would after not going to uni. It’s a really competitive job market out there.”

“Yeah but they treat me like I’m a bloody teenager!” Harry whined. “Paying me shit salaries with even shittier benefits. God you’re lucky to not have to deal with this.”

“Everything will work out,” he said. He was pacing now, drawing etches in the sand each time his foot hit the earth. “What about your flat?”

“I’m being kicked out of it.”

He winced.

“Shit,” he whispered. “I’m sorry, Harry.”

“I thought everything was finally going okay!” Harry exclaimed. “It always seems that way. Everything was settling down and then… and then it’s just all of a sudden. I can’t do this John. I can’t keep doing this time after time!”

“Just calm down,” he said, “I’ll help you through this, yeah? Stay with me and Sherlock while you work things out. I’ll help you find a proper job and a decent flat.”

He threw a glance back toward the cottage. Somehow he got a horrible feeling that Sherlock heard him. Already he regretted his offer- he knew he was shit when it came to searching for jobs, and even if Harry and Sherlock managed to get along he knew he couldn’t put up with staying with his sister for more than a couple of days.

“I don’t know what to do,” Harry sobbed. Her breathing was out of control now. “I’m being kicked out, and I have no savings. I feel like a complete failure. What the fuck am I doing with my life?”

*She’s going off the deep end…*

“It will be fine,” John promised. “I’ll be back home in a few days. Can you manage until then?”

“I don’t know!”

“Then go to the flat. I’ll give Mrs. Hudson a ring and ask her to let you in. You can stay in my bedroom.”
“You don’t need to stay there?” He didn’t answer, and she sighed: “Right. Sorry, I don’t like to think about my big brother having sex.”

“Yeah, that wasn’t necessary.”

There is no way this is going to work.

Now the voice in his head was turning into Sherlock, and this whole situation was already driving him crazy.

“We’ll talk about it later, okay?” He said. “I’ve got to go, there’s really bad reception here. I love you, Harry. Stay strong. You’ll get through this. Things will settle down again.”

“Thank you, John,” Harry whispered. “I love you too.”

She hung up, and John hung his head, letting his eyes fall to a close one final time. He just wanted to give his mind a moment to rest. Letting the gentle crash of the waves calm him, he took a few deep breaths before trudging back into the cottage.

He wasn’t surprised that Sherlock had pulled out a microscope from god knows where and was examining what actually looked like ash.

“Ash again?” John sighed. “Why can’t my boyfriend be interested in video games like normal guys?”

“Yes, ash again,” Sherlock replied. “While you spying on the neighbours I noticed something of importance: a fire had burned last night.”

“So? It’s a bit chilly here by the sea.”

“Yeah but it’s still summer,” Sherlock said. “It’s not really a summer thing, playing games and drinking by the fire. Judging by the ash the fire didn’t burn out until early this morning. So if you don’t mind, I’m going to keep sitting here and examine ash samples while you complain about your sister losing her job again.”

“How-?”

“Don’t even.”

John threw himself onto the sofa and regretted for the first time choosing a place with no telly or internet. At least it would have been a decent distraction.

“She’s not focused at all,” he admitted. “She’s still upset about Clara.”

“That was years ago,” Sherlock mumbled.

“It was last year!” John cried. “They were together for three. It’s a bit of a shock, that kind of sudden break-up.”

“It wasn’t sudden.”

“Just…stop,” he took a deep breath and went on: “She’s upset. She feels like her world is falling apart. She doesn’t have much support. She just needs someone to help her get on her feet. She needs love. She needs someone who will take care of her. So I asked her to stay with us.”

There was a long pause, and for a moment John wondered if Sherlock was even paying attention.
“It would just be until she found a job again,” John said. Still no reply, but Sherlock’s fingers noticeably tightened around the microscope. “I’m afraid if she’s out there alone she’ll get lost in the booze again and god knows what else. They’re kicking her out of her flat, Sherlock! She’ll end up on the streets. I can’t do that to her.”

“She can stay.”

“I can’t leave her out there like that. I know we don’t have the best relationship but I know I can fix this.”

“You can. She can stay.”

Lifting his eyes careful, John stared as his boyfriend re-focused the microscope and jotted down some notes. The cottage stood completely silent: outside the waves crashed, the gentle pat-pat-pat of rain began to hit the window, and somewhere in the distance Mortimer grieved for his sister.

Suddenly Sherlock beat against the countertops with his fist and threw himself away from his experiment.

“It’s useless,” Sherlock mumbled before storming toward the door.

“It’s raining!” John called as Sherlock wondered onto the damp beach.

Sherlock didn’t seem to care.

With a heavy sigh John settled back in front of his computer. He knew all too well that with Sherlock things just took time. He went through more phases than a teenager, and he told himself this was just one of them.

*But that’s a bit insulting, isn’t it? A voice in his head argued. He’s a grown man. He’s been through things you couldn’t imagine. Things he still hasn’t dealt with. It’s not a phase. He’s depressed.*

John closed his eyes and tried to tune the voice out.

It was making too much sense.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you are enjoying this case so far :)

Thanks!

And to Happy Thanksgiving to those who celebrated today! And for anyone preparing to work Black Friday...may the force be with you.
It was well past nightfall when Sherlock finally returned to the cottage. John had to admit that it was nice to be able to sit in the cottage by himself, with only the patter of rain as company. He was lost in his own writing when Sherlock burst through the door, shivering and pale in the face. His lips were blue from the cold and rain, and his hair was matted down into a damp mess.

“John,” he breathed, his voice trembling. It was almost a whine, and John immediately leapt up to meet him. Sherlock hovered by the door, sinking against it in exhaustion. Holding a hand up to him, John felt him for injuries just out of habit, but he was clearly physically fine. But his eyes… his eyes were dark and helpless. “I’m sorry I ran out.”

“It’s fine.”

“I was just frustrated,” Sherlock admitted, “I thought a walk… I needed to clear my mind. You’re right, this case is very delicate. No matter what we say we’re not going to be able to convince these people that this is anything other than an act of the devil. But it isn’t John. It isn’t. Do you remember what you said? The entire street was silent. She was dead since approximately six in the morning. People would have been waking up- making breakfast, going for runs, going to work. Why did no one see or hear anything? And the fireplace John, the fireplace. None of it makes sense!”

He raised his hands to Sherlock’s head and ran them gently through his wet hair. A soft smile crossed his face when Sherlock shivered. He just seemed so incredibly human right then: shivering and desperate. His boyfriend stopped the hand with one wrist and reached into his pockets with the other. Sherlock withdrew something and slipped it his hands, and when John opened them he smiled again when he found an arrowhead in his palm. Sherlock opened his own hand to reveal matching flint arrows.

“The moor is littered with them,” Sherlock explained. “This place is really amazing. The history here…the rock formations. I’ll take you out tomorrow, once it stops raining. Thank you for bringing me here, it’s perfect.”

“Even with a lunatic on the loose?”

His response was a kiss on the cheek. John moaned a little when those lips dipped down to his mouth, and he raised his hands to help Sherlock undo the buttons of his wet shirt, one by one.

“Tomorrow we go back to the house,” Sherlock said, devouring his neck with kisses. His eyes rolled to the back of his head when his lover reached that spot and suckled, forming a tiny mark, just red enough for to notice in the mirror. “Conduct a real investigation.”

“Mmm,” John murmured as Sherlock’s cold fingers dipped into the waistband of his trousers. He offered him a kiss on the lips before whispering in his ear: “Let’s go to bed.”

Sherlock grinned, but before John could lead him into the bedroom, a powerful knock sounded from behind the door. His lover quickly began doing the buttons back up.

“Mr Holmes!” The voice carried a thick African accent. Sherlock peeled the door to reveal the shadow of a huge man. He was well-built, to say the least, with wide arms and sharp features. His
eyes pierced through the darkness and his scraggily beard nearly hid his small mouth. Yet his voice boomed as he spoke to them over the rain. “I’m sorry to interrupt you like this, Mr Holmes, but I wanted to talk to you about this murder. It’s quite extraordinary, isn’t it?”

“Dr Leon Sterndale,” Sherlock breathed. His eyes lit up, like he was star-struck.

“Sorry,” John said, clearing his throat. “But who are you? It’s a bit late to be wandering the moor at night.”

“No, if you know these moors,” Dr Sterndale replied. He reached out to shake hands. “Dr Leon Sterndale. I’m someone of a twenty-first century explorer, an archaeologist, and wildlife expert all in one. I’ve just come back from my dozenth tour of Africa.”

“Eleven didn’t show you enough?” John teased.

“Of course it didn’t!” Sherlock cried. “It’s Africa, John. It’s wild, it’s brilliant.”

“I never knew you felt so strongly about Africa,” he mumbled.

He took the man’s hand, forgetting those fingertips were practically just down John’s arse, and helped the explorer inside.

“I apologise for the late hour,” Sterndale said, “as I said I just got back into the country and heard the news. I live in a little cottage, just over the moor. Perhaps you saw it?”

Sherlock’s cheeks turned a bit red, and John had a bad feeling that his boyfriend had indeed seen the house and probably did a bit of his own exploring. There was no way he came to Cornwall without knowing his beloved African explorer lived on the same strip of land.

“You’re looking a little worse for wear,” Sterndale commented, brushing a hand against Sherlock’s arm. As innocent as the touch was, John’s body went completely stiff.

“How about I get both of you some tea?” John asked. “I made some stew earlier, if you’d like.”

“Yes.”

John was shocked when he got two simultaneous answers.

“Sure,” John stammered.

He began setting the table, ignoring the fact it was after ten and he had been thinking more about sleep and sex than food.

“Mr Holmes, if you don’t mind—”

“Sherlock’s fine.”

“Sherlock,” Sterndale grinned, flattered, “if you don’t mind, I would like to warn you about Mortimer. Forgive me if I step over some lines here, but I’ve been around this village long enough to know who’s who here. Mortimer’s a strange one. He and his siblings were left orphaned when they were all just kids.”

John stole a glance toward Sherlock, and his heart tore as watched his lover’s eyes fall to the table. His hand twitched, itching to touch him.

“Their parents were a bit strange. They kept to themselves, never spoke to anyone at the church.
They died in a tragic accident one night: all of the children but Mortimer were in the car. The little ones survived. Mortimer was home sick with a neighbour. That was night was just…awful. I’ll never forget it. It seemed like the whole village lit up in red and blue emergency lights. Since then they’ve really stuck together, the four of them. Never did leave Cornwall, but they still seem like outsiders. I look at those kids, and it’s like there’s this hole in their lives that will never be filled again.”

Sherlock’s eyes went dark now, and he stopped eating.

Suddenly Sterndale shook his head and gulped down a spoonful of stew.

“Brilliant stew, Dr Watson,” Sterndale said. John offered him a small smile of thanks. “Anyway, that’s about as much as anyone knows about that family. They were always the weird ones, you know? The kids were always quiet in school. The other kids in the neighbourhood were downright frightened of them. Frankly, I don’t think anyone will be too shocked something like this has happened.”

“That’s horrible!” John said. Sterndale didn’t reply to John, instead he kept his focus on Sherlock.

“Do you have any thoughts on the case, Sherlock?” He asked.

John and Sherlock exchanged glances; while they rarely followed police procedure by the book one, rule they did keep for themselves was to not share information about their investigations with the general public.

“I’m afraid I can’t share any information with you, Dr Sterndale,” Sherlock answered, simply before he began eating at last- if only to distract himself from the conversation.

“Right.” Sterndale abruptly pushed his plate away and let his spoon fall to the table. “Well, it is very late. I got in so late last night I stayed at the Premier Inn to avoid the drive out here, so I really must be getting back home. It was an honour to meet you, Sherlock.”

His boyfriend didn’t so much as offer him a nod of appreciation. In fact, Sherlock seemed to grow incredibly stiff and suddenly seemed to be very interested in a speck of dust on the table. The door close silently as Sterndale left, and John rounded on Sherlock.

“What was that we were saying about good publicity?” John shot. “That doesn’t mean brushing off people who are saying ‘it’s an honour to meet you’. I wish I had people saying ‘it’s an honour’ to meet me.”

“Because it wasn’t an honour,” Sherlock said. He stuffed a spoonful of stew down his throat and grimaced, as though eating were painful. “He wanted information, John. You’ve got to be able to recognise these things!”

Their eyes met, and he wasn’t sure if Sherlock had any idea how much those words stung. Lately he felt like he was doing everything wrong, saying everything wrong.

“I’m sorry,” he mumbled.

He jumped up from the table but a cold, damp, hand clasped around his wrist.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock echoed. John let his boyfriend pull him back down into the chair. Once again their eyes connected, and when he saw the desperation in Sherlock’s he felt guilty to see that his boyfriend was trying too. “Yes, we’re getting more publicity now than ever. So we have to be careful. We have to protect ourselves as much as our clients.”
Their faces lingered close together, but just when John thought the moment was heating up again Sherlock slipped away.

“Going to bed?” He asked hopefully.

“Going to think.” The detective took his mobile out of his pocket. “Meet me at Mortimer’s first thing in the morning.”

“What-?”

Before he could finish Sherlock had fled out the door once again. John stood, to run after him, but then his mobile lit up:

*Following Sterndale. -SH*

John sighed and hesitated. He threw a glance outside the curtains and watched as the slim shadow of his partner disappeared, one footstep after the other.

*Are you okay? x*

*Fine. -SH*

It was the last thing he heard from Sherlock, until the next morning.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again to DeathFrisbee221 for being a fantastic beta!!!!!

And thanks to you for reading, and for all the nice comments! Case wraps ups next chapter :)
The Cornish Horror (part four)

Chapter Notes

Thanks again to my wonderful beta DeathFrisbee221!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John woke with a groan the next morning. A sour taste settled in his mouth at the sight of an unfamiliar room and empty bed. His partner really had spent the night following Sterndale, and now John felt terrible. Instead of helping, instead of acting like his partner, he stayed in to write.

Running his hands through his hair, he shuffled into the kitchen to find something to eat. He was surprised to find Sherlock hovering over a microscope, studying ash. His drenched clothes lay in a damp pile from the night before; this morning his body was covered in only a dressing gown and tracksuit bottoms. He was clearly distraught.

And he was humming.

“Sherlock?” John asked, taking a step forward.

As he approached Sherlock carefully the humming became louder. John didn’t recognise the tune but it was morbid. The song was so dark and gloomy that it made him feel uncomfortable.

“Sherlock, are you alright?”

“Mortimer died.”

Oh.

Shit.

“What happened?” John asked.

Ignoring him, Sherlock reached instead for the coffee pot.

“It looks like you’ve had enough,” John said.

He grabbed the detective’s hands and Sherlock jerked away, violently. His chest was heaving.

“Mortimer was found hanging upside down from that chandelier in the dining room of his house. It appears that he slit his own throat.”

John’s hand flew to his mouth, and he swallowed down the bile before it could escape.


“I was trying to help him,” Sherlock went on, shaking his head. “I was trying to help…I tried.”

“Sherlock, it’s okay.”

He reached for his lover’s hand, but once again Sherlock jerked away. It was then that John
noticed how vacant Sherlock’s eyes were.

Something was very not right.

He eyed the ash Sherlock was examining.

“Were you out all night?” He asked.

His boyfriend ignored him and instead turned to an old-fashioned oil lamp that was waiting for him on the counter.

“I went over to Mortimer’s last night,” Sherlock drawled. He sang a few more notes from his tune before continuing: “He was hanging upside down but his eyes were still wide. They were looking straight at me. I was the first one to find the body so I got to be the first one to examine the crime scene. There was a fire burning, but it was quite warm out last night; don’t you think?”

The mention of warmth made him bring his hand to Sherlock’s face, which stung like ice.

“Sherlock, you’re freezing,” he said quietly.

Sherlock let out a round of rough coughs, as though proving John’s point about his condition. Running around in the rain all night wasn’t the best of ideas for anyone; certainly not someone in the state Sherlock was in.

“I found this stashed in the closet of our room,” Sherlock said. His hands ran over the rim of the lamp and his eyes grew wide in the reflection of the glass. “The fire John, it’s how I solved it. Mortimer poisoned his siblings.”

“What?!” John exclaimed. “I thought you just said he was dead!”

“He is.” Sherlock hummed a few more notes before explaining: “He died at the very hands of the person who taught him the trick: Sterndale. There’s a reason he lives out here on the moor, John. The police recently re-opened the Tregennis’ case. Sterndale is their main suspect. But that’s not even…John…Sterndale taught—” he coughed some more, “he told Mortimer about the poison.”

“Poison?”

“Do keep up, John!”

“You’re not making any sense, Sherlock!”

Their eyes met, and John’s heart leapt. Sherlock looked unwell, to say the least. He looked empty. Ill. Lost.

“Mortimer received his parent’s fortune, but his siblings never knew how much until recently. I don’t think they were as happy as Sterndale made them out to be. They were playing, drinking, yes. But I spoke to the housekeeper again, and she admitted she thought she heard yelling. She was just afraid to admit it around Mortimer.

Mortimer almost set up the perfect murder. He planned to gather his siblings together one last time and kill them all with this poison. Sterndale told him about it when he was a little boy, and Mortimer must have stolen some from him at some point. The poison is in the ash, and he lit it in the fireplace. Sterndale got spooked when he came back in town and found out what happened. He must have confronted Mortimer about it, and then Sterndale poisoned him. Mortimer went insane under the influence of the poison.”
John could only stare. He wasn’t sure which made less sense- Sherlock’s behaviour or his explanation for the case.

“That’s my hypothesis, anyway,” Sherlock said, “but who is going to believe the man who found the body? I have to show the police how the ash works. Watch, I’ll show you how he did it.”

“No!”

He was too late.

Sherlock lit the lamp with the ash and immediately froze. Then he began choking.

“Sherlock!” John cried, rushing to his side.

Suddenly Sherlock hit the floor. The choking stopped but he started jerking, almost like he was having a seizure.

“Sherlock, it’s okay,” John attempted, grabbing at his arms. “It’s okay, stop.”

And Sherlock stopped; he completely froze up. His eyes gazed up, dancing around John’s before falling into a world unknown.

“Please don’t,” Sherlock whimpered. John blinked, startled. His stomach turned into knots as Sherlock’s voice jumped up a notch. He sounded young and scared. “Don’t kill me.”

As his body twitched his arms flailed about. His knuckles graced John’s face but he didn’t flinch. Instead he leaned over Sherlock and grabbed his forearms to still him.

“We need to get you out of here,” John said. “You’re breathing in this poison.”

He stopped.

They were both breathing in the poison. He could feel it now, tickling his throat like a piece of food gone down the wrong way. Slowly his senses felt as though they were catching fire- his eyes watered, his vision danced, his ears burned and his hearing became muffled.

“We’ve got to get out of here,” John mumbled.

The fumes of the candle were filling the cottage with poison, and if they didn’t get out soon he feared they might pass out. Grabbing Sherlock by the shoulders, he pulled him out of the cottage. As soon as they hit fresh air John threw them both off the porch and into the sand. He instantly felt better, and when he looked down to his lover he was relieved to find his eyes were a bit more familiar. Sherlock looked more like himself, just a bit cold and in shock.

“We’re okay,” John breathed, “but fuck was that stupid, Sherlock. Are you okay?”

But when he looked at Sherlock again, not only was his whole body trembling but he was crying. He let out a choked sob and clung to John, gripping his arms and holding on for dear life.

“John,” Sherlock croaked.

Instead of explaining himself Sherlock just buried his head into his chest. John forgot to breathe. He wrapped his arms around his boyfriend and held him close, letting him sob quietly into his body. He didn’t whisper any words of encouragement. He didn’t ask for answers. He just held him.

After a few long moments like that Sherlock peeled himself away. His hair was a mess of tangles
and he was still shaking, but at least he was able to catch his breath.

“I saw it,” Sherlock rasped. “I saw it, just like in my dreams. Luke was dead and Kirchhoff was… Kirchhoff was…he was on top of me, John. He was killing me and I…I didn’t want to die.”

His eyes went wide as Sherlock let out a trembling breath.

“I begged him not to kill me, John,” Sherlock whispered. “I begged him to let me live. I didn’t want to die. I was afraid, John, I was so afraid.”

Sherlock shut his eyes tightly, as though willing the images away, and buried himself into his boyfriend again. John’s hand fell against his back helplessly. As Sherlock’s haggard breaths teased his chest he kept his eyes on the ocean, looking for understanding.

_I’ve never begged for anything in my life_, Sherlock once told Irene Adler.

That changed once the two of them got together.

But apparently he had lied.

“I was afraid, I didn’t want to die,” Sherlock said again, and again they broke apart, leaving their foreheads resting against each other. For a moment Sherlock just tried to pull himself together, but at last he took John’s hands and explained: “I suffered from a great deal of survivor’s guilt after Luke died. I think Kirchhoff came for me, John. He intended to torture me until I told him where Luke was.”

“You can’t know that-“

“It makes sense,” Sherlock said. “It’s the only thing that makes sense. Luke had been locked up in Mycroft’s facilities. Kirchhoff couldn’t have known he was released. He came for me. He was going to kill me, John, and I begged him not to. I begged him not to and I shouldn’t have. I shouldn’t have survived. I shouldn’t have survived, and I’ve never told anyone this.”

Sherlock’s eyes trailed up to meet his cautiously, searching for his trust.

“I’m glad you told me,” John admitted. He felt helpless; it was the only thing he could think to say. He was happy that Sherlock was honest with him, but the idea of a younger-version of his lover begging for his life was too much. At last Sherlock’s tears stopped, and John carefully raised a hand to wipe away their tracks. After placing a gently kiss on his lips John took Sherlock’s hands and held them to his heart.

“You don’t ever have to feel guilty for being alive,” John said quietly. “You told me that once, remember? Survivor’s guilt? You’re talking to the king of survivor’s guilt. It hurts me to know you’ve been suffering for so long without anyone knowing, but you’re not being fair to yourself. You’re not being fair to Luke. He loved you, Sherlock. I can tell that much from your stories. Why else do you think he fought so hard? He wanted you to live.”

“Sometimes I feel like I barely knew him.”

“And yet you had this impossible connection with him, right?” John asked. He felt their foreheads shift as Sherlock offered a small nod. “It sounds to me like he wanted nothing more than for you to be safe, even if he had a funny way of showing it. While it’s painful to think of another man feeling that way about you, I’m grateful. I’m grateful that you lived through it. Never feel guilty about that, Sherlock. It’s not fair to yourself, and it’s not fair to Luke. You’ve got to let him rest in peace.”
Sherlock let out a shaky breath as he nodded, signalling that he at least heard him.

John could only hope he understood. He rubbed his hands over Sherlock’s to help him warm up.

“It’s going to be okay, Sherlock,” John said. He stole a kiss to his cheek and helped him to stand. “Now come on. You have a murderer to catch.”

Chapter End Notes

Smut next chapter. Promise!
This chapter takes place post-case and comes with a twist at the end that will shape the next part of the story. Have fun!

“Mmm…this feels so good.”

Sherlock didn’t reply as John settled into the bath beside him. The water was warm and the room was already engulfed in a comfortable steam, but he didn’t mind after two days of running around in cold rain. As he felt John’s warm body fall against his he was finally able to calm down a bit. The past few days felt like a mixture of depression and adrenaline. It had been physically and mentally hard to get through it, and while he wanted to feel like he had taken a load off his shoulders he somehow felt a bit sick to his stomach.

But he knew why: he owed John explanations.

His lover hadn’t said anything to him yet, but Sherlock was man enough to know he owed him that much. With a glass of wine in one hand and his other arm draped across John’s shoulders, he lowered himself into the bath and tried to shut his mind off.

“This is good wine,” John said, wiping away dribbles of red wine from his chin.

“Mycroft brought it from Paris,” Sherlock said.

John rest his head on his shoulder, and Sherlock subconsciously began running his hand through his boyfriend’s damp hair.

“If the rain finally stops tomorrow we should spend some time on the beach,” John said. “Do you know how long it’s been since I’ve gone for a swim in the ocean?”

“You know how to swim?” He asked, genuinely surprised.

Sitting up, his lover stared at him as though deeply offended.

“Of course I know how swim!” John teased. “There was a point in my life when I was athletic and, you know, well-built.”

“You’re plenty well-built.”

He planted a kiss to John’s cheek, and the single touch sparked something in each of them. They gazed at each other for a moment before their lips drew together, and Sherlock closed his eyes and let himself get lost in the gentle dance of their lips. John sucked at his lower lip a bit before using his tongue to pry his mouth open. Sherlock let him in, allowing John’s tongue to grace his teeth and slide along his own. His boyfriend’s soapy hands raised to his face, caressing him as the kiss drew on for a moment longer.

And then John broke away with a smile.
“I love you,” John announced softly. “It’s why I hate to see you so…down. So lost. I feel like we’ve been out of sync for the past few days.”

Sherlock nodded because he knew exactly what John was talking about.

“It’s Kirchhoff,” he finally admitted. He held onto John’s shoulder, needing something to steady him through the confession. “I knew I hated him, John, and I knew I’d do anything to get revenge. I thought I was prepared to do it. I thought I was capable of going through with it. I didn’t think I would feel like this after.”

“Feel like what?” John encouraged. His finger tapped against Sherlock’s skull. “What’s going on in there?”

“I killed a man, John,” Sherlock whispered. “I stabbed him with a knife. It took this physical strength I didn’t know I possessed, but the mental strength…I don’t have it. I don’t have the strength to get through this. I took another life. I murdered someone.”

John bit his lip and put an arm around him, pulling him close. Breathing in his warmth, Sherlock begged silently to have his strength. He was a doctor, a soldier. He’d watched people die time after time. He admitted to having to kill someone in battle; John killed the cabbie after they had just met. And somehow, John kept himself together.

“Being in the army is one of the most surreal experiences anyone could go through,” John began. “Suddenly you go from a society with rules and laws to one where you fight for survival. You’re told that it’s okay to do things you would have never imagined yourself doing back home. Some of the things I had to do still haunt me. There’s no getting over it, and that’s the bad part. You have to learn to accept it.”

“I can’t,” Sherlock croaked. “I can’t accept it. I want to. I want to justify it. I should be able to, right? This man, this evil bastard of a human being put someone I loved in so much danger that it’s sickening. He put drugs into his body and scars on his skin. The way he looked sometimes…he was so broken, John. As though that wasn’t enough, Kirchhoff killed him, and to fix it I killed someone. Luke wasn’t the only one Kirchhoff ruined.”

“No, there was you.” Sherlock’s eyes went wide as John sat up a bit and cleared his throat: “You suffered at the hands of Kirchhoff too because he turned Luke onto drugs you were turned onto them too. You were physically hurt by Kirchhoff and emotionally hurt because of the worry and grief you went through over Luke. He made your life miserable, Sherlock. He damaged you. Admit to me, please admit to me, that part of the reason you did it was because you were angry over what he did to you.”

Sherlock forgot to breathe.

It.

Even John was ashamed to say what he did. But ultimately, he was right, and maybe that’s why John had been so patient with him. He understood what was really going on.

“You could have finished uni and become something…fantastic,” John said, breathing soft, warm, breaths into his face. “You could have had money. Maybe a home instead of just squatting for years. Years, Sherlock. You went years on the street without proper food or healthcare and with little physically protection. It was traumatizing, wasn’t it? And no one quite understands. Maybe they don’t want to talk about it or maybe they-“
“No one cares if some junkie loses all his money and is left roaming the streets,” Sherlock interrupted. “I did it to myself.”

“And that hurts, doesn’t it?”

It did hurt. It always had hurt, deep down, and so much so that when John said it his stomach turned into tight knots.

“I’ve had a horrible life, John,” he admitted. “I never thought it would get harder than losing my mother. I thought that once I got through that then I could handle anything, but I still remember my first night on the streets. I still remember what it was like to spend all day looking for somewhere to crash. And the winters…it was so cold that I can still feel it. Sometimes I have these dreams where I’m walking around London and the streets are completely empty. I start wondering through houses—really nice, posh, houses—looking for somewhere to sleep, but even though all the beds are empty I keep running because I never feel safe. I have dreams where I go into restaurants for food but the kitchen’s empty. I have dreams where I sit and wait for Luke to come back and I keep waiting and waiting. How could I have been so stupid, John? How could I have done that to myself?”

John brushed a hand over the back of his head in soothing circles. Sherlock sank against him and basked in the feeling of his steady breaths over his face.

“I feel safe with you,” Sherlock said. “I make good choices when I’m with you.”

“Well…”

A small smile crossed Sherlock’s face.

“Okay, some good choices,” he teased. Then his face fell again. “But I killed Kirchhoff, and I can never take that back. I have to learn to accept it, and I have no idea how to do that.”

Soft lips placed a reassuring kiss against his cheek.

“I think you’ve already started,” John murmured. He offered a breath-staling nibble to his ear before explaining: “You’ve admitted that you’re going through something. You don’t want to go through it alone, and you’re trusting other people and letting them in. Do you know how big of an improvement that is from the Sherlock I met at St. Bart’s?”

Their hands found each other’s and collapsed together. Sherlock laced one of his legs over one of John’s. It was the first time they had ever lay like this together, in a bath. He had to agree with John that it did feel good. An electric energy shot through him as John’s hand snaked toward his cock, and he realised this conversation was about to take a very different turn.

“I want you to be completely honest with me,” John breathed. “I am you and you are me. We’re in this together. I don’t want you to hide. I want to know everything. Your life has been so hard, Sherlock, but you’re safe now. You’re safe and alive and you’re not allowed to feel guilty about that.”

Suddenly John was on top of him, pushing his body down into the soapy water. His head rest just above the surface and his eyes watched John reach down between him and grab his dick.

“I want you,” John whispered into his ear.

Sherlock nodded, feeling a bit feverish as those hands squeezed around him. He moaned and tilted his head back, allowing John room to nip at his neck and leave a mark that would surely still be
there when they returned to London.

John reached for a bar of soap and drew it to Sherlock’s chest. Slowly, his boyfriend ran the soap over his chest, across his shoulders, and down his arms.

“You need to be better about the whole showering multiple times a week thing,” John joked. Reaching up, he raked a hand through Sherlock’s hair and grimaced. “Your hair has become unruly.”

“You love my hair!” Sherlock protested.

“It needs a good trim.”

He leaned down and pressed a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead. Once again the soap dragged across his body, right down to his thighs. A smile fell across Sherlock’s face as his head fell back against the edge of the tub. John’s calloused fingers dug into his thighs and, one by one, traced down his legs to his ankles. His thumb ran across the bones and reached beneath to tickle the bottom of his foot.

Before he could stop himself he burst into giggles.

“You’re ticklish!” His partner exclaimed. To prove his point, John tickled his foot again and again Sherlock giggled. “Sherlock Holmes is ticklish. It’s almost reassuring.”

“For god’s sakes John, stop!” Sherlock said, sitting up.

He decided it was time to turn the tables.

His grin widened as he scraped his nails down John’s chest and back up to his nipples and lowered himself so their bodies touched through water. John’s stomach bobbed just above the water, adding the warm liquid to the sensations he would feel as Sherlock’s tongue lapped at one of the nipples. His tongue danced back and forth, back and forth, getting faster and faster until John’s eyes fluttered closed and he let out a low whimper.

Instead of giving John a break he worked on the other.

“Sherlock,” John moaned as his tongue dashed back and forth. His hands ran through Sherlock’s hair again, encouraging him.

Sherlock pried the soap away from John’s hand and leaned back. He dragged the bar across John’s chest, putting a little more pressure than necessary on the nipples he just teased raw. Working in slow motion, Sherlock washed away the grime from running around Cornwall. And after a couple of days of running around the village, Sherlock had to admit his body was worn, and his boyfriend didn’t look like he fared much better.

He helped John sit up so that he could reach his back. John’s face fell against his shoulder, and Sherlock enjoyed the soft moans as he ran his soapy hands across his broad shoulder muscles. His fingernails dragged against John’s spine; his palms scraped over his hips.

“Sherlock,” John whimpered.

He finally felt a bit sorry for him, and Sherlock dipped them both further down into the water. He sat the soap aside and took to using his bare hands to reach each of those sensitive spots on his back. John squirmed under his touch and scooted forward so their bodies were even closer. With a moan John threw his head back and Sherlock attacked his neck, giving him a mark to match his own.
His lips danced down John’s stomach, leaving a trail of open-mouth kisses. Sherlock scooted backward as John lifted himself up so that he was balancing against the edge of the tub, giving himself enough room to take his boyfriend’s cock in his mouth. John let out a series of soft grunts as he licked at the head, down the shaft and back up again before taking him down whole again. His heart leapt at the salty taste and he took him in further, wanting more.

“Yes!” His lover cried softly.

Sherlock tried to take him down deeper, to go harder, but he was too anxious and the soapy water wading around him didn’t help. John let out a groan when he let his cock go. Instead he climbed up John’s body, leaving them face to face.

“Are we going to do this here?” Sherlock whispered.

John nodded and lifted himself out of the water so he could sit on the edge of the tub. Leaning over him, Sherlock positioned himself as close as possible and was just going in for another kiss when he accidently made John fall back against the wall. The heat of the moment instantly died as they both burst out laughing.

“I don’t think we’re coordinated enough to do this year,” John teased.

With a smile on his face, John grabbed Sherlock’s hand and they both stood up straight. Sherlock reached for a towel and helped John dry off before they stepped out of the bath and slipped into the bedroom. Wrapping his arm around him, John pulled them both against the door to finish the kiss that started in the tub. The two shared another laugh between kisses before throwing themselves onto the bed.

His face lingered over John’s a moment before he swooped down, planting kisses down his neck.

“In my bag,” John murmured.

Sherlock leaned over the bed to grab the bag John was talking about, and he grinned when he found the condoms and lube buried inside.

“My doctor,” Sherlock sang, kissing his neck.

Their skin burned against each other, and John’s chest flushed as Sherlock began preparing him. John squirmed when he pushed in the first finger and teased him a bit before pulling out again. Moaning, John twitched beneath his touch. He pushed in deeper and planted kisses to each thigh, then to his hard cock before pressing in with a second finger. His lover’s back arched off the bed. Sherlock leaned forward and licked at his cock while continuing to finger him. John whimpered and slipped his hands around his head.

“Sherlock,” John rasped. “Sherlock, please. I need…”

“Mmm, I know,” Sherlock said, “I know.”

With one final kiss to the head Sherlock pulled off the cock and lined himself up. He pushed in slowly at first, giving John time to adjust to the pressure before sliding in completely.

“Oh!” John breathed. “Sherlock-“

John grabbed at his own cock, telling him what he needed. Sherlock took him in hand and pumped as he began to thrust slowly. Soft grunts escaped his partner as he picked up the pace.
“Oh yes,” Sherlock cried out softly.

He thrust harder, leaving John’s body twitching against the bed. His lover let out small gasps for breath as he pounded into him and jerked him off in unison.

“Fuck.” John threw an arm over his face and cried out again as he came. Just the sight of him sent Sherlock over the edge, and he thrust harder and faster until his own climax took over him. He let out a series of grunts before collapsing on top of his boyfriend.

Their lips met in a fierce kiss. Breathless, Sherlock ran his hands up and down John’s warm body. When he reached his boyfriend’s hips John grinned and laughed a bit as his palms scraped the bone.

“I think you might be a bit ticklish yourself,” Sherlock teased.

They kissed again before crawling up to the head of the bed and slipping underneath the duvet. The two lovers faced each other with their bodies still only inches apart. John let out a deep sigh of exhaustion as he brought a hand up to caress Sherlock’s cheek.

“I’ve been worried about you,” John admitted, “I just want you to feel safe. I love you.”


John kissed him again, and Sherlock welcomed the distraction. He allowed John’s tongue to dip back into his mouth, but just as things started heating up again his lover backed away.

“Sherlock, you know I don’t judge you for that, right?” John asked; he nodded. “Sometimes we do things that we just can’t explain, but it will get better.”

After one final kiss John pulled him close so Sherlock was resting against his body. He let John wrap an arm around his shoulder, and their hands connected. Sherlock brought their knuckles to his lips and graced them with a kiss.

“Hey!” John exclaimed suddenly. “If I remember correctly, I was promised a song.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“No, Dr. Agar promised you a song,” he pointed out.

Nevertheless he slipped out of bed and grabbed his violin case.

“You’re going to play me a song stark naked?” John smirked. “Is that traditional amongst violinists? If so I might actually consider going to the symphony.”

He considered grabbing his dressing gown, but just to spite John he took out his violin and stood beside the bed, naked. Sherlock drew a deep breath as he brought the bow to the strings, and he closed his eyes to push the nerves away as he began to play.

The tune was a big dark, but it fit the mood he was in. It fit what the two of them had been going through all year. The song began as a slow, ominous melody, but quickly changed to a dance of minor notes.

When at last he finished the song and opened his eyes, Sherlock was startled to find John gaping at him, horrified.
“I thought about ‘Watson’s March’,” Sherlock teased, hoping to ease the tension of the room. Personally, he really didn’t think the tune was half bad, but John looked downright scared. “Or perhaps, ‘The Captain’s Overture’. What do you think?”

“I…I think it was lovely,” John stammered. He pulled Sherlock down to the bed to kiss him and feigned a smile. “Thank you.”

John embraced him, but Sherlock still felt like something was wrong. When his boyfriend held onto him a little longer than normal he was even more worried.

“And I was promised the next great novel,” Sherlock announced. “Or a poem, or blog entry, or something with words.”

“Oh, right.”

Grinning, John reached beneath the bed for his bag again and pulled out a piece of pink paper with a note written in purple crayon:

Roses are red
Violets are blue
You love me
And I love you too
Xoxo John

Sherlock stared at him, completely stumped.

“Is that it?” He finally shot.

“What?” John said. He was doing a terrible job of trying not to laugh.

“It’s not even original!” Sherlock whined. “And it’s written in crayon!”

“Dan left it,” John shrugged, “I thought I’d put it to good use.”

He threw a playful punch into his boyfriend’s arm and John finally burst out laughing. John reached under his bed again and this time pulled out his laptop. Sherlock draped an arm around his shoulders as he fired up the computer and brought up the document he had been working on.

“Here,” John said quietly, shoving the laptop at him.

Biting his lip, John crossed his arms and fell back against Sherlock’s arm. He was clearly nervous, and Sherlock squeezed his shoulder as he began reading.

The Hounds of Baskerville

By Dr. John Watson

“What is this?” Sherlock asked, his voice falling as he turned toward his partner.

“I never told you, but I was offered a book deal,” John admitted.

“No!”
“Yes!” A small smile crossed John’s face as he explained: “It was after I started my blog and we began getting media attention. A local publisher sent me an email saying she thought I had much more potential than just being a blogger. I thought it was a scam at first, but after I typed up the Baskerville case she dropped by the flat. She had a proposal written up and everything. I told her it wasn’t really my thing; I didn’t think I was capable of writing a whole book, but Dr. Agar asked me to write something so I decided to give it a shot. This is a novel version of the case. I wanted to get your opinion before I sent it to her.”

Sherlock began scanning the first page, and even just by glancing at it he could see that John’s writing was phenomenal. It was better than just a blog entry- it was proper dialogue, it was suspense and emotion. John actually knew what he was doing.

“Well?” John asked when he remained silent.

“I…” Sherlock stammered. He forgot to answer as his eyes took in the first chapter. He found himself dashing through each line eagerly, like a child, and he almost forgot that all this happened to him in real life. “John…this is brilliant.”

His lover’s eyes lit up.

“Seriously?” John squealed. “I mean, you’re not just saying that? Because we’re lovers, Sherlock, you’re allowed to be honest. If this is pure shit I want you to tell me before I send it to a publisher.”

“It’s not shit!” Sherlock replied. “This is gold, John. Why didn’t you tell me you could write?”

John shrugged.

“You make fun of the blog,” he pointed out.

“Well the blog is shit,” Sherlock said, “it’s written for crazed fans. This is literature.”

“It’s a few chapters in a word document.”

“Literature!” Sherlock exclaimed. “John, this could change everything.”

His boyfriend gazed at him, and Sherlock felt his heart melt when he realised John really didn’t feel all that confident in his writing.

“I want to read it all,” Sherlock went on. “Do you have more?”

“Besides Baskerville, you mean?” John asked. “Well, there’s this…”

He inched the computer out of Sherlock’s hands and clicked back on a folder labeled “Stories”. Inside was a whole list of subfolders titled after their cases, right down to the Violet Hunter case.

“It’s all just ideas,” John said. His cheeks flushed with embarrassment. “I haven’t fully thought them out. I’m not a writer, you know. Everything I know about proper grammar comes from medical school and research.”

“It’s fine, you’ll have an editor for that,” Sherlock said, stealing the computer away from him.

John’s eyes lit up at ‘editor’, like he hadn’t given much thought as to what this process would truly be like.

“You really think she’ll like it?” John demanded. “Do you think the public will like it?”
The question sparked something inside him, and suddenly Sherlock was able to really see how this could change them. *The public.* Books could make for good press, especially for John. Their popularity would probably lead to more clients, a better reputation, and even…

“Stop it!” John protested, slapping him in the shoulder. “I can practically see the numbers lighting up in your eyes. I’m not bloody J.K. Rowling. At best I might get published in a magazine- and that’s if this gets accepted in the first place. Don’t think too far ahead. I don’t want us to get our hopes up. Frankly, even if I was offered a deal I don’t know if I could go through with it. It’s a lot to consider, isn’t it?”

Sherlock leaned into his chest and maneuvered the laptop so it rest evenly over their legs. He turned to John, and he realised then he had never felt so much love for anyone in his life than in this moment. The feeling made his heart pound, his body turn warm, and sent the hairs on his body standing straight up. His muscles twitched, aching to be closer to John.

“I’ll be proud no matter what happens,” Sherlock said quietly. “This is incredibly brave of you, Dr. Watson.”

He stole a quick kiss to his lips and when they broke away John was smiling.

“Thanks,” John replied. He buried his head against Sherlock’s shoulder and let out a yawn. “You read. I’ll sleep.”

“Deal.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again to DeathFrisbee221 for being an awesome beta and helping me out! She also drew up Dan’s pictures for us from chapter 65. They’re super cute! Check them out here:

http://archiveofourown.org/works/1080305

Also... what do you think of the twist? I’d love to know how you feel about it! Thanks!!
His knees bounced up and down as he wringed his hands together. His eyes dashed around the room, taking in everything and everyone:

Red-head, late 30s, recently divorced, workaholic.

Brunnette, in the corner, only child, swamped with credit card debt despite having a high-ranking job.

Younger man who impatiently keeps glancing at the desk. Recently married. Baby on the way—just found out. Scared to death.

Surely he didn’t belong here.

Are they trying to figure out me too?

Sighing deeply, Sherlock closed his eyes and tried to calm down. At last he pulled out his mobile to text John when the receptionist looked up.

“Holmes?” She asked.

Swallowing away the lump in his throat, Sherlock stood up and walked once again into Dr Agar’s office. This time, the doctor’s office was a bit more tidy. Dr Agar was dressed sharply in a dark brown suit and a new haircut; the ghost of a smile crossed his face until he noticed Sherlock enter.

“Mr Holmes,” Dr Agar greeted. “I’m happy to see you again.”

“Congratulations on the engagement,” Sherlock offered with a grim smile.

The doctor grinned and raised his hand for a shake.

“Thank you,” he replied. “Dare I ask how you knew?”

“You have a glow about you.”

Agar laughed as Sherlock took his seat across from him. He already had his file out on his desk, but from what Sherlock could see, it was like a blank canvas. There were the pages he was forced to fill out at the front desk, but other than that the doctor was clearly ready to write the book on Sherlock Holmes.

Which made him all the more nervous.

“Now I’m sure you took one look at me and knew that I was engaged,” Agar said. “You probably know where the wedding is going to be, when, where the honeymoon is, and you have probably guessed how long we will last. You have spent years doing nothing but observing everything around you, but when are in this office, I’d like to ask you to use those skills to observe yourself. This isn’t about me writing a diagnosis and prescribing medication. I’d like to help you look inside yourself and truly get a grasp of who you are.”

Sherlock blinked.
That was unexpected. Wasn’t this supposed to be about changing who he was?

“I’m fascinated by your work, Sherlock,” Agar admitted, “but what interests me most is you. Who you are, and where you’re from. You’re becoming increasingly popular, and if you aren’t able to answer these questions yourself you’ll find it difficult to handle fame. I’m afraid I’ve seen it happen time and time again with my patients.”

Fame?

Sherlock felt so lost that he was impressed. Never before had someone (other than John, of course) left him so speechless. For the first time he was beginning to understand why Lestrade recommended him to Agar. He obviously dealt with not only the general public but people who left high profile lives. Up until now he had been in denial that his work was anything more than assisting the police, but considering John was involved now maybe it was time to consider how he was going to deal with everything- including the possibility of his boyfriend becoming a published author.

“Questions?” Sherlock finally said.

“Who are you? Where are you from?” Agar reiterated. “They’re two of the hardest questions any human being can answer. Answering those questions honestly requires us to look deep inside ourselves and fully accept what has happened to us and what we’ve done. But I will start simple. Tell me about your family.”

Simple? He thought. Right.

In fact, the topic of his family was so complicated that Sherlock didn’t know where to begin. Did he start with Mycroft, his overprotective older brother who practically controlled the British government? Or his mother?

Or his father? Where did he even begin about his father? The part where his father left when he was two? Or maybe he could admit that he’s always worried there’s more to that story he didn’t know. The abuse Laura and her mother went through…did Mycroft go through that? Their mother?

How could he talk about any of that with a stranger?

“It’s not simple, is it?” Agar asked. A soft smile crossed the doctor’s face. “Do you still have a clear memory of your mother?”

Sherlock’s heart leapt to his throat.

Now that was a hard truth.

“I’ve talked to a lot of patients who lost their parents young,” the doctor explained. “Some of them find that the hardest, the most painful part of that experience, is when the memories begin to fade. It’s not anything you’re doing wrong. You would be surprised the ripple effect something like that has.”

Swallowing nervously, Sherlock asked:

“Ripple effect?”

“It’s starts with losing those memories,” Agar said, “and then it starts to feel like you’re losing control. It’s because you are losing control.”
Sherlock blinked. He didn’t expect a therapist to be so blunt with him; at least not so soon.

“You think I’m losing my mind,” Sherlock realised.

“No,” Agar replied, shaking his head. “No, that’s not what I said.”

“You said I’m losing control. That’s the same thing as-”

“No, it’s not,” Agar protested. He took a deep breath and folded his hands on the desk. “I have no doubt you think it is, but I think you are becoming overwhelmed by your past, by all of these emotions, by your work, by your love for John, even. This is all very new to you, isn’t it? So far it has been easy to push everything back, but now everything is coming at you all at once. Do you have any idea why?”

All he could do was shake his head.

“You want to deal with it,” the doctor said. “You are ready to deal with it. Now, what is the clearest memory you have of your mother?”

Closing his eyes, Sherlock ran through his mind palace and opened the door that held what little he knew about his mum. Flashes of Christmas dinners, birthdays, and bedtime stories came to mind first. Then there was beach, there was fresh salt air and a long car ride to the shore. His head was on Mycroft’s shoulder. His brother had just turned sixteen.

“Mycroft’s sixteenth birthday,” he finally replied. “We went to the beach: just him, mum, and I.”

The doctor smiled.

“In the family history section of your forms you state that your parents separated when you were two years old,” Agar said. “Do know anything about your father?”

With a heavy sigh, Sherlock admitted:

“He sells cars in upstate New York. I understand he’s done more than one stint in jail. He’s a petty criminal who left my mother for a younger woman in America. I really don’t give a damn about him.”

Agar’s eyes lit up like he had struck gold.

“Did they have any children?”

A knot formed in his stomach; he really hadn’t expected this session to go like this. He expected to talk about the cases, about the victims. Maybe even about the Violet Hunter case, in particular. Yes, that would have been a good one to discuss with a therapist.

But his sister?

“Yes, a daughter; my sister. She lives in New York too.”

Agar nodded, and Sherlock couldn’t tell if it was out of sympathy. When he finished with his notes the doctor paused and stared at the page filled with his thoughts for a long moment. Then he finally looked up at Sherlock and smiled again.

“I think you’re doing a lot better than you think, Sherlock,” Agar said. “I’ve talked to a lot of people whose parents are divorced. They come from broken families, many with step-brothers, -sisters or half-siblings, and they have no idea what to think about it.”
“And you think I do?”

“You said ‘my sister’,” Agar pointed out. “I do watch the news, Sherlock. I know all about the kidnapping. That’s quite a way to find out family secrets. Have you accepted her into your life?”

Sherlock blinked. Was he not supposed to?

“Of course,” he shot.

“My point exactly,” Agar smiled. “Accepting something like this takes a great deal of strength. You would be surprised at the amount of people who live in denial for years after finding out news like that.”

“It wasn’t easy,” Sherlock interjected quickly. “She was the child my father chose to raise. But I found out how he treated her and her mother and-”

“You’re not sure whether you feel guilty for not being there or grateful it didn’t happen to you.”

Sherlock froze and stared. Besides John, any kind of doctor he had ever seen before was perfectly useless in figuring him out. They weren’t sure what to make of his appearance and name, let alone his personality or psyche. Yet somehow Dr Agar was spot on every time. He shifted in his seat and tried to make himself relax; maybe this didn’t have to be such a bad experience after all.

“Yes,” he replied.

“You realise there is no way you could have known what was going on?” Agar said. “Even if you did, it was in America, and you were just a boy in England. You are her older brother; it is only natural for you to feel obligated to protect her, just as your older brother feels the same way about you. Of course, with two younger siblings in tow now I’m sure Mycroft must be going mental.”

Sherlock smirked. They hadn’t discussed it, but he could just picture Mycroft fighting to put some of his own security protections on Laura and her family. He wondered if she had begun to find any hidden cameras yet.

“I know your brother well,” Agar admitted. “Are you beginning to see why he was always so overprotective of you?”

He didn’t reply. He tried not to make admitting he was wrong a habit, but deep down he knew if the situations were reversed, or if it were Laura who was in danger, he would have acted the same way.

“Tell me about your holiday,” Agar said casually, as though he could tell Sherlock needed a break from the family talk. “Where did you go?”

Sherlock hesitated. The case had leaked into the news, and he didn’t want to be lectured for solving a murder while on holiday.

“The beach,” he said, keeping it simple. “It was very…nice.”

Agar smirked, and Sherlock knew he saw right through the lie. The doctor had probably even checked regional news just to make sure there were no crimes solved over the week that were connected with him.

“Were you able to come up with a song for John?”
John’s reaction to his song was more disturbing than the murder and Mortimer’s case combined. His partner hadn’t just looked shocked but frightened- so much so he was nervous about bringing it up with a therapist. The doctor would probably think he was insane for scaring his boyfriend with a song, but he knew no matter what he said Agar would know he was hiding something.

“He seemed a bit…afraid,” Sherlock confessed.

Even the doctor looked confused.

“How do you mean ‘afraid’?” Agar asked.

He thought it over, considering all the theories he came up with since leaving Cornwall.

“He was just very shocked,” Sherlock began, “it was like he wasn’t expecting it, that’s all.”

“Was it a dark song?” Agar said. Sherlock hesitated, and Agar wrote down some notes. “Perhaps he was just surprised you chose a tune filled with so much deep emotion.”

“Perhaps.”

But he wasn’t convinced. There was something else that John was hiding. Since returning to London the day before John had kept to himself. They slept together, ate together, unpacked, and hung around the flat, but apart from that John hadn’t said anything more about their holiday or the song. Maybe he should have pushed John to tell him what was going on.

“Well,” Agar announced, closing his file. “That’s our session for today. If it’s alright with you I’d like to see you and John together again next time.”

Sherlock nodded, but his mind was already far away as he stood and shook the doctor’s hand. He fled the room and waited until he was safely inside the empty lift before he took out his mobile and texted:

*Why were you afraid of the song? –SH*

John didn’t answer right away. Sherlock headed out of the building and waved down a cab. As he settled into his seat his phone lit up:

*What are you talking about?*

Sighing, Sherlock closed his eyes and rest his head back against the seat.

Maybe the doctor is wrong.

Maybe he was losing his mind.

When he reached the flat he found John in the kitchen studying the directions on the back of a box of pasta.

“You start by boiling water,” Sherlock teased.

John grinned as Sherlock stopped in front of him and slipped his arms around him. They kissed, but when they broke apart John looked crestfallen.

“Why did the song frighten you?” Sherlock asked again.

His boyfriend’s eyes locked with his, and he knew John was trying to find a way to explain it.
“Sherlock…do you remember what happened when you were under the influence of that poison? Not the bit when you confessed to me about Luke, but right when it first hit you.”

Sherlock shook his head. Not only did he not remember, but he wasn’t aware there was ever anything more than John throwing them both out into fresh air and his own confession about his survivor’s guilt. He remembered seeing the horrific images of Luke’s death, but he didn’t remember saying anything.

“You were humming a song,” John explained. “It was the same song you played for me.”

Oh.

No wonder he freaked out.

“I thought I made that song up,” Sherlock confessed. “I thought I heard it in a dream. It came to me all of a sudden after solving the case.”

“Well, you must have come up with the melody while you were working on the ash experiment because it was the same tune. It just freaked me out, that was all. I could tell when you were playing it that you didn’t remember singing it earlier. It was like something straight out of a horror film. I didn’t think it was particularly scary. I was just surprised, that was all. The song was beautiful, Sherlock. The emotions in it were just perfect. I’m really impressed.”

John leaned up on his toes to kiss him again, and Sherlock’s nerves finally calmed down. He dragged his hand across his mouth as they broke apart. His eyes drifted around the flat, and John turned back to his cooking.

“Is Harry here?” Sherlock asked.

“She’s been out, searching for jobs. She’ll be around for dinner. Do you want to help?”

He watched as John tried to decipher the recipe for the sauce, and he grinned.

“Yes, I think I better.”

Chapter End Notes

Once again, thanks to DeathFrisbee221 for beta-ing!!

Thanks for reading! I’d love to know what you think about Sherlock's session with Agar.
The next day John found himself waiting for Harry at Angelo’s and, like always, she was late. John waved Angelo away as he approached with his usual wine and candles. He double checked his mobile for new messages and ran a nervous hand over his head when there was nothing new from his sister.

“Bloody typical,” he muttered.

Then he spotted her hurrying around the corner, clutching a rucksack and wiping her hand at her face as she ran into restaurant; she was earning more than a few concerned looks from the other patrons.

“Are you okay?” John asked.

Harry nodded as she sank into the seat across from them.

“Yeah, it’s fine, I just didn’t get the job,” Harry sighed. “Not enough experience.”

He didn’t want to point out that wasn’t hard to believe, since most of her longest-lasting jobs were in shops.

“In the meantime I got a job in another fucking shop,” Harry continued. “I hate to, but I need something to get by, you know?”

“Yeah, of course,” John lied.

He couldn’t think of anything better to say. It was no secret that he and his sister were worlds apart- he studied medicine and joined the army, and she studied art history and dropped out after one term. Up until now he always thought Harry had a problem with commitment, but lately he thought she was just afraid. She never tried hard enough because she was afraid of failure and afraid of people turning her away.

But of course he couldn’t say that to her face.
Suddenly Harry’s hands were on his, and a sloppy smile spread across her face.

“Thank you for helping me,” Harry said, “I really do appreciate it. You don’t have to be there for me all the time. You have a life now, John. You have Sherlock. Don’t feel like you have to put up with me.”

“Don’t worry about it,” John replied. “Honestly. We’re siblings, Harry. We should see each other more. You know you can stay.”

Harry just beamed, and they both fell silent. John’s eyes drifted out the window, and that’s when he saw him: a young man, no older than twenty-five, loitering outside the restaurant. He was brunette, short, and clearly high. The young man was wearing a hoodie, though it was fairly warm outside, and he was pacing. The cashier up front kept glancing out the window, and that’s when John knew something was wrong. When the man headed toward the entrance, John panicked.

“Harry, there’s an emergency exit behind us. Go through it. Now!”

His sister glanced around, wondering what she was missing.

“John, what are you going on about?”

“Now!” He hissed as the man entered the room.

But Harry was too late.

“Everyone on the floor!” John’s heart pounded as the man withdrew a gun from his jacket, and everyone hit the floor. He stayed closed to his sister, reaching for her hand when she began shaking. “Wallets, mobiles, keys, now!”

The cold floor scraped against his cheek as he reached for his wallet and the keys to the flat. He nodded at Harry to do the same, and she closed her eyes in defeat as he pulled a single credit card out of her pocket.

Since when does she have a credit card?

He watched as the robber made the rounds. At his close of a distance to him, John could see the man’s bloodshot eyes, his pale, drawn face, and the finger twitching against the trigger. John knew right away that the guy was high, and a druggie with a gun made the scenario even more unpredictable. As he made his way toward John the robber bumped into tables and tripped over his own victims. John knew he had the advantage for knowing the man wasn’t in a right state of mind- but he’d seen enough violent outburst from patients in the A&E to know a junkie’s mind wasn’t something to mess with.

But seeing that finger on the trigger made his heart stop. Beside him, Harry was biting her lip and closing her eyes tightly as though pretending she weren’t there. John wanted to reach out and comfort her, but that’s when he got another idea instead. The robber was clearly unsteady on his feet. John knew he had the strength to take him down, as long as he acted quickly.

So when the robber’s feet appeared within arm’s reach John leapt up. He was easily able to tackle the junkie, but the man clutched the gun in his hands as they fell to the floor. A large, muscular man who had been eating alone in the corner got to his feet to help at the same time that the sound of a gunshot exploded in his ear.

For a horrible moment John thought he had been shot again. He could even feel the pain searing through his shoulder and the adrenaline coursing through his blood. His ears began ringing, but
that didn’t drown out the screams echoing around the restaurant. In the distance, he thought sirens were crying out into the night, but he knew it must be his imagination.

His attacker was suddenly above him, sitting on his chest and pinning him to the ground. John struggled, only to be left with his arm twisted around his back and a punch to the face. He managed to free his arm, but before he could act the gun came down hard against his face.

Three hours later he lay on the sofa in their flat with a bag of ice on his forehead. Sherlock hovered over him, studying him like John was one of his science experiments, while Harry yelled at the reporters loitering outside.

“Are you sure your headache is okay?” Sherlock asked.

“It’s just a small one, the medicine will help,” John replied. He grabbed Sherlock’s hand and offered him a grateful smile. “Thanks for taking care of me, but I’m fine, really.”

One of Sherlock’s long, lanky, fingers brushed across the new knot on his head, and John winced. A low chuckle escaped his lover, and John knew he had a point.

“John, your head’s swollen to the size of a melon,” Sherlock teased. His knuckle ran across his black eye. “It was an incredibly stupid decision.”

“I know.”

Suddenly Sherlock’s lips were on his for a quick kiss, broken up by shouting from downstairs. Then there were two sets of feet storming up the steps.

“John, I tried to stop him!” Harry exclaimed.

John frozen when he saw who had followed Harry into the flat.

“Dad?”

The room fell silent as father and son stared at each other. He hadn’t seen his father since…since…he couldn’t even remember. It had been so longer that he swore his dad looked older than he had before. There were more wrinkles in his face, he had lost weight, and he looked tired.

Harry stood beside their father, arms crossed and so upset she looked like she might cry.

“He can’t stay!” She cried. “I told him you wouldn’t want to see him.”

“Harry, it’s fine,” John lied.

In all honesty, he didn’t know what he felt about seeing his father. After all, it wasn’t his father who slapped him across the face. He hadn’t actually talked to his dad about Sherlock- in fact he could probably count the number of meaningful conversations they had since he came back from war on one hand.

“John,” his dad announced, his voice dry and nervous. “I heard on the news about what happened, and I wanted to make sure you two are alright.”

“Like you give a shit about us,” Harry shot.

She purposefully shoved against their father as she made to storm up to John’s room. The door
slammed and, once again, a long silence filled the room. He just didn’t have a clue what to say. It was true, it wasn’t like his dad to panic over something like this. He and Sherlock worked dozens of cases that left them maimed or warranted an A&E stay, and he had never gotten so much as a text from his father.

He couldn’t even be certain his father owned a mobile.

“I’m fine, Dad,” he finally replied. “Just a bump on the head. I’ve had worse.”

“Are you sure you don’t need to be in the hospital?” His dad asked.

“I’m fine,” John said again.

Sherlock’s hand brushed against his, and John realised his boyfriend was waiting to be introduced. Anxiety overtook him, forming knots in his stomach as he remembered what happened with his mother.

“Dad…” he had to stop and swallow away those nerves. His father stood, waiting to hear those words from his son’s mouth for the first time. “This is Sherlock. He’s my partner.”

Their hands collapsed together, as though Sherlock were claiming him as his.

“It’s good to meet you, Sherlock.”

John froze up again. He flashed back to being sixteen years old and introducing his dad to his first official girlfriend. He never thought a conversation with his parents would get more awkward than that—god had he been wrong.

“It’s good to meet you too,” Sherlock stuttered.

He had never heard Sherlock stutter like that before. Could it be—was Sherlock nervous about meeting his father? The thought of the consulting detective being worked up over something so innocent made him want to grin.

But then Sherlock jerked away, like he was trying to flee. John squeezed his hand, begging him to stay.

“I don’t have to stay,” his dad announced. “Really, I can—“

“No,” John cut in. “No, I…Dad…look, I’m sorry for how things have turned out. It’s just with Mum and the way she reacted, I couldn’t put myself through that again.”

“I would never hit you, you know that.”

“I know.”

He noticed Sherlock glance away, uncomfortable, and John knew he was thinking of his own father. It was so strange being forty-one years old and fighting to win his sixty-seven year old father’s approval.

“I have nothing against you being gay,” his father blurted out. Sherlock and John stared, unsure what to think or do. “That religious stuff, you know that’s all your mother. What bothers me, John, is that you came back from the war an entirely different person. You didn’t talk anymore. You didn’t want to see us. Getting that call was the most terrifying moment of my life. For the longest time we didn’t know how serious it was. Your mother and I, we wanted nothing more than to see
you again. Then you came back and...you were just different.”

John was speechless. Not only had he never heard any of this before, he had never heard his father say something so heartfelt. The confession almost made him understand his parents’ behaviour over the past couple of years—almost.

“War changes people,” John replied quietly. “You know that.”

“I know,” his father whispered. “God I know. But you never expect it to be your son. You never expect something like that to happen to your kid. It’s like this denial you go through as parents. That bullet didn’t just change your life; your mother was completely shaken. She didn’t speak to anyone for a long time. You deserved to have your space, but she felt like you were pushing her away.”

“I wasn’t.”

I was.

Getting shot in a desert wasn’t exactly something he wanted to chat with his mother about. He didn’t want to talk to her about how much danger he was in or how terrified he was. His mother never thought the army was a good idea to begin with; he didn’t want her to feel like she was proven right.

Somehow, that space he needed turned into over two years of hardly communicating with his parents.

“You never talk about it,” his dad went on, “and that just, well, it scares me. It’s just taken me this long to say it, and I’m sorry for that. Hearing about you getting shot at, kidnapped, robbed, hurt, feels like reliving that phone call all over again. Except you never tell us. I have to hear it from the news. My son gets hurt trying to save a restaurant full of hostages, and I hear about it from the news. I think you’re a brilliant person, John, but if you want us to keep our distance that’s fine.”

Right, so suddenly the decision was on him. He was so stunned he didn’t know what to think. His father was a man of few words. Legend had it that at his wedding his father became so nervous while trying to say his vows that he nearly threw up on the priest.

“What about Harry?” John asked. Because it really made no sense: his father couldn’t just stand there and pretend like he had no problem with his children’s sexuality when a lifetime of arguments with Harry proved otherwise.

“Harry?” His father repeated. “I think Harry makes terrible decisions, and I constantly worry about her drinking. But it’s not about the fact that she likes to date women: it’s who she chooses to date. The things she chooses to do. Harry puts her health and well-being at risks with the stupid things she does, and you know it. I’m glad you’re helping her out because she doesn’t want to reason with us.”

“Maybe because Mum told her she was going to hell.”

“Your mother—” and suddenly his father stopped. He stopped and drew in a deep breath. He closed his eyes and clenched his fist, and John wondered if there was something about his parents’ relationship he didn’t know. “That’s your mother talking.”

“How can you stand by her?” John demanded. “She slapped me, Dad! She disowned me.”

“No one disowned you!”
“She doesn’t want anything to do with me!” John screamed. He knew he was shouting like a child, and beside him Sherlock looked more than a little uncomfortable. But he didn’t care. “I’m her son and she looks at me like I’m nothing. I didn’t do anything wrong, Dad. Maybe Harry keeps making these decisions because she’s had no real guidance in life. The values she was taught are twisted and hateful. Yes, we’re both different, but we’re your kids. She’s hiding upstairs right now because she feels like she has no one—she feels like no one cares, and she’s far too old to still feel that way. Sure she pisses me off too, but I know that she needs help.”

And then something happened that he had never witnessed before in his life.

His father let out a single, choked, sob. The elder Watson’s hand flew to his face to hide the tears as they erupted in his eyes, and John could only watch, helpless, as his father broke down in front of him for the first time ever.

“Would you like to sit down, Mr Watson?” Sherlock asked, gently.

Nodding, his father took a seat in the armchair and held his head in his hands for a moment. After a few minutes of raspy breathing he finally let out one long sigh and looked up. Their eyes connected, and John forgot all about the robbery and his injury. Something was wrong. Something was very wrong.

“I had a heart attack a couple of weeks ago,” his father announced, “it was minor but god it was horrifying. As I lay there in the hospital it hit me: I’m an old man, John. I’m a couple of years shy of seventy, and I don’t have any kind of relationship with either of my children. The doctor warned me that if I didn’t change my diet and other habits that the last years of my life could be unpleasant— if I’m even blessed enough to earn those years. That’s why Harry terrifies me because I know part of this is due to all the drinking I’ve done. She’s so young, and I can’t watch her repeat my mistakes.”

John felt his mouth go dry. He felt like he was going to be sick.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” He demanded. “I’m a bloody doctor. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I was ashamed! I brought this on myself, I know it.”

“You had a heart attack!” He roared. Upstairs a door slammed shut, and he realised Harry had been listening in. “Are you okay? Was there permanent damage? What did the doctor say?”

“A bunch of medical nonsense,” his father replied with a wave of his hand.

“Who was your doctor?”

“Dr Morgan, a cardiologist at Barts.”

John tried not to let his disapproval show, but he couldn’t help it. He had worked with Morgan a time or two in the past, and though he knew she was a capable doctor she had a terrible bedside manner and tended to think of her patients more like numbers and cases than human beings.

“I’m finding you a new doctor,” he announced, “and we’re going to sit down and go over all the instructions they gave you. Have you been monitoring your blood pressure?”

“I didn’t come here to get a lecture!”

Closing his eyes, John took a moment to pull himself together. His father, a heart attack. His father could have died, and he would have never even met Sherlock. He wouldn’t have lived to see his
son become a published author.

“I can’t believe you didn’t tell me,” John whispered. “Did you tell Harry?”

His father shook his head, and John drew in a deep breath.

“Right,” John went on, “well, like I said, we’ll go over everything. I know it’s all a bunch of confusing shit but you have to take it seriously.”

“I know,” his dad admitted. “I know, and I am. Trust me, with your mother on the case.”

A sad smile crossed his face at the thought of his mother. Any normal family would be together at a time like this. But the Watsons? It took an armed robbery to bring him and his father long enough to hear about the heart attack.

“Are you sure you’re alright?” His father asked. To John’s surprised he stood up and walked over to the sofa. His muscles stiffened as his dad leaned over and examined the wound on his head. He then addressed Sherlock directly: “Have you given him anything for the pain?”

“Yes, Sir.”

John bit his lip as he tried not to laugh. He wished he could record a video of this moment so he could show Sherlock how ridiculous he sounded.

“And you know to keep the ice on every twenty to thirty minutes every-“

“I know,” Sherlock said.

The shadow of a smile slipped across his father’s face. Suddenly John felt like he was a kid again, and his dad was there to help him get through the flu. It was a good feeling. His heart tore a bit when his father took a step back and began slipping his coat on.

“Can you tell Harry for me?” He asked. “And please, John, look after her.”

John could only nod. As he watched his father disappear from his flat his hand found Sherlock’s palm.

“John?” Sherlock asked carefully.

“You called my father ‘Sir’,” John teased. But his smile quickly faded as tears rushed to the surface. “Sherlock, come here.”

He pulled his boyfriend close and threw his arms around his shoulders. Burying his head into Sherlock’s shoulder John began sobbing, and when he felt his lover’s arms squeeze him tightly he felt comfortable enough to cry openly for the first time in ages.

“It’s going to be okay,” Sherlock whispered into his ear.

For a few moments only the sounds of his sobbing filled the flat, and when John dared to look up again the room was blurry through his tears. He closed his eyes once again as his breath came in uneven gasped. John hugged Sherlock tightly as he finally calmed down long enough to say:

“My father had a heart attack.”

“It will be okay,” Sherlock said again. “We’ll get through this.”
They broke apart, and John let out a final sob as Sherlock’s hand brushed over his face to wipe the tears away. His lover offered him a kind smile; Sherlock was as full of confidence as ever.

“You were incredibly brave tonight,” Sherlock said.

“Doesn’t feel like it,” he muttered.

He gracefully fell back against the pillows, and Sherlock grabbed the bag of melting ice to replace it with fresh ice cubes.

“You need to rest,” Sherlock announced, “and the moment your head starts to hurt, or your body goes numb, or you start to forget who you are, you tell me.”

John grinned.

“Yes, doctor,” he teased.

Sherlock returned with the new bag of ice and sat it carefully on his head.

“And if you feel like you need the hospital, we’ll go,” Sherlock offered quietly.

“Okay,” John replied. He gazed at his partner for a moment and wondered how he had ever gone so long without having him in his life. “Thank you, Sherlock, really. But you don’t need to call my father ‘Sir’, you know.”

Embarrassment flashed across Sherlock’s face. Their hands collapsed together again, and John felt his body warm up a bit.

“Scoot,” Sherlock ordered.

He moved enough to give Sherlock room to lay with him on the sofa. They awkwardly faced each other, cuddled in each other’s arms. Upstairs, he knew Harry was fuming, but he needed to carefully craft what he was going to say to her before going up there. He thought of the restaurant, and of how scared his sister was. In many ways she was still a child. In many ways, she had never had the chance to grow up. She had been manipulated, used, hurt, and John knew she needed him. And now, his father needed him. He had to save him, and if he failed it could mean losing his family forever.

“You’re not doing this alone,” Sherlock murmured quietly as he held onto him.

As he gazed into Sherlock’s eyes, he knew he had to confess how he felt during the robbery.

“During the robbery, when that gun was pointed at me, all I wanted was you,” John confessed. “He fired a warning shot into the ceiling, and for a moment I thought I had been shot again.”

“Sounds simple enough to me: I will just have to never leave your side. Ever.” John laughed, and Sherlock went on joking: “Seriously. You won’t even be able to go to the loo by yourself. Clearly the world falls apart while I’m not around.”

“Clearly.”

They kissed, and finally the night seemed to settled down.

“You’re not supposed to leave someone with a head wound alone for twenty-four hours,” Sherlock said. Their foreheads touched, and the warmth of Sherlock’s body took his breath away. “And I’m supposed to make sure you stay alert. How’s the headache?”
“It’s fine. I promise.”

“Are you sure you don’t want to go-“

“Sherlock, the medic cleared me of any major head wound. It’s just a bump.”

“Why did my head wound warrant a hospital stay and yours a rest on the sofa?” Sherlock whined.

“Because my attacker was an incredibly out of shape junkie,” John pointed out. “Head wounds aren’t created equal.”

Sherlock scrunched up his nose, like a child, and pouted. John rolled his eyes and sank further into the pillows.

“Rest,” Sherlock urged. “I’ll wake you up routinely to check on you.”

“Can’t wait,” John mumbled.

As soon as his eyes closed he began drifting off to sleep. He dreamt of Angelo’s and their first dinner there; he dreamt of the robbery and getting shot instead of hit. He dreamt of his mum and dad and that summer his dad coached his rugby team.

And when Sherlock woke him up for his first check-up, John’s chest tightened as he realised how much he desperately wanted to put his family back together.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! What do you think of John's dad?
“Is Dad going to be okay?”

The two siblings sat shoulder-to-shoulder on John’s old bed the next morning. It took hours for Harry to finally open the door, but she stopped pouting as soon as he told her their father’s confession.

“Yeah, I think so,” John replied. “It was a minor heart attack. As long as he follows his doctor’s instructions, goes to some follow-up appointments, and makes some lifestyle changes he should make a good recovery.”

Harry let out a hollow laugh, and John understood her point. Their father was never one for following other people’s instructions.

“How’s your head?” Harry asked after a long moment of silence.

John caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror hanging over the back of the bedroom door. The swelling had significantly decreased overnight, and the pain never got any worse. He knew he was lucky; despite what he told Sherlock, deep down he knew there was every possibility head wound could have been worse than it was.

“It’s okay.”

An uncomfortable silence fell between them. John didn’t know how to do this—this *brother and sister* thing. How did it come so naturally to Sherlock? Laura came along out of nowhere and yet he always seemed to know what to do.

Then he remembered the one question he did feel comfortable asking Harry.

“Harry, when the robber demanded our money, you handed over a credit card. Honestly, it seems like you were more upset about that then being held at gunpoint.”

The question must have struck his sister at the core: she immediately teared up and looked away. Dabbing at her eyes, she breathed in and out heavily; Harry did always have massive anxiety issues. Part of him felt guilty for upsetting her, but he forced himself to keep it together. Being firm was really the only way to get through to her.

“I’m in over my head in debt, John,” Harry confessed, her voice quiet and broken. “My flat, my old car, nearly every expense I’ve needed to pay has gone on that card, and now I’ve maxed it out. I’m broke.”

No wonder she’s so upset about jobs.
“You know how careful you have to be with those things,” John pointed out. “Why didn’t you come to me?”

Harry let out a hollow laugh, and he knew why.

“You let me into your flat, John, that’s enough.”

He placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder and squeezed it gently. He noticed now how tattered her clothes looked. She had been wearing those same jeans, blouse, and trainers for years, now that he thought about it. Her short, cropped hair was beginning to grow out past her ears, and the rings she usually wore on her fingers had disappeared.

“You can always come to me,” John whispered.

His sister turned to him, eyes wide and wet as she took this as an opportunity to blurt out:

“I saw Clara the other day. I was just feeling a bit down-”

“A bit?” John exclaimed. “What were you doing looking her up?”

“I didn’t!” Harry cried. “I ran into her, honest! It was at a pub and she was-”

“You were out drinking?”

Now his own anxiety was settling in. John clenched his fist and breathed out carefully, trying not to lose it completely. Harry bit her lip, obviously trying her best to not scream at him.

“I went to a pub,” Harry repeated tersely, “and I ran into Clara, but I didn’t drink. I was going to but she talked me out of it.”

“Well thank God for Clara,” John shot.

“John!” Harry screamed his name so loud it echoed through the room; he knew Sherlock must have heard it downstairs. “She asked me to not start drinking and invited me out for dinner instead. It wasn’t a date. We didn’t hook up.”

John closed his eyes and wondered how his sister could be so stupid. After a few flings in school, Clara was the first serious relationship Harry had ever been in. She was so manipulated by the idea of being in love, of becoming engaged and having a wedding, that she was blind to how Clara treated her.

“Is there anything else I should know?” John demanded as he ran his hands over his face. “Dad had a heart attack. You met up with Clara. What next?”

Harry bit her lip and admitted:

“We arranged to meet for coffee tomorrow.”

He let out a bitter roar of laughter that left his stomach feeling sour as it hit him- maybe she didn’t want his help at all.

“God I’m stupid,” he mumbled to himself. He jumped off the bed. “Stupid, stupid John Watson. You don’t really want my help, do you?”

“John, please!”
Harry’s voice came out as a choked sob. Swirling around angrily, he crossed his arms and just stared at her for a moment and realised…

*I’m just like Dad.*

“Harry,” he sighed. He sank down onto the bed again and placed a hand on her shoulder. “Harry, I don’t mean that. You just frustrate the hell out of me, you know that. I want you to stop hurting yourself like this. Seeing her just makes it worse, you know that.”

“I know,” Harry confessed through tears. “I just feel like a useless, selfish, piece of shit.”

He bit his lip and straightened up, determine to keep his cool. Harry breathed out a final choked sob and ran her hands over her face. Throwing herself onto the bed she buried her face in the pillow and nearly made John tumble off the bed as she yanked the sheets over her head.

“I don’t want to think about any of it,” Harry mumbled. “I just want to sleep and wake up being ten years old again.”

“What, so I can chase you around the house calling you four-eyes?” John teased.

Harry laughed into the pillow, and a chuckle escaped him as well as he remembered how his sister looked in those horrendously large wire-rimmed glasses.

“You were such a dick when you were younger,” Harry shot turning her face to look at him. “Really, though, I just want to sleep.”

John gazed at her, hesitant to leave her alone. He knew he couldn’t hover over her shoulder the whole time she was in the flat, but having her under his wing made his sibling instincts kick in more than usual. Anything that happened while she was staying with him would be his fault.

“Are you going to talk to Dad?” He asked.

Shrugging, Harry wrapped the duvet around her shoulders and at least pretended to drift off to sleep.

*Typical Harry, sleep your troubles away.*

“I’ll be downstairs if you need anything,” he sighed.

He closed the door quietly behind him, and as he descended the steps from his old room it hit him how bizarre it was to be taking care of his sister in the flat. All it took was lecturing his sister once and yelling at his dad about his health to make him feel like he was eighteen again. He had lost the battle over Harry then, and he refused to lose it again.

The front door suddenly burst opened, jolting him out of his reverie. He stopped on the bottom step of the middle landing when he saw Greg ushering Sherlock inside by his collar and up the first set of stairs. His eyes instantly found Sherlock’s bloody knuckles. His boyfriend’s face was pale, and he was out of breath from running- or perhaps from trying to get away, judging by Greg’s grip.

“Greg?” John asked, his lips turned up in a smirk.

“I caught our guy,” the D.I. replied letting go of the consulting detective when they reached the top, “just as Sherlock was bashing his face in.”

“When did you leave the flat?” John demanded walking over to the pair. Sherlock looked away as
John picked up his hand to examine it. “And why didn’t you tell me? I would have...”

He felt just sort of saying ‘helped’ when he noticed Greg’s disapproving glare.

“...Stopped you,” John lied. He turned to Greg and offered a feigned smile of gratitude. “Thanks for bringing him home, Greg. Come on and let me look at that, Sherlock.”

He pulled on Sherlock’s wrist a little harder than he should have as he dragged him through the flat and into the kitchen. A grin swept across his face as he pinned Sherlock against the sink and raised his hand up again to examine it. His eyes flickered to his lover’s as he asked:

“You really went after the lunatic who attacked me and beat him up?” John asked. Sherlock’s eyes twinkled in response. “Wish I could have seen that!”

“You can! I filmed it, look!”

Sherlock whipped out his mobile and cued up a poorly shot video of him punching the guts out of the very man who robbed Angelo’s. It looked like Sherlock propped his mobile on top of a back alley dumpster using a tripod.

“God I love you,” John murmured as he pulled his partner in for a kiss. Sherlock blinked in surprised as the kiss deepened and wasted no time in wrapping his arms around John’s shoulders.

*I want this, right now,* he silently pleaded.

“Sherlock,” John protested, breaking away. He looked down at the sight of Sherlock’s disappointed face. Obviously he had planned to do some bullying and come home to claim John as his. On any other day, the doctor wouldn’t argue with that. “Can I ask you something personal? Really personal?”

Sherlock let out a dramatic sigh, clearly displaying his waning arousal.

“Yes, John,” he sighed, “please ruin a perfectly romantic moment with one of your childhood story games.”

John couldn’t help but feel a bit offended, and it must have shown because Sherlock raised his good hand to John’s cheek.

“What did she say to you?” Sherlock demanded.

“Look,” John said, taking Sherlock’s hands again. “I want to ask you something personal, and I’d appreciate an honest answer. Back when you were using, when did you admit you were an addict?”

Sherlock blinked. Clearly not what he was expecting at all then.

“I…I suppose it was when I overdosed- for the second time, that is- and Lestrade found me in an alley. He took me to the hospital, got me help, and made me make a promise.”

“What did she say to you?”

“...I suppose it was when I overdosed- for the second time, that is- and Lestrade found me in an alley. He took me to the hospital, got me help, and made me make a promise.”

“What did you promise?”

His eyes pleaded with Sherlock as his partner silently relived the memory. He wanted something, anything, to guide him through getting Harry out of this mess.

“He promised that he wanted to live.” They both spun around to see Greg appear in the doorway. The detective gazed at his consultant, reliving his own memory of the night. “We sat in that hospital room and I asked him if he wanted to live or die. He said he wanted to live, and I made
him promise that to me. Then I asked him to say it.”

“Say what?” John asked, turning to Sherlock.

Sherlock stood perfectly still, hands behind his back, gaze somewhere else entirely, as he recited:

“I am a drug addict.”

A lump developed in John’s throat, and Sherlock placed a hand on his shoulders. Hearing Sherlock say it made all those stories come to life. He was lucky enough to have not been faced with seeing Sherlock in that state, and hearing the stories seemed more surreal than real.

But hearing him recite those five words…

“Powerful, isn’t it?” Sherlock asked finally looking John in the eye. John nodded. “Those words stick with you for life. Harry is afraid, John. She is afraid of admitting what she is because it will brand her for life. It doesn’t matter if she gets better, finds a new girlfriend, lands a fantastic job, and lives happier ever after. This part of her life will always be with her.”

John turned to Greg next, realising that maybe he had useful device, being a detective and all.

“He’s right, partially.” Greg admitted. “The thing is, though, is that once she’s sober- actually sober- that will begin to define her. She’ll build her life from there. Right now she’s trying to build her life from all these mistakes and bad things that have happened to her. It just won’t work; I’ve seen it time and time again.”

“She has you, remember that,” Sherlock spoke up. “Most people don’t have a John Watson there to rescue them.”

Letting out a frustrating groan, John grabbed his head and squeezed his eyes shut tight.

“It’s too much,” he admitted. “It’s just too much. Between her and my dad wanting to play happy families again; I just…I can’t.”

He broke away from Sherlock and left the room before either man could stop him. He sent a quick text before fleeing from the flat. There was someone else John needed to talk to, someone who would relate to him on this level more than anyone.

Mycroft.

_God help me._

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! What do you think about John's family?
Mycroft's Advice

Chapter Notes

I'm so sorry for the wait!!! I was busy last week, especially over the weekend, and this was an important chapter to me so I wanted to make sure it was done right. Thanks so much to DeathFrisbee221 for being an awesome beta! This chapter became so massive that I split it into two, so this is the first part!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John was actually impressed when he found Mycroft waiting for him at their arranged spot by the Thames. The elder Holmes gazed over the river, umbrella in hand, occasionally letting his eyes drift to the overcast sky.

“The rain is supposed to hold off until tomorrow,” John said as he took a seat beside Mycroft.

With a grim smile, Mycroft admitted:

“It’s already raining where I am headed, and I’m told it will continue to for the entire week.”

*If I were Sherlock I would have worked out exactly where he is going, why, and for how long.*

“If you have stuff you should be doing, feel free-“

“I have an hour before my plane leaves, and Gregory is working. You’re fine, John.”

“When you say your plane you actually do mean your plane, don’t you?” John was aware he was grinning like an idiot, but he still burst out laughing when Mycroft’s eyes twinkled. “That’s brilliant. God I can’t imagine the trouble Sherlock would get in if he had his own plane.”

“Oh, I have Sherlock banned from all of my aircrafts,” Mycroft replied. “Except for emergencies, of course.”

Silence fell between them, and he realised Mycroft was waiting for him to start the conversation about Harry.

“I wanted to talk to you about Sherlock’s drug abuse,” John admitted. “Obviously he’s come along way, and I just wanted to talk to you about that…journey.”

He winced at his own choice of words. He could feel Mycroft studying him, seeing straight through him.

“How are you feeling, John?” Mycroft asked. “Gregory tells me you took a hard hit to the head.”

John grimaced.

“Fine,” he sighed. “Fine, just…no, actually, I’m not. If I can be completely honest with you, Mycroft, I don’t have a clue what I’m doing. I’ve taken in Harry at the flat, and I’m just not sure if I know what I’m doing and it makes me feel like complete shit.”
“Sounds familiar.” John stopped; by the looks of it Mycroft was already deep inside some distance memory of a twenty year old Sherlock. “The first time I saw track marks on Sherlock’s arm I was so afraid that I just didn’t say anything. I was afraid that anything I would say would just drive him away. I didn’t know what to think, what to do, or who to talk to so I did nothing and my doing nothing nearly cost my brother his life.”

“I’m afraid the same thing’s going to happen to Harry.” John’s voice was just above a whisper. The wind suddenly picked up and he wrapped his arms around himself. Autumn was quickly moving into London, and he could feel his body adjusting to the sudden drop in temperature. Somehow the passing of the season made him feel like he felt like he had accomplished nothing over the summer. “And it’s already happened to my dad.”

An uncomfortable silence passed between them, and John’s face grew hot as he regretted ever inviting Mycroft to have this chat.

“You can’t blame yourself for what happened to your father,” Mycroft said. He paused for a moment. “Family is a funny thing. We don’t choose them, and they don’t choose us. Yet no matter what they do or what they believe we’re supposed to love them unconditionally.”

“Tell me about it,” John groaned, running his hands over his face. “I can’t imagine what it must have been like to bring up Sherlock.”

“Can’t you?” Mycroft replied. Instead of elaborating, Mycroft stared at the river for a long moment, his fingertips sitting beneath his chin just as Sherlock always did.

“It’s funny though, because Sherlock was great with Laura,” John quipped. “It’s amazing how someone who spent much of their life being so emotionally cut off from the world could just click with her like that.”

“Oh I don’t know,” the elder Holmes mused with a firm smile on his face. “I think Sherlock sees in Laura the family he never realised he wanted. All Sherlock had to do was treat Laura the exact opposite way I treat him.”

John laughed.

“I always wanted a brother,” John confessed. “Harry and I have never connected. Every time I try to help her she takes it as me trying to control her life.”

He paused, hoping Mycroft would take the cue. Mycroft stared at his hands for a moment, as though contemplating what story would be most appropriate to tell John. Then at last the elder Holmes sighed and began:

“When my mother died she gave me a speech I will never forget. She told me that Sherlock’s my responsibility now. I was the closest thing Sherlock had to a friend, and Grandmother tried but she was seventy. Mum’s dying words were ‘take care of Sherlock’. She told me life would be very hard for him, and he might never understand his childhood. But Mummy made me promise to never give up on him, and my promise was the last words I ever said to her.

I thought helping Sherlock get through being a teenager was the hardest thing I would have to do. He was socially detached, and while he was always ahead of the other students he was unmotivated. He got into uni only to drop out and, well, you know the rest. I didn’t know how to connect with him. I would talk to him, but I never knew if he was listening. When he started doing drugs it broke my heart. I still remember how sick I felt the first time I caught him sneaking cocaine inside the flat. I panicked. I felt like I had completely failed on my promise. I did
everything I knew to do, I talked to people, I did research about drugs and abuse, but Sherlock refused to have anything to do with me. I didn’t understand… I was losing my brother, and I was terrified he would die young.”

It wasn’t exactly what John wanted to hear. After knowing Mycroft was one of the most powerful, dangerous, men in London it was hard to imagine him as being so lost.

“What did you do?” John asked quietly.

“Unfortunately with Sherlock it took Luke’s death to make him realise what he was doing to himself. For some time I blamed myself. I told myself there was more I could have done, that I should have dragged him off the streets kicking and screaming. In the end, though, Sherlock changed. He appreciates life, and he appreciates those who love him.”

“So… you’re saying I should just wait until Harry makes some colossal mistake and let her realise then what she’s doing to herself?”

“No,” Mycroft said with a soft laugh. “No, Dr Watson, I’m saying that being an older brother is one of the hardest jobs you can have. No one wants their brother to be in charge of their life, and no matter how much you want to, you will not be able to force your sister to change. She has to realise she has a problem, and she has to want help.”

John’s eyes drifted over the banks of the river as he considered Mycroft’s advice. The only decent conversation he had with Harry lately was when he revealed his relationship to Sherlock to her. Otherwise things hadn’t changed in years. How was he supposed to suddenly earn her trust like that?

“Lestrade pulled Sherlock off the streets,” John said. “It must have been hard, seeing your brother confine in someone else.”

The elder Holmes let out a heavy sigh and admitted:

“It was. In the end it was Lestrade who convinced Sherlock to go to rehab… though threatening to arrest him for possession might have had something to do with it. But at the same time I was just happy seeing that he was ready to get help. It was a great relief, it truly was. I’m sure you would welcome feeling that kind of weight come off your shoulders.”

“Yeah,” John whispered. That’s exactly what he needed- to get this everlasting worry off his shoulders. “What’s frustrating is that I feel like I’m the only one who feels like this. I’m the only one walking around with the weight on my shoulders! Harry doesn’t seem to care if she walks in the footsteps of our father; and now he’s gone had a heart attack. I should have been there for him, and I should be able to help my sister. I’m supposed to be a doctor, but I’m just bloody useless.”

A hand fell on his shoulder, and John stiffened. Comparing Mycroft now to the Mycroft who kidnapped him years ago nearly made him laugh out loud; but it comforted him to know he judged the elder Holmes brother correctly.

“I think we’re more alike than we thought,” Mycroft mused. “I’ve spent most of my life feeling responsible for my brother’s actions.”

“It’s maddening, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it is.” Mycroft stopped for a moment, and John realised it actually felt nice to have something in common with Sherlock’s brother. In the past he became close with his partner’s family, but he never pictured that happening with Sherlock. It was nice to know that perhaps he
and Mycroft could get along. “You mustn’t feel guilty about your sister’s actions, and your father came to you after his heart attack. He wants to reconnect with you. I’m usually not one for these heart-to-hearts, but do you mind if I ask you a personal question?”

Like you ever mind asking people personal questions!

“Go for it,” John offered.

“What was your relationship with your family like when you returned from war?”

Pausing, John considered the odds of his father and Mycroft bringing up Afghanistan. It felt like so long ago and like yesterday all at the same time. He’d like to say that most days he didn’t think about the war, but it was always there- in his nightmares, in every startling, loud noise, even in the heat of a warm summer’s day. But he tried his best to never let it show; the average civilian would never understand how that stuff could continue to haunt him years later.

“I avoided them,” John confessed. “I was so…I dunno, for a while I was bit ashamed I suppose. I know it’s stupid, but when I was so excited when I went off to war. My father was so proud, and all of our family and friends knew. Then, in an instant, it was all over. I was nothing. I couldn’t face them- especially my mother. She begged me not to join the army…she was so afraid of something happening to me. Honestly one of the worst parts about being shot was making my mother’s greatest fear come true. You know, besides the excruciating pain, blood loss, and shell-shock.”

Mycroft offered him a sympathetic smile, and John couldn’t help but to wonder if anything like that had ever happened to him. While he

still didn’t know the details of Mycroft’s job, he assumed he was some sort of spy or agent. Surely he’d seen all kinds of battlefields himself.

“It’s funny because my dad brought that up,” John went on. “I guess I never really considered what they went through during that time. I feel a bit guilty, knowing I pushed them away. Instead of reconnecting with them I found Sherlock, started working on cases, and life just…slipped away from me. It’s been good but my past, my family, all that seems like this surreal life that happened to another person. I just don’t know how to connect with them now.”

Letting out a deep sigh, John forced himself to stop. After all, it was like Mycroft would really care about his problems- not to mention all of this would probably be repeated to Greg.

“You are not alone in that,” Mycroft replied. “Until my brother found you I wasn’t sure he would ever be in a place where he could connect with anyone, let alone me, not that I have the right to ask him.”

“Of course you have the bloody right!” John exclaimed. “You saved him, Mycroft, you and Greg and he owes you forever for that. He’s grateful for you, I know he is. I think he just still has…”

“Trust issues?”

John grinned, thinking back to what Ella used to say about him.

“Yeah, something like that,” he agreed, “but he’s already grown so much just in the past year.”

With a stiff nod Mycroft suddenly fell silent, and John felt like he had run out of things to say. He wasn’t sure exactly what he was looking for- all he knew was that he wished someone would just tell him what to do.

“Harry met up with her ex a few days ago,” John said with a sigh. “She’s in over her head in credit card debt. She’s trying not to drink, but I’m afraid it’s just all going to be too much for her. I don’t
want to push her because I’m afraid of just pushing her back toward the booze. I don’t want to send her to rehab; I don’t want to think it’s gotten that bad.”

“Perhaps she just needs someone to talk to, someone who has been there before,” Mycroft suggested. “Someone like Sherlock?”

Brilliant!

Except…

“I’m her brother!” John protested. “I should be able to-“

“She’s staying in your flat, John,” Mycroft pointed out. “You’re taking care of her. She’ll feel as though you’re suffocating her. Trust me, I’ve been told that before.”

John cringed at the thought. Now he felt like he was just bringing up bad blood between the Holmes brothers. But Mycroft was right. Harry had no friends that he knew of, and certainly none that were good influences. She just needed to connect with someone, to learn to trust again, and he himself trusted Sherlock more than anyone to take on that role.

“Thanks Mycroft,” he offered. Raising a hand, Mycroft gestured that it was no big deal. “You know, you’ve changed to quite a bit. Greg’s brought out the best in you.”

“I’d like to think that,” admitted Mycroft with a smile. He turned toward the sky, and as John watched he realised Mycroft was truly dreading leaving London.

“It must be hard, having to leave him all the time.”

There was no reply. Their conversation was interrupted by Mycroft’s mobile.

“Laura!” Mycroft announced; it was comforting to hear how genuinely excited he sounded. “Oh, Dan. Are you alright?”

John tried to listen in, but judging by the way Mycroft’s face scrunched up it seemed that Dan was whispering, like he was afraid of being heard.

“I’m afraid I haven’t heard the name. Maybe I can ask Greg to do a background check?” As Mycroft rambled on to Dan, John didn’t have the heart to point out the kid probably had no clue what a background check was. “No, I wouldn’t want to put myself in a compromising position either. That’s very thoughtful of you. You should phone Sherlock, I’m sure he’s itching for a new case. Yes…I’m sure he can offer a family discount. Alright, I love you too.”

He rushed the last part, as though he were embarrassed to be heard saying that. A chuckle escaped him as he hung up the phone.

“Seems as though Dan may have a case for you,” Mycroft explained.

“He didn’t want your help?” John asked. “He does know his uncle is the head of…practically everything…right?”

Mycroft laughed again.

“He says he doesn’t want to put me in a compromising position because I’m dating a policeman,” Mycroft replied. “He insists on not getting the police involved.”

“I guess I better get home,” John said, getting to his feet, “seems like we have a client.”
He held out his hand, and Mycroft took it.

“It was nice to see you, John.”

“It was nice to see you without being kidnapped, Mycroft,” John teased. “See, mobiles do work for things like this.”

Giving his umbrella a twirl, Mycroft swirled around and began to head toward the car. As he walked he checked his mobile again, and from where he stood John could see it was a text from Greg.

Suddenly Mycroft stopped and announced:

“Oh, and John, if there’s anything I can do for you and your family—"

“That’s not necessary,” he lied.

With a sympathetic look in his eye and his lips pursed in a firm smile, Mycroft turned and replied:

“The offer will always stand.”

“Thanks,” John called back, “I appreciate it.”

“And if you do decide to pursue rehab, or therapy, I have done more than my fair share of facilities and doctors specializing in addiction,” Mycroft confessed. “I’m sure Lestrade would have some suggestions as well of specialists in alcoholism.

John was too ashamed to admit that he had some suggestions of his own, being a doctor and all, but he wasn’t sure he would ever have the courage to have that conversation with Harry.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” he replied.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you are still enjoying the story! I would love to know what you think about where the story is going- how you feel about John and his family, and what else you would like to see. Thanks for reading!
He found Sherlock hovering over his laptop in the kitchen when he returned to Baker Street. A stew was cooking on the stove, and three bowls were stacked on the table.

“Is Harry joining us?” John asked as he leaned in for a kiss.

Sherlock shrugged.

“She’s been quiet, but I thought I’d make enough for her.”

“Thank you.”

The Skype menu was on his laptop; Sherlock’s fingers tapped anxiously against the keyboard. John took a seat beside him and casually dropped his hand on his boyfriend’s arm. As soon as he was settled his mobile went off, and Sherlock shot:

“Don’t answer it. It’s Michael with a terrible business proposal for Harry.”

“Michael and Harry?” John mused as he checked his phone to find that Sherlock was, unsurprisingly, right. “That’s a thought.”

Sherlock shoved the laptop over to him, revealing an email from Michael with a link to a program about starting an online business.

“Good call,” John sighed. “Though in a way I’m not being fair. We started a consulting detective business, after all.”

His boyfriend smirked.

“I started a consulting detective business,” Sherlock pointed out. “You just blogged about it.”

Rolling his eyes, John logged off his email account. Sherlock tried to jerk the laptop back away, but John grabbed onto it. They glared at each other, but they could only lock eyes for a moment before bursting out laughing. John kissed him again out of pity; just as he raised a hand to Sherlock’s shoulder someone cleared their throat behind him.

“Am I interrupting a moment?” Harry asked.

His face became hot from embarrassment as he turned around to see Harry standing there, still dressed in her pyjamas with a blanket around her shoulders.

“What are you alright?” John asked, jumping to his feet. He reached up to check Harry for a fever, but his sister swatted his hand away.

“I’m fine, I just…I dunno, I don’t feel very well.”
Suddenly she shivered, and John realised she was shaking.

“Withdrawals,” Sherlock announced, without looking away from the computer. “Shakes and tremors. Insomnia.”

“Insomnia?” John asked. “I thought you were sleeping.”

Harry let out a harsh roar of laughter that made him feel pathetic. Of course, how had he not seen the signs?

“She was right when she said she hasn’t been drinking,” Sherlock said. His boyfriend stood up and strode over to them and stepped directly in front of Harry, clearly making her feel trapped. Sherlock looked her up and down, sizing her up, and he didn’t hold back as he went on: “It’s been exactly a week since she last drank. Her tremors have subsided into casual shakes, but the insomnia just won’t give. Which really, should be a bit of a relief because if she were sleeping she would be plagued with nightmares. And that’s not even the worst part. The worst part is that she has been through this before, perhaps a dozen times, and yet she still let herself slip. She lets herself go through this. It’s pathetic. It’s self-harm in one of its most horrible forms, and it’s one of the most selfish things a human being could ever do. You’re hurting yourself, you’ve ruined your relationship with everyone you’ve ever known, and you continue to push away the one person left who cares rather or not you die of a liver disease or kill yourself driving drunk.”

John forgot to breathe. It wasn’t exactly what he had in mind when he decided to reach out to his boyfriend, but the fear that flashed in Harry’s eyes proved the accusations hit home.

But then the fear turn to tears, and Harry turned to flee.

“Harry!” He cried after her, making a mental note to slap Sherlock later. “Harry, stop. He didn’t mean it- well, he did- it’s just that he’s been there.”

Beside him Sherlock had that deer caught in the headlights look on his face, and John realised he might have overstepped some boundaries.

“It’s true,” Sherlock admitted; John bit back a sigh of relief. “If you knew me while I was going through withdrawals you wouldn’t have wanted anything to do with me. I don’t know which was worse: the constant vomiting, headaches, and weakness or the persistent anxiety and depression. And the cravings, they never disappear completely. Not even years later. I know this because I went through it. I put myself through it time after time.”

He couldn’t help but to slip an arm around Sherlock’s waist. John quietly held him as his boyfriend and his sister stared at each other. A sort of mutual respect passed between them, and John finally calmed down. Then Harry’s eyes swelled again and she bolted up the stairs before either of them could say another word.

“Oh Christ,” John mumbled.

Turning to Sherlock, he buried his face into his shoulders. His lover’s arms wrapped around him, and John breathed in deeply to keep his own eyes from watering.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock offered quietly. “My past addiction has been the elephant in the room since she’s been here. I’m happy to talk to her, John, but she has to know the cold hard truth.”

“I know,” he admitted. “It’s just so hard seeing her do this to herself.”

Sherlock kissed his neck gently and placed a hand at the small of his back.
“It’s like looking in a mirror,” Sherlock whispered. “I can’t believe I put Mycroft through this.”

“If it’s too much having her here-“

Stepping back, Sherlock took John’s face in his hands and planted a soft, warm kiss on his lips.

“That’s not what I meant,” Sherlock said, his voice a bit rough.

“I should go talk to her.”

Sherlock grabbed his hand before he could go, pulling him in close once again.

“Give her some space,” his boyfriend suggested. “Right now she feels like the world is closing in on her. She feels like she’s in limbo, like life is just this surreal nightmare. She can’t be forced into anything right now - it would almost be like going into shock.”

John was surprised by how much that made sense. Sherlock was right: Harry had been through this before. Maybe not a dozen times, but enough for him to realise it was going to take more than just a few supportive words to get Harry to turn around this time.

“I can’t go through this anymore, Sherlock,” John said. Sherlock ran his hands up and down his trembling arms. “I can’t keep fighting to hold them together. I have to save her this time.”

A sad smile fell across Sherlock’s face.

“John,” he sighed. “You know she has to save herself.”

Drawing in a deep breath, he admitted:

“Yeah, I know.”

A Skype call came through on the laptop, and John had never been more grateful for a distraction. Sherlock grinned and announced:

“I think that’s our client.”

Chapter End Notes

You guys!! You make me smile so much! Over 600 comments? THANK YOU! Two updates tonight!
Sherlock wasted no time answering the call as he and John settled back into their seats at the table. His boyfriend smirked as he pulled up a word doc, like he was taking notes for a ‘real’ case, but he really intended to use it as a way for him and John to talk privately during the conversation.

“Are you going to wear the hat too?” John murmured.

He slapped John’s arm playfully, and they were both laughing when Laura answered the call. She had Dan in her lap, and they were seated inside their own kitchen. He could see the sun pouring in through the yellow curtains, a stark contrast to his dreary flat. When he noticed Dan was in his pyjamas, Sherlock frowned.

“Dan, shouldn’t you be in school?” He asked.

“Yeah,” John chimed in, checking his mobile. “It’s what, about one there?”

“I don’t feel well,” Dan moaned.

His nephew’s head fell in his hand, as though to prove how exhausted he was. Laura placed a hand on Dan’s forehead and turned to them.

“He insisted on staying home,” she sighed. “Honestly, I don’t know what to do anymore.”

“Have you been to the doctor?” John asked.

“You’re a doctor!” Dan cried. He turned to his mum. “John’s a doctor. He can diagnose me.”

“Diagnose, sweetheart,” Laura said with a feigned smile, “and I don’t think you need the doctor. It’s not about Dan being sick, it’s about Dan’s school.”

While John studied Dan, examining him for symptoms, Sherlock recognized the obvious signs of someone who was faking a sick day. He himself had become quite the expert when he was a kid. He knew there were many reasons why a kid would be desperate to stay home from school: skipping a test, avoiding presenting a project, being bored of school.

I was probably the only kid who did that.

He noticed John began typing something in the word doc so that only he could see:

Bully?

Something clawed at his chest. Bully. How had John seen that and he hadn’t? Bully. The other reason he used to try to skip school. To make him feel better, John wrote:
I’m a doctor. I’ve seen this before.

“Is everything okay at school, Dan?” John asked in his doctor-voice.

Dan froze up and looked down, as though frightened by the three sets of eyes staring at him. Then he mumbled under his breath:

“Can I talk to Sirlock and John by myself?

Again, he had to fight not to smile. Dan managed to have every characteristic their clients usually possessed: nerves, guilt, fear, shame. And all over a bully. Sherlock wished he could be there in New York right now to deal with whoever this bully was face to face. Laura bit her lip and threw them a helpless look as she got to her feet and let Dan have the chair to himself. His nephew sat for a moment with his arms folded on the table and his eyes glued to the floor, and when he finally spoke he was so quiet they could barely hear him through the speaker.

“I got in trouble at school yesterday,” Dan admitted. “I don’t want to go back so I pretended to be sick.”

Got into trouble? Was Dan the bully? Well, that would certainly be a family first.

“I got into trouble before at school once,” John replied. Sherlock turned to him, impressed. He was dying to know if John was telling the truth. Somehow he couldn’t picture his lover as an adolescent trouble-maker. “Actually, a couple of times, but it always turned out okay. All kids get into trouble once in a while.”

“Yeah, but I didn’t do it!” Dan protested. “I told Mrs Cubitt that and she wouldn’t believe me! I hate her.”

“Dan,” John scolded. “You don’t-“

Sherlock slapped him on the shoulder.

“I swear if you tell him he doesn’t hate anybody-!”

“He’s five!” John hissed. “Dan, what I mean is that…hate is a really strong word.”

Dan crossed his arms and leaned so far into the table his face was practically against the screen.

“Well I don’t like her!” Dan shot. “I had to stay inside during recess because I kept talking during naptime- but that wasn’t the bad part. Mrs Cubitt told me to sit with Mrs Wesley’s room while everyone was outside so I did. When the whole class when back into our room there were all these drawings on her desk, and Mrs Cubitt got scared! She said I did it, but I didn’t. Promise! I don’t know why she was so mad. They were just stupid drawings.”

Letting out a long, dramatic, sigh Dan fell silent and let his chin fall to his fingertips. Sherlock typed in a few notes in the word doc while John pulled up the school on his mobile’s search engine to look up the teacher.

“I think something’s wrong with Mrs Cubitt,” Dan said after a long pause. “She seems…scared. But grownups don’t get scared like that, right?”

Oh Dan. You have no idea how wrong you are.

“Lots of things can scare adults sometimes,” Sherlock admitted. “Tell me more about Mrs Cubitt.
What’s she like?”

Dan thought for a moment.

“Well…she’s very pretty. She’s sort of quiet, she’s not like the other teachers.”

“How so?” Sherlock asked.

With a shrug, Dan replied:

“She doesn’t really talk to the other teachers. And one day, this kid named Tommy asked Mrs Cubitt about her family, and her eyes got all big, and she just turned away from him! No one liked to ask her things after that. That’s why I thought Greg could check on her because he’s a policeman, and policemen know people’s secrets.”

She’s private, Sherlock typed so that only John could see it. Maybe she has something to hide.

John typed back:

Maybe you two are being paranoid!

Sherlock glared at him, and Dan asked:

“Why are you two playing with the computer?”

Both of them cleared their throats and sat back at the same time. John placed his hand on Sherlock’s arm and offered it a gentle squeeze.

“I’m going to grab a bite to eat,” John said quietly, planting a kiss on his cheek.

Sherlock gazed after him as John wordlessly poured a bowl of stew before slipping away to their bedroom.

“Is John okay?” Dan asked.

“He just had a bad day,” Sherlock offered. “Look, Dan, if you’re really concerned about your teacher why didn’t you talk to someone?”

“I’m five, who am I supposed to talk to?” Dan shrugged.

He has a point. And this would be so much easier with John. Why did he leave?

Sherlock studied Dan’s face through the computer screen, searching for the mystery behind all of this. If Dan felt so strongly about this then surely something was wrong.

“When you say dancing men, what do you mean?” Sherlock asked.

“Like this!”

Grabbing a pen and piece of paper, Dan quickly drew a rough sketch of what looked like a row of stick figures dancing. He was able to draw well enough to show that each figure’s leg and arm were stuck out in different positions.

“It was in the classroom before!” Dan said, his eyes lighting up. “I just remembered! I saw it once, on her computer.”
“Was it in an email?” Sherlock asked.

His answer was a blank stare, and he remembered Dan wouldn’t have a clue what that meant. Suddenly Laura appeared again, and Dan squirmed away when she tried to pick him up.

“Time for a nap,” Laura announced.

“No!” Dan protested.

Sherlock grinned; Dan was reminding him very much of a mini version of himself.

“I can’t sleep,” Dan complained. “I’m on a case!”

His sister glared at him, and Sherlock realised he was probably overstepping some kind of boundaries.

“You can talk tomorrow, but only if you go back to school,” Laura said, kissing Dan on the cheek. She winked at him over her child’s shoulder, and Sherlock had to resist the urge to scold her for using him as bait to make the kid go to school.


Dan waved, and Sherlock’s heart melted a bit. He waved back, and he realised he already couldn’t wait for tomorrow. In fact, he almost didn’t care what the case was, how it turned out, or if there was actually a case at all. Watching John struggle to connect with Harry made him want to be closer to his own family- well, to Laura and Dan at least. Mycroft would always be a work in progress.

“Goodnight!” Dan called.

Laura offered him one last smile before ending the call.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I hope you recognize the new case- The Dancing Men! Told from the point of view of a 5 year old. Also, Dan's back! Yay! Hope you're as excited about that as I am! :)

EDIT:

I'd like to let everyone know that there is now a prequel to Not Just Biology! It's called "Top Secret", and it's a Mystrade story!! I just posted it. There's more of the new story and NJB coming soon!
Chapter Notes

I had an awful week, and I had the flu last week. I just realised I never posted this chapter. Thanks DeathFrisbee221 for editing this!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John couldn’t bring himself to curl up in bed at seven o’clock so he pulled out his laptop and began studying his old case notes. He had outlines, ideas, and an entire list of memorable quotes from Sherlock he intended to put to good use. He was half-way through the first draft of A Study In Pink, but he felt like it was missing some kind of personal touch. People had read the cases on the blog, so why would they want to buy the book?

They want to know about you! He could just imagine an agent saying. You and Sherlock.

Closing his eyes, John leaned back against the headboard and took a deep breath. He thought of Harry, up in his old room, and wondered if he should go talk to her. But he remembered Mycroft’s warnings, and John knew in his heart he was right.

The door creaked as it opened, and John opened his eyes and sat up as Sherlock came into the room.

“The stew is good,” John commented, waving his hand toward his empty bowl. Sherlock leaned over to share a kiss before lowering himself into bed beside him. “How is Dan?”

“He may be onto something,” Sherlock replied. “I couldn’t find anything about his teacher on social media. Her bio on the school website simply said she was new to the school, but based on her photo I deduced that she was recently married- within the last year and a half- and had a very short engagement. I texted Laura and asked her to inform me of anymore sightings of these dancing men drawings, and she just replied back warning me not to indulge Dan.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes and John laughed.

“Read this out loud,” John asked. “It’s the opening of a new draft.”

“You don’t think I’m too biased?” Sherlock teased. Nonetheless he took the computer from John’s lap, cleared his throat, and began reading:

I thought the worst, and most terrifying, experience of my life would be the moments after a bullet shattered the bone in my shoulder during a mission gone wrong in Afghanistan. My body had instantly gone into shock; it was like I was locked-in, and all I could do was watch my life pass before my eyes. The moment I woke up in the hospital and came to my senses I thought that surely, nothing would ever be more horrifying than that.

Then I met Sherlock Holmes.

The funny thing is, as adventurous as our partnership became it began simply. We both needed a flatmate, and we were introduced through a mutual acquaintance. The moment we met, Sherlock knew everything about me and all I knew about him was that he had a reputation of being a freak-
which wasn’t helped by the skull he kept stashed on top of his mantel.

Looking up, Sherlock shot:

“Do you really have to bring the skull into this?”

John reached up to run a hand through Sherlock’s hair.

“It’s good for characterization, love,” John replied. “Keep going.”

With an annoyed sigh, Sherlock continued.

After joining the army I didn’t keep in touch with anyone back home and I arrived back in London feeling like a stranger in my own city. I went from army medical doctor to being told I had to find a flat share fast or I would end up homelessness. I decided to take a leap of faith, and I moved in with a complete stranger. At best, I thought I could keep to myself while figuring out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life.

At worst, I would become another skull on Sherlock’s mantel.

Sherlock stopped again and scrunched up his face.

“Another skull on my mantel?” Sherlock mocked. “Is that what you thought I did? Lured in new flatmates, murdered them, and kept their skulls for centerpieces?”

Biting his lip, John tried not to laugh. Instead he pointed toward the screen, encouraging Sherlock to go on.

Instead, Sherlock Holmes became the rest of my life.

His lover froze, and John placed a hand on his wrist and squeezed gently. He leaned over and brushed his lips against Sherlock’s cheek.

“What’s wrong with this introduction?” Sherlock finally stammered. He cleared his throat again. “Besides beginning too many sentences with the letter ‘I’.”

“I don’t know,” John confessed, pulling the computer back into his lap.

“I think I know.”

Sherlock picked the laptop from his lap and placed it on the bedside table. John scooted over, giving Sherlock room to roll on top of him. A bony, pale, finger graced his cheek, and John felt his body turn warm. He lifted himself up, slowly closing in the space between them. They shared another kiss, and John didn’t protest when Sherlock wrapped his arms around him to lower him back down into the mattress. He licked his lips, ready to dive his tongue into Sherlock’s mouth when his boyfriend pulled away.

“There’s too much pressure in here,” Sherlock said, placing a hand over John’s heart. “You have too high of expectations for yourself.”

No one had ever told him that before, but hearing it came as somewhat of a relief. He always thought this is what everyone expected of him- to be perfect.

“As a doctor, I’m not allowed to make a mistake,” John sighed. “In the army every second counted and a single slip-up could end in tragedy. Pressure is my life. Yeah, maybe I do let it affect my personal life too much, but they’re my family, Sherlock. If there’s any chance that I can fix my
relationship with my family I want to take it. I can get Harry to stop drinking, I know I can. And Dad…maybe I can’t fix his heart problems but if he’s willing to fix our relationship then I am.”

Sherlock leaned over him so that his lips could brush against his forehead, then his cheek, until finally their noses touched and their lips lingered together just so.

“Just be careful,” Sherlock whispered.

John gazed up at him, realising that Sherlock must be thinking of his own estranged father. What would happen if the infamous Mr. Holmes suddenly returned to London? What would Sherlock do? Or Mycroft?

Then he remembered what Sherlock told him about Luke coming back to him. He had been willing to forgive him; yes, he was young and gullible, but perhaps Sherlock had been a bit too forgiving. Maybe that’s where the plea came from. A flash of sorrow passed through Sherlock’s eyes, giving evidence to his theory.

“How about you?” John asked, caressing his lover’s face. “I’m sorry it’s been so crazy since we came back.”

Sherlock nodded and let out a deep sigh, as though realising he was caught. John had been giving him space, but he wouldn’t let Sherlock hide forever.

“I’m still not sleeping well,” Sherlock admitted. “It still plays in my mind, over and over again, what I did…”

Eyes closed, Sherlock’s forehead fell against his, and for a moment John simply held him like that. He brought a hand to the back of his boyfriend’s neck and tilted his head to kiss his jaw.

“We’re due for a visit to see Agar again,” John said. “Want to go with me?”

At first Sherlock hesitated, but John tightened his hold on him a bit, and he nodded in agreement. Having his boyfriend so close awakened energy in him he had been lacking over the past few days. Breaking out of his shell, Sherlock suddenly attacked John’s neck with his lips. With a moan John reciprocated by tugging Sherlock’s shirt out of his trousers and running his hands underneath the rim so he could claw at his back. Part of him warned him this wasn’t the proper time, but the other part was begging for comfort and relief. He wanted this, he needed this- to be close to Sherlock.

Sherlock rocked forward as John tore at his shirt buttons.

“John.”

His fingers dug into Sherlock’s back as their lips crashed together. The kiss deepened quickly, their tongues danced together, and Sherlock was just reaching for his zipper when his mobile buzzed.

“Christ!” John hissed, jumping so hard at the sudden interruption that their foreheads slammed together. He checked his texts to find a message from Harry that made his heart skip a beat.

Just FYI you can hear the bed creaking from up here.

“Fuck,” Sherlock mumbled as John showed him the text. “Well, I suppose we’re finally even for the Mycroft incident.”

“No!” John exclaimed, thrusting an accusing finger in Sherlock’s face. “Being caught with your finger up my arse is nothing compared to someone hearing a bed creak!”
Sherlock suddenly grabbed his finger and shoved it into his mouth, making a show of wetting it with his lips. John stiffened, surprisingly turned on, and he nearly broke when Sherlock murmured:

“Why don’t you turn around, and we’ll try this again very quietly.”

With another shudder John obeyed, turning around so that he could rest on his elbows and knees. He closed his eyes as Sherlock reached around to undo his belt buckle and slide his trousers down beneath his hips. Sherlock kissed the skin of his thighs as it became exposed, little by little, until-

The mobile buzzed again.

“Leave it!” Sherlock hissed.

John groaned as he reached over to see what Harry wanted this time.

*It’s not that the noise bothers me, but has Mrs Hudson really never said anything to you? That bed is practically directly above hers, you know.*

“Yup, that officially ruined the mood,” John mumbled.

He rolled back over onto his back, pushing Sherlock off him. Sherlock fell beside him in a heap as John sat up.

“She’s trying to get my back from the time I told mum and dad she brought someone over while they were away. She was grounded for weeks,” John explained.

“Weeks?” Sherlock echoed. “How old was she?”

John shrugged.


“I’m only teasing! Just getting you back from the time you told mum and dad about Sara.”

“See!” John cried. “Told you. She is right about Mrs Hudson though. God that’s embarrassing! We should just go back to our ‘no sex when family’s over’ rule.”

His boyfriend let out a whine, and John snuggled into his arms.

“Why don’t I ask Dr Agar what he thinks of that rule?” Sherlock threatened. Laughing, John slapped his arm. “Seriously John, we have some catching up to do…if you know what I mean.”

He nuzzled his cheek against John’s neck.

“I know,” John whispered. “I just haven’t been in the mood. I’ve got a lot of on my mind. Even just now, it wouldn’t have felt right.”

“It’s okay,” Sherlock said, reassuring him. “I’ve been feeling the same way. For me I just wish I could get some kind of…”

“Closure?” John offered.

“Yeah.”

John snuggled closer to him, and although it was still early he felt like they could lay there all night like that.
“You know, you should offer Harry to help us solve Dan’s case,” Sherlock offered.

“We don’t even know if Dan has a case!”

“So?” Sherlock said. “We can still investigate. It might be…fun. Plus, she’ll feel involved. She needs to feel needed.”

As he rubbed a hand over the small of his boyfriend’s back he considered the irony in that.

“And what, make her into another Sherlock Holmes?” John asked. “I don’t know if investigating is really her thing. Actually, I don’t really have a clue what she’s interested in. Except, well, girls.”

A hollow laugh escaped Sherlock.

“Well this will help,” Sherlock said. “You’ll see her strengths, her weaknesses. Remember our first case?”

John sat up, and their eyes met. He could practically feel the weight of his gun in his hand. In his mind’s eye he could see the bullet hole through the glass.

“Of course,” John whispered. “I’ll never forget it.”

“I’ve never seen someone come to life like you did during that case. You were lost, John. I was lost. Up until then I was just solving cases to pass the time. We connected during that case.”

“It was pretty amazing,” John agreed. “Maybe you’re right. Harry and I have never really worked together on anything before.”

Suddenly his mobile buzzed again, but when he reached for it he realised it was Sherlock’s that went off. His partner checked his phone and showed him an email he just received.

“It’s from a Mr Hilton Cubitt. I guess Dan told his teacher he was related to me, and now her husband wants to talk to me about the dancing men. He’s requesting a meeting via Skype tomorrow.”

John took the mobile into his own hands so he could read through the email.

“He’s worried about her,” John said. “She’s been distant lately, making him promise not to ask questions. Wow. Look at that! I guess Dan really does have a case. How much are you going to charge him?”

Grinning, Sherlock took his mobile back and planted another kiss to John’s cheek.

“Just his lunch money,” Sherlock teased.

Chapter End Notes

Agar is back next chapter! And there will be smut soon! Because they really do have some catching up to do!
John woke at four in the morning to the sound of someone coughing in the bathroom. He was nineteen and staying at home over summer holiday. Though he was only beginning basic Biomedical Science course he already felt an attachment to the practice of medicine, and when he heard what was most definitely the sound of someone throwing up he jumped out of bed.

His childhood bedroom was right next to the bathroom, and he wasn’t surprised to find it was locked.

“Harry?” He whispered, being mindful of his parents’ room down the hall. “Harry, are you alright?”

Harry threw up again, and John’s stomach churned as she broke into another round of coughs. At last they subsided, and John breathed a sigh of relief when the door opened.

“Shit!” He whispered when he lay eyes on his sister.

At eighteen, Harry still had long hair. She was very thin and pale, with sunken eyes and a face that typically was broken out in acne. She wore a long sleeve jumper and pyjama bottoms, like she had been halfway through changing when she realised she was going to be sick.

“John,” Harry moaned. “Did I wake you?”

“Yes.” He raised his hand to Harry’s forehead, but she swatted it away and pulled him into the bathroom. “Harry-“

He protested when she locked the door behind him, but he didn’t have the heart to yell as she ran some water to wash her face. His sister was shaking and her breathing unsteady, but from the foul stench of her clothes and the cigarette smell in her hair John knew it wasn’t the stomach flu.

“Are you drunk?” He hissed.

She lifted her head to gaze at him through the mirror, and John swallowed nervously. He was going to have to cover for her, again.

“Please don’t tell Mum and Dad,” Harry pleaded. “Mum freaked last weekend, and that was when I only had one beer in my room! She told me that if I ever brought alcohol into the house again or came home drunk I would have to move out. I’m not ready to move out John! I can’t afford it.”

He would like to think his mother was more compassionate than Harry gave her credit for, but the only subject she was stricter about than their love lives was drinking. Their house had a zero-tolerance party for drinking and smoking- two things Harry seemed to enjoy the most. His parents were especially hard on Harry, who was postponing school and staying at home to…well, John wasn’t really sure what she was planning on doing.
“I won’t tell,” John promised. Harry shut off the water and turned around to face him. “Harry, you don’t look so good.”

“Gee, you should be a detective or something,” Harry mumbled. She moved to wrap her arms around herself, but as soon as her hand left the edge of the sink she stumbled forward. He caught her, and Harry let out a choked sob as she nearly fell into him.

“Just…take it easy,” John whispered.

She grasped his arms and shook as he held her.

“I blacked out,” Harry whispered. “It was so scary, John.”

“Harry, you know alcoholism runs in the family. You have to be careful!”

“I am!” She looked up to meet his eyes. “I thought I was. I guess after a few I forgot how much I had, but I was just having fun. It was a bit of a relief, being able to relax like that around people. I just met these girls I was out with, and I just wanted them to like me. God that sounds pathetic now that I say it out loud.”

“That’s why drinking can be so dangerous,” John replied. “It seems like good fun until the moment it’s not. Did you eat much tonight?”

Harry shook her head.

“You know better than that,” he sighed. “You drank too much, too fast.”

“I know. I know that now.”

He rubbed his hands up and down her arms to help calm her down.

“When I woke up I couldn’t remember where I was,” Harry admitted. “I feel so stupid…and so sick.”

His face fell. He really did feel sorry for her. It was true that their family history was riddled with alcohol problems. He learned early on that it took far fewer drinks than his mates for him to start feeling tipsy, and while it might be a bit embarrassing he wasn’t stupid enough to try to push it.

“Do you have any idea how much you had?” John asked, hoping to be able to do a quick calculation of her blood alcohol level.

“We did drinks, then shots,” Harry said. “There was wine at some point.”

John snorted.

“I think you literally broke every rule of drinking tonight.”

“I’m still new to this, alright?” Harry shot.

“Yeah, and you’re being stupid about it!” John exclaimed quietly. Throwing his hands up in defeat, he had to take a few deep breaths to keep from losing it. “I know how hard peer pressure is, but there’s a good reason why Mum is worried about you. Every time you go out you more than overdo it, and now you’re blacking out? You worry me, Harry.”

“You’re not a doctor yet, John.”
She offered him a small smile. It was her joke: whenever Harry was sick, or hurt, or had so much as a bad headache John did have the tendency to jump the gun on diagnosing her.

“Yeah, but I’m your older brother,” he replied. “Look, let me go out with you next time.”

“Going to the pub with my brother? Sounds like a blast!” Harry remarked sarcastically.

“I meant so I can look out for you!” John said. Her tired eyes gazed after him, and he knew deep down she appreciated the offer. “You need to take it easy.”


He nodded.

“Of course.”

“Are you okay?”

John looked up at the sound of Sherlock’s voice. They were sitting in Dr Agar’s waiting room. He was so tired that morning he spent their waiting time with his elbows on his knees and head in hand napping until Sherlock shook him out of it.

“Yeah,” he lied, sitting up. He stretched and looked around, wondering how long he had been out of it. “I guess they’re running late today.”

“Just by a few minutes,” Sherlock replied. John felt uncomfortable when he noticed his boyfriend staring at him, concerned. “John, are you sure you’re alright? I heard you get up last night and make tea in the middle of the night. You’re not sleeping well.”

“Neither are you, if you were awake to hear me.”

“John-”

“I’m fine, Sherlock.”

“Are you really going to lie to me before a therapy session?” Sherlock challenged.

Sherlock was right, he wasn’t being fair- especially after all those times he pushed him to be honest.

“It was just a memory,” he confessed. “I’d nearly forgotten about it. Harry started going out drinking as soon as she turned eighteen, and it didn’t take her long to get into trouble. She would black out and come home drunk. She’d wake up at houses she was partying at, begging for me to help her get a ride home. I warned her about alcoholism, but she wouldn’t listen. God I should have gotten her help back then.

His boyfriend placed a hand on his wrist and squeezed it.

“Mr Holmes and Dr Watson?” The receptionist called.

With a sigh, John stood up and followed Sherlock into Agar’s office. He was surprised to see that once again the doctor’s office had changed- the walls were a soft blue.

“Congratulations on the baby girl,” Sherlock said, eyes twinkling.
Agar grinned and stood to shake their hands.

“It’s always a pleasure to see you two,” Agar confessed. He stopped. “Well... you know what I mean. How have things been?”

John bit his lip, hesitant to go first. He was grateful when Sherlock spoke up:

“John is having a difficult time helping his sister battle her alcoholism, and I still can’t sleep.”

“I’m sorry to hear that, John,” Agar said, turning to him. “You are in a unique situation, though, seeing as Sherlock has been there before.”

“Yes,” Sherlock nodded. “I’ve offered my advice.”

John snorted.

“Yeah, he yelled at her.”

“Yelled?” Agar asked, eyes narrowing.

“I was a little hard on her,” Sherlock admitted, “but addicts need truth just as much as comfort.”

Agar jotted down a few notes before turning back to John.

“Has she joined any programmes yet?” He asked.

“I’ve been debating suggesting rehab,” John said. “I think that it is that serious, but I just want to run through all other options.”

“You have run through the other options!” Sherlock protested.

“Maybe she should go back to meetings,” John tried. “Or find a new doctor, or-“

“John,” Agar cut in gravely. “I have to agree with Sherlock on this one. Has your sister been showing any physical symptoms of alcoholism?”

Closing his eyes, John thought back to that night when he was nineteen. It wouldn’t be the last time Harry came home drunk, or blacked out, or expected him to cover for her. It was selfish, it was unfair... but it was his sister.

“I don’t want to see her in rehab,” John whispered. “I can’t stand the thought.”

He rubbed his hands over his tired face and let out a sigh.

“It will be hard,” Agar said. “Very hard. But it will be even harder to see her continue to do this to herself. And John... you didn’t answer my question.”

John forced himself to sit up straight and at least look somewhat presentable. His face scrunched up as he thought through the past few days.

“She’s depressed,” he stated. “She has horrible insomnia. She says she hasn’t had a drink in almost two weeks, and I believe her. When she does drink, she has no idea when to stop. Her tolerance for alcohol is frightening.”

“Do you feel like she’s a danger to herself?” Agar asked.
He thought about that one for a long moment. It wasn’t a question to take lightly- he knew what Agar was getting at. As soon as he said yes to that question, Harry needed to be in rehab. So he settled with:

“Sometimes.”

Sherlock let out a sigh of annoyance beside him.

“She called once about three months ago after being picked up by the police for public intoxication,” Sherlock said. “She got into a fight with someone.”

“It was an argument!”

“She’s forty years old and she still has her brother cover for her!” Sherlock shot, glaring at him. “She can’t hold down a job because of the alcoholism. She can’t keep a flat. She hurts everyone around her, and she makes you feel guilty when you have absolutely no reason to.”

The room fell silent, and John wasn’t sure if he wanted to hit Sherlock or hug him.

“I just don’t like the idea of her in rehab,” John admitted again, “I don’t want to admit it’s gotten that bad.”

“It doesn’t have to be a long program,” Dr Agar suggested. “Perhaps thirty days.”

“Thirty days is a long time to my sister.”

“It is a long time,” Sherlock breathed.

He looked to his boyfriend for support, but Sherlock’s eyes were fixated on a specific spot on the carpet.

“I want John to stop blaming himself,” his partner whispered.

Agar nodded.

“I agree,” said Dr Agar carefully. “John, you have to realise none of this is your fault.”

John remained silent, though he was well aware they were waiting for him to say something. Instead, he was afraid he might throw up.

“I’m sorry,” he mumbled. “I just...I need some air.”

Sherlock grabbed his arm as he tried to flee, and John shoved him off.

“I’m fine,” he lied. “Please, stay.”

He fled before either man could say anything else.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked the glance into John's past. I really don't know why I haven't done it before! This fic needs John flashbacks just like Sherlock flashbacks.
Thanks for reading!! What will John do? And more importantly...will it be too late?
Tune in next time...
Chapter Notes

Thanks again to my beta, DeathFrisbee221!!! Sorry for the wait for this one. Hopefully March will be a MUCH less crazy month!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The door slammed so hard as he entered the flat that John heard Mrs Hudson let out a cry from the kitchen. He drew in a deep breath and bit his lip before pounding up the stairs.

“John you scared the living daylights out of me,” Mrs Hudson said, smiling even though she was clutching her chest. “You and Sherlock aren’t having a domestic are you? I couldn’t help but to overhear you two talking about therapy.”

She whispered ‘therapy’ like it was a secret too him, and John could have kicked himself.

“It’s not me and Sherlock,” he sighed. “It’s me and my sister.”

“Oh John.”

He closed his eyes as he was engulfed into an embrace. The smell of her perfume, the silk of her dress, suddenly reminded him of his grandmother, and he had to shake himself away from those memories.

“I used to fight with my sister all the time,” she said, “and when we were older she used to be so hard on me about my husband. She didn’t like him from the moment I started dating him. In the end she was right, but I would never admit it. To this day she still gets so angry every time I bring him up.”

“Really?” John asked.

The two settled into the kitchen table, and he didn’t argue when Mrs Hudson reached for the tea kettle.

“Yes. And you know Sherlock and his brother argue like an old married couple,” she said, shaking her head. “Sometimes those two can’t even walk past each other without getting into it.”

“This is different,” John said. He hadn’t talked to Mrs Hudson about his sister before, but he was sure she had heard him and Sherlock talk about her at some point. But Mrs Hudson was a brilliant listener, and if anyone could tell him what to do, it was his landlady.

“My sister is an alcoholic. She’s been trying to get off the booze for years, but she keeps damaging herself even more. I’ve picked her up from bars or flats she didn’t remember going to. She drinks until she blacks out. She’s lost jobs, flats, and friends. Supposedly she’s been sober for a couple of weeks, but I just can’t bring myself to believe that she’ll go through with it this time. I’ve been wondering lately if she should go to rehab.”

Mrs Hudson took a sip of her tea, pulling herself together and giving his comment a moment of thought.
“Dear, you can’t make that decision for her.”

“I know,” he closed his eyes again. “But I’m afraid to suggest it to her. How bring up something like this?”

A soft smile peered over the rim of Mrs Hudson’s teacup, and she nodded her head and shifted her eyes behind John.

“Just talk to her, love.”

“Hey John.”

He jumped at the sound of his sister’s voice. Putting on a fake smile, he turned around to greet her.

“Hey Harry,” he replied casually, “this is Mrs Hudson, our landlady.”

“Nice to meet you,” Harry nodded, “John has told me so much.”

He hadn’t, but he was pleased Harry was being kind.

“Have some tea!” Mrs. Hudson offered, waving toward an empty chair.

“I really appreciate you approving my staying here,” Harry said, accepting the tea.

*What is it about Mrs Hudson that made even the most introverted people talk?*

“Oh no one asked me,” Mrs Hudson teased. John’s eyes went wide, but she grinned at him. “But any friend of John and Sherlock’s is welcome. I hear you’re going through a rough time, if you don’t mind me saying, and a woman needs a safe place to get back on her feet.”

“Yes, she does.”

Harry’s hand fell on his arm, and John looked up at her, stunned.

“As I’ve told John, I just feel so lost,” Harry went on. “Like there’s nowhere I belong.”

“I understand,” Mrs Hudson said, grabbing her hand. “I felt the same way after I lost my husband.”

His sister’s face fell.

“What happened to him?”

John bit back a laugh as Mrs Hudson admitted:

“Lethal injection.”

Unsurprisingly, Harry went quiet and looked away, embarrassed.

“Oh don’t worry!” Mrs Hudson laughed, swatting a hand at Harry. “That’s all in the past. Sherlock and your brother are the best company I could ask for. You’re welcome to stay as long as you like.”

“Thank you,” Harry said.

The first genuine smile John had seen Harry wear in ages crossed her face, and he couldn’t help but smile too. Mrs Hudson stood up and poured them both some more tea.
“It seems like you two are overdue a heart-to-heart,” Mrs Hudson announced. “Tell Sherlock I said hello.”

Her hand graced over John’s hair, and he smiled.

“Will do,” he replied.

And they were left alone.

They sat silently for a few moments, gazing at their tea, and John was reminded of old family dinners when everyone stayed silent throughout the meal. He secretly felt the exact same as Harry did- he didn’t quite know where he belonged. He knew he belonged with Sherlock, but what about the big picture? Yes, cases were fun, and they were rewarding whenever they helped victims, but he didn’t actually have a job anymore. His family was in shambles. He felt like he was floating through life and clinging onto Sherlock like a lifeboat.

“Mrs Hudson’s nice,” Harry spoke up quietly.

“Yeah.” A long pause, but then he had to confess: “Sherlock and I are seeing a therapist. It’s mandated by the department, but we’ve kept going and…it’s been good. Well, until I ran out on today’s session...”

Harry looked up at him, meeting his eyes.

“I…I talked about you today,” he admitted. He turned to his sister and drew in a deep breath. John had to meet her eyes to say this. “Harry I’ve…I’ve been wondering…I’ve been wondering if maybe you should go to rehabilitation.”

Harry’s eyes went wide, and John nearly stopped breathing. For a long moment the two just stared at each other, and he worried if this was it…if he just ruined everything.

“I’ve been thinking about that too,” Harry whispered, and his heart began pounding again. Tears suddenly erupted in her eyes, and he pulled her into a hug. “I’m so scared, John. I don’t know what’s going on with me. I don’t feel stable. I feel out of control. I thought I had a handle on this, but I don’t! I want to drink, I constantly want to drink, and when I do I don’t know when to stop. I’m scared, John. I need help, I…I think I want help.”

Their faces lingered close together when they broke apart, and John reached up to brush a few bangs out of her hair.

“Do you mean it?” He whispered through his own tears.

They were both sobbing, the two Watsons, and John felt a bit numb.

“I’ve started making a list of some of the best facilities,” John said quietly. “We can just try a short program, if you want.”

Harry just stifled another sob and buried her head into his shoulder.

“We’re going to get through this,” he whispered, “but I don’t think we should do this alone. I think we should talk to Dad.”

With a laugh Harry pulled away and wiped the tears from her face.

“Dad?” She snorted. “No way. He doesn’t care about us, John.”
“He said-“

“I know what he said!” She wrapped her arms around herself, like a defense mechanism. “But forgive me for not trusting a man who didn’t even want to talk to his own son when he came back from Afghanistan. I don’t think he’ll care much for admitting he has a daughter in rehab.”

“In his defense, I wasn’t very talkative back then,” John said, though his body felt cold. Maybe bringing up their father was a mistake.

*Baby steps, John.*

“No, he didn’t want to!” Harry shot. John felt sick inside when he realised what she was getting at. “I overheard him and Mum…they didn’t feel comfortable around you. I think Dad was a bit ashamed that you were invalidated home.”

He wished Harry knew how much of a sore spot getting shot was for him. He wished she realised how uncalled forthat was, how- even if it was true- it was completely rude of her to say it. But she did say it, and he couldn’t unhear it. He would never unhear that his father was disappointed in him.

“I was shot,” John said, his voice hollow.

“I know,” Harry brought a hand to his shoulder. “I think we’re in this alone.”

“I don’t want us to be. He’s our dad. He’s supposed to be supportive.”

“He’s a prick.”

“Harry!”

“Just admit it, John,” Harry said, holding his hands tightly. “It’s easier when you do.”

*But it’s not right! He’s my dad…why isn’t he proud? What’s going on?*

John opened his mouth to protest, but his mobile buzzed to reveal a text from Sherlock.

*Skype call from client. I’m still with Agar. Can you take it? – SH*

Face scrunched up, John couldn’t help but to worry about why Sherlock was taking so long with Agar.

*Sure. x –JW*

“Harry, a client is about to phone in on Skype,” he said. “Do you mind-?”

“No,” she replied quickly. “No, of course.”

She shook her head as he opened the laptop that had been sitting at the table. As soon as he logged into their Skype account a call came through, and when he answered it a black man in his early thirties appeared on the screen.

“Dr Watson?” The client asked. “I’m Hilton Cubitt. I’m the husband of Elsie Cubitt. I apologise if this seems rude, but I was under the impression Mr Sherlock Holmes would be taking this call?”

“Sherlock has an appointment,” John replied, “but I’m more than happy to talk to you. My sister, Harriet, is here, if you don’t mind.”
He motioned to Harry to join him, remembering what Sherlock said about suggesting she help them on the case.

“Not at all,” Mr Cubitt said, though he didn’t look too convinced. “Mr Holmes’ nephew is in my wife’s class. Apparently he suggested she talk to the detective after this dancing men business started up. My wife isn’t convinced, but I’m desperate. Someone is stalking her.”

“Have you talked to the local police?” John asked.

Mr Cubitt snorted.

“It’s New York, Dr Watson,” Mr Cubitt replied. “There are bigger fish to fry. But in all honesty my wife won’t admit something is wrong. These dancing men have been popping up for days. At first it was just at school, but then there were some on our front door, then outside our bedroom window. She’s scared, and I don’t know what to do.”

“Why don’t you tell me about yourself?” John suggested. “Tell me about your wife.”

With a shrug, Mr Cubitt went on:

“We met two years ago. We had a very short engagement- we were only together six months before we decided to get married. Before we did she made me promise that I trusted her 100 percent. She didn’t let me ask any questions about her previous relationships, and though I suspected she was hiding something I figured fine, as long as I get the girl I can deal with her wanting privacy. That’s only fair, right? But I think someone’s stalking her, and I’m afraid that it has to do with a previous relationship.”

“Was she married before?” Harry asked.

John turned to her, impressed that she was jumping right in.

“No, but she was in a serious relationship right before she met me,” Mr Cubitt explained. “She lived in Manchester then and came to America to study abroad. I guess long distance didn’t work for them. She met me shortly after. I was skeptical and wondering if she should be in another serious relationship so soon, but she insisted she made a clean break from her past.”

“Has she been back to England since?” John said.

“No, she refuses,” Cubitt replied. “Eventually I stopped bugging her about it and things settled down between us. We were in a really great place when this dancing men business started.”

“You think the ex is behind it,” Harry announced, her eyes wide.

He tried not to feel jealous that his sister was one step ahead of him, but then again his mind hadn’t really been on cases lately.

“Yeah, I do. First the dancing men showed up only at the school, but now it’s our home. I’ve taken pictures of all the drawings just like Mr Holmes asked. I can text them if you’d like.

“Send them directly to Sherlock, he’ll be home soon,” John said, “Oh, and if you have any notes about what time and day the men might have appeared or anything else that seems odd, send those too please.”

“Of course,” Cubitt said, nodding. “Thank you for your time Dr Watson. I hope to speak with you and Mr Holmes again soon.”
The screen went blank as Cubitt ended the call, and a stifled laugh escaped beside him.

“Harry!” He scolded, hitting her in the shoulder.

“He’s paranoid, John! It’s probably just some kids messing with them or something. Her ex lives in Manchester. What kind of lunatic would fly all the way to America just to play games with an ex?”

Their eyes met, and a quiet “Oh” fell from Harry’s mouth.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!! What do you think of the decision?
When John woke up the next morning he was surprised to find he felt more relaxed than he had in weeks. He was also surprised to find Sherlock lying beside him, fast asleep. At first he thought his boyfriend looked at peace: the detective’s breathing was steady and calm, his hand was tucked under his head, and his eyelids fluttered gently as he dreamed. With a small smile John leaned over and planted a kiss on Sherlock’s forehead, but the touch seemed to trigger something in his partner.

Sherlock jerked violently in his sleep and let out a low whimper. His arms twitched, and John knew what was coming. He grasped one of his lover’s arms to still him as he shook, and at last a familiar blood curdling scream erupted in the silent morning air.

“Sherlock!” John exclaimed.

As he tossed and turned in his sleep Sherlock’s hands fought against his, and it wasn’t until his breaths turned to heaving gasps that his boyfriend’s eyes finally shot open. He looked drained, even after sleeping, and his entire body was shaking.

Instead of talking to him Sherlock backed away and spun around in bed so he could sit on the edge and catch his breath. John scooted closer to him and, cautiously, placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Sherlock, it’s okay,” John whispered.

“I know that,” Sherlock snapped. “I’m sorry I woke you up.”

“You didn’t.” John squeezed his shoulder. “I fell asleep waiting up for you. Is everything alright?”

Obviously everything was far from alright, but of course Sherlock nodded ‘yes’.

“Sorry, I went for a walk after talking to Agar,” Sherlock explained.

“You went for a walk until midnight?”

“Yeah. Sorry.”

Once again Sherlock turned quiet as he shuffled out of bed and grabbed a towel. John’s hand grabbed onto his, and for a moment he swore his lover glared at him.

“Mind if I join you?” John whispered.

Sherlock simply jerked away.
With a heavy sigh John climbed out of bed himself and strode into the flat, heading straight for the kitchen and his favourite tea mug. Apparently, it was just going to be one of those days. Sherlock was in a mood, which meant no communication whatsoever.

Which was nice, since they were technically still on a case.

As he fished around the fridge for some eggs he heard Harry creep into the kitchen behind him.

“Breakfast?” He asked.

“Yeah, thanks.”

Sometimes it felt like Harry and Sherlock seemed more like brother and sister than he and Harry did. She let out a long sigh as she flopped down into a seat at the table—her signal that something was wrong.

“Is everything okay, Harry?” He said as he began heating up the stove.

“Couldn’t sleep,” Harry confessed. “It’s been ten days since I’ve had a drink.”

“That’s great!” John planted a smile on his face as he started on the tea.

“No, it’s miserable!” His sister exclaimed. “I can’t stop craving alcohol. It makes me feel pathetic. And last night I… I went out. Well, I got as far as the front door and broke down. It took all my willpower to not go out and get a drink. When I finally got back to bed I just cried all night.”

Her confession made him feel so sick he didn’t think he could eat. He turned to her, took her hands in his, and tried to meet her eyes.

“The important thing is that you didn’t go,” John said quietly. “Harry, you have to realise alcoholism is an addiction. That includes having cravings. You might have them for years, even after rehab.”

“How are you so sure I’m going to even finish rehab? What if it doesn’t work?”

“You’re going to try,” John replied, offering her hands a gentle squeeze, “and you’re going to keep trying until it works.”

His sister bit her lip but didn’t say anything else. The tea was ready, and John had never felt more desperate for a cuppa. His stomach grumbled as the eggs began to take form on the stove, and the walls groaned as he the water shut off in the shower. A few minutes later Sherlock appeared in the kitchen in his dressing gown, and when their eyes met John knew he was sorry. He nodded, showing him he didn’t have to say anything.

Sherlock took a seat next to Harry.

*My two lost souls*, he thought as he poured them both a cup.

“When are we talking to Cubitt again?” John asked.

Sherlock shrugged.

“Possibly this afternoon. I had Lestrade pull a background check on Cubitt’s wife and her ex. There was a history of abuse in their relationship; it’s really no wonder she ran away to
America.”

“I thought Dan asked you not to get the police involved,” John said.

There was a twinkle in their eyes as they looked up at each other, and at last Sherlock seemed to wake up.

“Eggs?” John asked him. Sherlock shook his head and pushed himself away from the table instead.

He didn’t have the heart to protest as Sherlock began tuning his violin and raised it to his shoulder to play. His eyes met Harry’s again and she smiled; they both knew they couldn’t resist hearing him play. As music filled the flat and the eggs finished cooking, he joined Harry at the table and began eating.

“I looked at some of the places you recommended,” Harry said. “I’ll need you to choose for me. I…I can’t.”

At the reference to rehab the music crescendoed, and though he would have loved to have Sherlock’s input John decided not to push it.

“Don’t worry about it,” he offered. “I called my therapist to apologise for running out, and he offered to see me again today. Do you want to join me?”

Harry froze. This year was the most progress they had ever made when it came to being honest with each other, let alone a therapist. He was shocked when she offered a small nod of the head and whispered:

“Yeah, that would be great.”

He almost called over to Sherlock to ask if that would be okay, but when he caught sight of his boyfriend John realised he was in a different world altogether. Sherlock’s eyes were distant and hollow, and he jumped when John cleared his throat behind him. He looked his partner straight in the eye as he asked:

“Can we talk?”

Sherlock followed him quietly back into their bedroom. Having lost his appetite, John informed Harry she could have the eggs and she called back that she was next in line for the shower. John closed the door behind them and took his place behind Sherlock, who was already becoming lost yet again in staring out their bedroom window.

“Are you okay?” John asked.

For a moment he worried Sherlock wasn’t going to answer, that he was going to stay silent like this all day. But at last Sherlock drew in a deep breath and admitted:

“I didn’t go for a walk yesterday. After talking to Agar I saw a doctor.”

His first instinct was to panic. Not only did Sherlock never go to doctors, but whenever he admitted he needed one his preference was usually for John to help him. But he knew he had to remain calm. Whatever was bothering Sherlock, he was going to have to help him through.

“Are you sick?”
There was a long pause before Sherlock’s small voice confessed:

“As Agar suggested going on antidepressants, and before prescribing them he recommended a full physical.” Sherlock drew in a sharp breath, and John’s chest turned to stone. “It’s all shit if you ask me. I didn’t ask for this. I should have known that in the end all I would get out of this was another prescription. It happens every time.”

He kicked out at a bedpost, and John realised for the first time that of course Sherlock had been through therapy before. He lost his mother as a kid and had his father walk out of him. He was a former addict, for Christ’s sake. For all John knew he could have been put through loads of therapy before Agar. Maybe that’s why he held his emotions so close to himself—therapy had never worked out and he lost trust in those who tried to help him.

“I don’t need meds,” Sherlock said, sounding uncharacteristically desperate as he turned to meet John’s eyes. He was pleading with him, begging him to hear him out. “John I…I just need time.”

“It’s been years, Sherlock,” John said quietly, placing a hand on his boyfriend’s cheek. He glanced over at Harry and thought of his family, their lack of communication, and how this would be so much easier if they all didn’t hate each other. “Maybe time isn’t what you need.”

Sherlock’s eyes narrowed darkly, like he was actually angry at him.

“But what do I need?” Sherlock snapped. “Because cases aren’t working. Therapy isn’t working. You…you are brilliant, John, but no matter how much you’re there for me, it just won’t go away.”

John grabbed either side of Sherlock’s head to force him to come to his senses.

“You need forgiveness, Sherlock,” John whispered. “You need closure, and you can’t get that from me.”

Eyes twitching, Sherlock looked away before taking a step back. He cleared his throat and nodded, like he was finally beginning to understand.

“There’s something I’ve got to do,” Sherlock said, his voice strained. “Do you want to take this case?”

“Me?”

Sherlock nodded and managed a faint smile.

“You’re my blogger,” Sherlock pointed out, “you know all my tricks. You’ll be fine. I just…I need to do something.”

Stealing a quick kiss, Sherlock offered no further explanation as he began getting dressed.

Chapter End Notes

I always love knowing what you guys think. I know it’s been a long ride, but personally I’m not ready to say goodbye yet, especially if people are still enjoying this.
So let me know what you think about where this story is going! Sherlock is due for some closure, and next chapter will be a big step toward that.

Thanks for reading!
He wasn’t okay.

In fact, he hadn’t been this not okay in years.

Sherlock was practically shaking as he rang Mycroft’s doorbell. He felt completely on edge as he glanced around his old home. The leaves were just beginning to change colours on the trees, and he remembered running through the yard, chasing after his brother as a kid. He remembered their mother, pretending she was decent enough at football to kick the ball around with them. He remembered Mycroft, wondering around the lot with a book in his hands.

And he remembered coming back here with Luke one night. It was after they were kicked out of their last flat, and Luke had a hard time believing he came from money. Sherlock snuck him into the estate just to boast about how majestic it was. Mycroft was out of the country and he was easily able to thwart the security systems. They drank, they ate, they fucked, and they slept under a warm roof for the first time in months. He remembered sleeping in his childhood bed that night, Luke curled up in his arms, and thinking how much he longed to be able to call the place home again. He just wanted it to all be over, but he was too much of a coward to admit it.

The door opened, and Sherlock nearly jumped out of his skin.

“Sherlock?” Mycroft asked, his eyes roaming over him with concern.

A few minutes later the two brothers were leaning against Mycroft’s kitchen counters. Mycroft passed a bloody Mary to him, offering a quiet:

“Cheers.”

His brother seemed to know something was wrong, very wrong, and Sherlock didn’t deny it as he took a sip of the drink.

“I was surprised you were home,” Sherlock admitted.

“I was surprised you used the doorbell,” Mycroft replied, “usually you just pick your way in.”

“Yes, well I suppose it’s too much to give me a key.”

“Yes, it is.” He smirked, and explained: “I moved my meetings around.”

Sherlock glanced up and noticed the bags under his brother’s eyes. Mycroft’s face looked drawn, and his shoulders drooped uncharacteristically as he sipped at his own drink.

“You’re having trouble sleeping,” Sherlock said. His brother didn’t reply. “Yeah, well you aren’t
the only one. Mycroft…I need to talk to you about something. But…I need some air.”

As soon as the truth of confessing why he was really here almost left his mouth it felt like the house was suffocating. He closed his eyes and saw his mother, cooking breakfast. In his mind her favourite roses stood in place of where Lestrade’s mug collection sat on the countertop. School tests cluttered the refrigerator. Sheet music full of children’s songs sprawled about the kitchen table, where he spent hours composing his own arrangements as his mother cooked.

He never wanted to leave her side.

“Do you still have that old football?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft threw him a confused look, riddled with concern as he began to realise Sherlock wasn’t in a proper state of mind. Sherlock went back outside and drew in a deep breath of fresh air while his brother searched the house for the ball.

“Our was in a sorry state so I stole Gregory’s,” Mycroft announced as he emerged from the house, ball in hand.

He threw the ball to the ground and grimaced before kicking it over to Sherlock. Catching it easily with the ball of his foot, Sherlock kicked it back to him, but it barely managed to get halfway there. His brother didn’t hesitate to burst out laughing.

“You’ve lost your skill,” Mycroft teased, “oh that’s right, you never had any!”

“And since when do you have any coordination when it comes to sport?” Sherlock shot.

Mycroft grimaced again as he kicked the ball back to him.

“Gregory has been forcing me to play,” Mycroft sighed. “I think he just likes making me look like a fool. Sherlock…I know you didn’t come all the way out here just to drink my liquor and play football.”

Sherlock tried to concentrate on not looking like an idiot as he continued to fail at mastering any coordination with their little game.


His brother had to jog after the ball as Sherlock kicked it in entirely the wrong direction. Instead of sending it back to him Mycroft reached down to grab it with his hands.

“Do you mind if we go for a walk instead?” Mycroft asked.

The grounds seemed eerily quiet as they rounded the side of the house, heading for the garden.

“Remember when Mum used to play with us?” Sherlock said.

“Oh yes,” Mycroft replied with a grin. “She was quite good, actually, she just had dreadfully uncoordinated sons.”

Sherlock felt sick inside as he nodded in agreement. How was it that it felt like the entire world was closing in on him? Like everything that happened since the day his mother died was crashing around him?

“Do you remember that woman who came around to give you piano lessons?” Sherlock asked.
Laughing, Mycroft replied:

“I had successfully suppressed those memories, thanks.”

“She tried,” Sherlock said with a sigh.

They came round to the garden and Sherlock stopped, realising it was one of the first times he’d physically set foot back here in years. Red and yellow leaves scattered about the grounds. Skeletons of flowers and bushes from the summer showcased how much care Mycroft gave to keeping up with the summer landscaping. There was an oak bench in the centre, looking out to the forest beyond the estate. He knew the old Holmes family cemetery lay just beyond those trees; the thought still made him shudder.

Mycroft led him over to the bench and as he took a seat Sherlock considered this was the closest he had been to his brother in ages. It felt odd, being near to him, and it was a few long moments before he could find the strength again to talk.


“He does know you’re a former drug addict?” Mycroft smirked.

“It was a bit of a wakeup call,” Sherlock went on, his voice dropping. “I need to move past this. I need to move past this before it eats me alive.”

Beside him his brother shifted and straightened his jacket, a clear sign that he was uncomfortable talking about this.

“What do you need from me?” Mycroft asked.

Sherlock let out a deep breath.

This was it.

And suddenly, everything he’d been reciting in his head sounded so stupid when he prepared to say it out loud. Still, it was now or never.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock announced. The world seemed to stop. Mycroft was speechless, and Sherlock’s body felt like it turned to ice. He was suddenly restless, and he couldn’t keep sitting like this. Jumping up, he finally found the energy to continue his confession. Mycroft looked up at him, like he was going mad, and that only set him even more on edge than he was. “I was stupid, alright? I nearly got myself killed; I wasted years of my life, and I was stupid.”

“Sherlock…are you alright?” Mycroft asked, his eyes following him carefully.

“No, I’m not!” He exclaimed. Weeks of insomnia and emotional stress were finally catching up to him. His hands shook as he ran them through his hair, trying to calm himself down. “I can’t sleep, I can’t think, I can’t even concentrate on a bloody case. I need to move past this.”

“Move past what?”

“Everything!” Sherlock sighed. “No amount of therapy, no amount of rehab, can make me forget that I wasted part of my life being an addict. It can’t make me forget what happened to Luke, and it certainly can’t make me forget what I did to Kirchhoff…especially when I can’t even bloody talk about it. But forgetting it isn’t the point, is it?”
Mycroft leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and his fingertips resting beneath his chin.

“No, it isn’t,” Mycroft replied, “and it’s very strong of you to realise that. You’ve reached your breaking point, haven’t you? When it all becomes too much in here.”

He tapped a finger to his temple. Sherlock hesitated and looked away, offering a small nod. He was shocked when his brother stood up and placed a hand on his shoulder; the closest Mycroft Holmes could get to an embrace.

“You’ll get past it in time,” Mycroft offered.

“I’ve had time,” Sherlock shot. Their eyes met, and he knew Mycroft agreed. His voice dropped to a whisper as a breeze picked up around them. “I need to make peace with my past, and that starts by telling you that I’m sorry. I mean it, Mycroft. I should have listened to you from the beginning. You tried to help me, and I treated you like shit.”

His brother just stared at him as though he were trying to decide rather or not he had finally lost it. The only other time he had seen his brother look this stunned, this speechless, was after the found out about Laura.

“Are you asking for my forgiveness?” Mycroft asked.

Sherlock forced himself to meet his eyes as he nodded. The hand slipped from his shoulder, and his brother turned his back to him. Hands on his hips, Mycroft stayed quiet as he gazed out into the woods.

“You have no idea how hard it was,” his brother finally announced after a few, long, moments. “Knowing that you were out there and not being able to help you…it nearly killed me. I just want you to know that.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock whispered.

“Yeah,” Mycroft whispered.

“I’m…I’m proud of what you’ve done with yourself,” Mycroft turned back around, and Sherlock’s eyes lit up at the confession. “When you first started working with the police I thought the world had gone mad. Then you started catching serial killers and popping up in the papers. I didn’t understand it, but secretly, I was proud. I’ve never told you that but it sounds like now might be a good time.”

He wasn’t sure what to say. He knew it was as close to a straightforward ‘I forgive you’ as he would get from his brother; it was what he wanted to hear and yet…nothing could have prepared him for it. Mycroft was proud of him. Mycroft acknowledged what he was doing, and he was proud.

Somehow, he never expected that to actually feel this much relief from hearing him say it.

“You’re doing just fine, Sherlock,” his brother said.

“Doesn’t feel like it,” he mumbled, “it’s like I’ve gone soft. I’m weak. I feel weak.”

“You’re in love,” Mycroft explained with the ghost of a smile on his face, “and when you’re in love nothing makes sense.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to laugh at the irony of that statement.

“Never in a million years would I have imagined you giving me advice about love,” he teased.
“Yes, well I never would have imagined either of us in relationships,” Mycroft replied. “We are becoming soft, dear brother. But I suppose, after all these years, that’s not so much of a bad thing.”

“I’m not the only one who has changed,” Sherlock announced quietly. “Lestrade has been a good influence on you.”

“I think he has been on us both.”

That was too true. After all, Mycroft wasn’t the only one he needed to make amends with.

“Is he going to be around today?” Sherlock asked, glancing back to the house.

“He just texted me, a new case has come up,” Mycroft said, “I’m sure you’ll hear about it soon enough. Why don’t you and John come around for dinner tomorrow? His sister too, if she would like.”

“Thanks, I’ll let them know,” Sherlock replied.

And that was that. He had actually done it- he apologised to his brother. He was told his brother was proud of him. Things were actually okay between them.

Now what?

“Would you like to come inside for some tea?”

Of course.

“There’s actually something else I’ve got to do,” Sherlock admitted. “Tomorrow then?”

“Yes,” Mycroft nodded.

He placed a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder again, holding him in a sort of half-embrace. Sherlock offered him a grim smile before slipping away. Before he could leave the garden Mycroft called after him:

“I forgive you, Sherlock.”

He froze. Behind him Mycroft didn’t move, didn’t speak again. As he let out a shaky breath the world finally began moving around him again. He could breathe again. All it took was hearing those four words, and he felt more like himself than he had in months. Everything seemed so clear, and he knew exactly what he needed to do.

For the second time that day he stepped up to someone’s front door, uncertain if he should knock or not. After talking to his brother he at least had enough confidence to stop shaking, but as soon as he talked himself into knocking he wanted to run away.

But when the door opened to reveal a woman with short, blonde hair and bright blue eyes his heart stopped. The hair colour was different, the gender was different, but she was the spitting of him. It was the first time he’d ever laid eyes on Luke’s mother, but even at first sight he could tell she was at once a kind, gentle woman. Now her eyes were cold and her features sharp. She actually reminded him a bit of Mycroft, of someone who had just spent too long worrying about their family.

“Can I help you?” She shot.
Sherlock opened his mouth but nothing came out. She just stared at him and acted like she was going to close the door, but at that moment he finally found his voice.

“I’m Sherlock Holmes.”

He sounded a bit too desperate, but she got the message straight away. The door abruptly began to shut in his face, but he caught it just before it could close.

“Please,” he begged. “I want to talk to you about Luke. I think you may be interested in what I have to say.”

Mrs Sheppard was the only one home. Sherlock had to stop his eyes from roaming around out of curiosity. He knew this small home in the suburbs wasn’t where Luke grew up, but even from just the foyer there were pictures of his sisters, picture of ancestors- the life of Luke that he never knew. The furniture in the living room was minimal, suggesting it was rarely used.

The house was just so quiet.

And he didn’t dare to speak, not after he made his confession. He kept his eyes peeled through the curtains, gazing out onto the quiet car-lined street while Luke’s mum took in what she just learned:

The man who killed her son was dead.

And I killed him.

“There was nothing on the news,” Mrs Sheppard finally breathed, running a hand through her hair. “No one told me, no one phoned.”

“The police don’t know,” Sherlock whispered. “They don’t know it was me, I mean.”

“God,” she whispered.

She brought a shaking mouth to her hand. Her face had gone pale; she looked like she might be sick.

“I should have told you sooner,” Sherlock confessed.

“You shouldn’t have come here at all!” Mrs Sheppard snapped. She jumped up, rounding on him. “I already think about him all the time. I have to live with the guilt of knowing I’m a terrible mother. You know, no one feels bad for you when you lose a son because of drugs. People just look at you like…how could you? I’ve been asking myself that for nearly a decade now. Meanwhile you’re on the telly, working with the police. Do they know who you were?”

Sherlock swallowed nervously and decided the question must be rhetorical. When the woman’s eyes swelled with tears he feared he might be wrong, but he didn’t have a clue what to say. He hadn’t thought it through past his confession; honestly he hadn’t thought he would make it past the front door. Now that he was standing here, in the house that Luke’s family lived in, Sherlock found himself wondering…what the hell have I been doing all these years? He felt foolish, he felt like some joke had been played on him. This was the life Luke could have had- should have had- if Sherlock hadn’t helped indulge him in a life of madness. It was the life he could have had, if his mum hadn’t of died so young, if he hadn’t been stuck with Mycroft all those years.

“Why did you come here?” Mrs Sheppard demanded, openly weeping now.
Wrapping her arms around her chest, she ran her hands up and down her arms as though trying to calm herself down, and Sherlock felt stupid for ever thinking he could just waltz in here and find closure. How could he make her understand that he, too, was tortured?

Instead he just wanted to run away.

He couldn’t do this.

“I’m sorry, I’ll go,” he mumbled.

A strong arm clasped around his arm as he tried to flee, and his heart skipped a beat in shock.

“You think about him too,” she whispered.

Sherlock offered a small, hesitant, nod.

“He was killed in my flat,” Sherlock said, stammering a bit. He glanced away, desperate to distance himself from her sharp, hateful, eyes. “I’m sorry that I let him live like that.”

“You were young and stupid,” Mrs Sheppard spat. Her eyes diverted to the floor; her tears were subsiding, but she still struggled to breathe properly. “But I think the work you’re doing with the police is good, and it’s good that that monster is off the streets.”

A wave of relief rushed through him, and his eyes lit up just as they did when he was talking to Mycroft.

“I don’t think I can ever fully forgive you, Mr Holmes,” Mrs Sheppard confessed. A pit fell in his stomach, replacing how elated he felt just a moment ago. “I can only admire that you’re trying to be a better person. Judging by the trouble my son got into I’d wager he was the one that pressured you into drugs, and if that is true than I am sorry. You are trying to make amends, and you appear to be clean now, and I’m sure your family and friends are grateful for that. I just don’t know if you’ll ever be able to become the person you were meant to be.”

“The person I was meant to be?” He stated softly.

The smallest of smiles fell across Mrs Sheppard’s face as she explained through the last of her tears:

“The person your mother envisioned you becoming. When we first hold our children in our arms, we have their whole life planned out for them. It never turns out that way, of course, but Luke’s life was never supposed to turn out like this.”

She raised a hand to her forehead, hiding her face as she let out another sob. Sherlock decided it was time for him to go, that she really didn’t need him here. When he headed for the door this time, she didn’t stop him.

And as he shut the door behind him he didn’t stop to look back either.

Chapter End Notes

I thought it was high time Sherlock started to find closure. His journey will continue, but every little bit helps. This newfound strength will be just what he needs to help
John deal with Harry. This was a pretty big chapter in terms Sherlock moving forward. I'd love to know what you thought of it! Thanks for reading!
“Are you actually nervous?” Harry teased as she slid into a seat next to him.

He realised he was wringing his hands, something he used to do when he was younger whenever he was this nervous, and he stuffed them in his pockets.

“No,” he lied.

John turned again to his laptop, double checking the connection for the dozenth time. Mr Cubitt had sent him an email saying he would Skype with an update that afternoon, but when the client was a half an hour late John began to worry something happened.

“Maybe you got the time difference wrong,” Harry suggested.

His sister wrapped her hands around her coffee mug. He had noticed she had become more addicted to caffeine since weaning off alcohol, but he didn’t have the heart to say something to her. When Harry offered to help him interview Cubitt he was grateful; sure he had talked to plenty of clients before, but rarely alone and rarely on a case like this. After Sherlock told him about the history of abuse in Elsie’s previous relationship John wondered if they were in over their heads. He once warned Sherlock that any case that had to do with physical, relationship, violence should be turned over to the police (if not just out of fear of how crude Sherlock could be around victims, usually without even realising he was doing something wrong). What if they were dealing with a crazy stalker, and this was just the beginning?

“Maybe I should just contact him,” John sighed.

He made the call via Skype and turned on the webcam. It took a few rings, but he was surprised when someone who wasn’t Cubitt answered. The man who answered looked to be in his fifties, with greying hair. Before John could even say anything the man flashed a police badge at him.

“Hi, I’m um…calling on behalf of Sherlock Holmes,” John explained. Harry snorted, and he knew none of this would make sense to a detective in New York. “We work with Scotland Yard.”

For a moment the detective just stared, sizing him up, and John felt his face grow hot with embarrassment. It was moment like this where he looked at the grand scheme of things and thought…what the fuck are we doing, messing about with the police? He was a copper in an entirely different country, using the user name of their client-

Oh.

“We were expecting a call from Hilton Cubitt,” John went on, “he’s consulting us on a case.”

More of the death stare.

Then the detective burst out laughing.

“Sherlock Holmes,” the detective mused, “I haven’t heard that name in ages.”

“You know Sherlock?” John stated with a smirk.
“Of course! I’m Terry Martin, a detective with the Syracuse Police Department. I knew Sherlock back when I was in New York City. He wrote in a tip about a serial killer that blew the case wide open. We all thought he was a little crazy, but after all the work he’s done with Scotland Yard since, I realised how lucky we were for him to find us.”

“What brings you to the Cubitt’s?” John asked. “We had a Skype call scheduled with Mr Cubitt a half an hour ago.”

The detective went white, but he stared directly into the webcam as he admitted:

“Mr Cubitt is dead. He was shot by his wife roughly an hour ago.”

Harry’s hand flew to her mouth, and she looked like she might throw up as she abruptly got to her feet.

“I’ll let you take this one,” Harry whispered.

John listened to the pattering of her feet as she fled up to his old bedroom, and he felt a bit lightheaded himself as he turned back to Detective Martin.

“What about the wife?” John asked.

“Murder suicide,” Martin explained, “well…attempted suicide.”

“She’s still alive?”

He was desperate to be able to see beyond Cubitt, where it looked like detectives were sorting through a crime scene.

“Yes, she was taken to the hospital for an emergency operation. She shot him in the skull before turning the gun on herself. It’s very tragic. She was a school teacher, you know.”

Poor Dan. How is he going to get past this one?

“Yeah,” John said quietly. “Sorry if I seemed a bit shocked, it’s just that when we first took this case it seemed pretty trivial. Mrs Cubitt kept finding these dancing men drawings. It was like someone was stalking her and leaving her the drawings to taunt her. We reached out to a…source at Scotland Yard. He did a background check and discovered she had just gotten out of an abusive relationship.”

The detective was jotting down notes as he spoke, and John couldn’t help but to feel more confidence knowing he was being taken seriously. Part of the reason he felt uncertain about going out on a case on his own was because it was Sherlock everybody wanted. Even the New York detective knew him! John however, had plenty of qualifications as a doctor and soldier—and none as an investigator. Chasing Sherlock through London while he deduced psychopaths wasn’t the same as trying to convince real detectives to take him seriously.

“Did you find out if the dancing men symbolised anything?” Martin asked.

“So far, no,” John admitted. “I have pictures though, I can send them to you.”

“That would be great, thanks!” Martin replied. “How did you guys find this case anyway?”

John shrugged.

“Sherlock’s nephew is in the class,” he explained. “In fact…would you make sure the rest of the
class doesn’t find out until we get to talk to him? He told us about the dancing men. I’m afraid he’ll take it pretty hard.”

“Anything for Sherlock,” Martin said, offering a sympathetic smile. “Give me your email, and I’ll send you all my contact info. Let me know if you think of anything else important.”

“Of course.”

Martin hesitated for a moment, then dropped his voice as he offered:

“Look, the guys want to write this off as a clean murder-suicide, but I think there’s more going on; and if I think there’s more to this I know Sherlock Holmes does. If he wants to I can come back to the scene and give him a personal tour, via webcam. Just like you wrote about in your blog!”

He wasn’t sure he wanted to die of embarrassment or if he was honoured that an actual detective took interest in his blog- besides whenever Anderson or Donavon wanted to poke fun at them, of course.

“Right,” John replied, “I’ll let him know, I’m sure he’d appreciate it.”

The webcam went black as the detective signed off, and John let his head fall into his hands. Just as he was about to reach in his pocket for his mobile it went off, and he was relieved to see the call was from Sherlock.

“John,” Sherlock greeted. His voice sounded rough, almost wounded. “Has Mycroft phoned?”

“…no,” John answered slowly, carefully. What the hell was going on with him?

“Good,” Sherlock sighed, “he’s going on about having dinner tomorrow. Laura’s not even in town, why the fuck does he want us over for dinner?”

He couldn’t help but grin to himself.

Of course Sherlock wouldn’t remember!

“Maybe he’s having a sort mid-life crisis?” John suggested. He ran a hand through his hair. How was he supposed to admit that barely twelve hours into his stint as lead investigator on their case that their client died? “Sherlock…Hilton Cubitt is dead.”

There was a long pause, followed by the sound of Sherlock taking in a deep breath, and John closed his eyes and braced for the worst.

“It’s not your fault, if that’s what you’re thinking,” Sherlock said quietly.

He opened his eyes again, stunned.

“Yeah, well,” he swallowed nervously, “I should have noticed something, shouldn’t I? You would have.”

“How did he die?” Sherlock asked.

Avoidance. He knows I’m right.

“Murder-suicide,” John explained. “She killed him and turned the gun on herself. She survived, though. Oh, and the head detective on the case knew who you were. It was some bloke named Terry Martin.”
“Martin?” Sherlock spat out, like a piece of food that didn’t quite taste right. “I thought Terry Martin despised me.”

“No, he worships you!” John replied. “He follows the blog and everything.”

“Really?” Sherlock said; he could just imagine his eyes lighting up at the thought.

“Yeah,” he shrugged, “he offered to go back to the crime scene later on and give you a private tour via webcam. He thinks there’s something else going on, just like you do.”

“Your average young school teacher doesn’t just burst into a fit of rage and kill her husband and attempt to kill herself,” Sherlock mused. “Especially when she is clearly being stalked. I’m in. I just have one more thing I need to do.”

Sherlock didn’t sound as interested as he made himself out to be. He sounded distracted, like the case wasn’t priority (a first!), like he didn’t actually want to come home and view crime scene video.

“Are you okay?” John asked. “And don’t say ‘fine’, I know you’re not.”

There was another moment of hesitation, and at last his boyfriend admitted:

“I need closure. I need…I need to stop living in all of this…darkness. Kirchhoff is dead but it’s like I can still feel his presence. He’s gone but I don’t quite feel like I can move on until I fully accept what happened. And that means telling Lestrade I killed him.”

John’s heart began racing as the image of Sherlock in an orange jumpsuit popped into mind.

“What?” He exclaimed. “That was a top secret government matter. You read those forms Mycroft made us sign!”

“But we were working on Lestrade’s case,” Sherlock pointed out. “I just…I need to do this.”

He bit his lip, trying his best to quickly think of a way to explain to Sherlock how very not good this was.

“Sherlock, he might arrest you.”

Another pause.

“I know, but I don’t think he will.”

“You can’t assume that.”

“Watch Mycroft try to let him arrest me,” Sherlock shot.

His mouth fell agape at the utter ignorance Sherlock was expressing.

“How can you put them in that situation?” John demanded.

“The same way I was put into that situation!” Sherlock cried. “John I…I changed the rules. I changed the rules, and I have to change them back or…I don’t know what I’ll turn into.”

“You make yourself sound like some kind of psychopath,” John whispered. “Please just, come home first. Talk to me about this. Really think through what you’re saying. I know what you’re going through- I’ve been there. Please…let’s talk about this.”
“You don’t know, John,” Sherlock shot. He was breathing hard, like he was pacing.

John threw his hands up in frustration before putting the mobile back to his ear and exclaiming:

“Are you forgetting the cabby? Are you forgetting the bloody war I was in?”

“You’re a trained soldier!”

He held his breath as he closed his eyes and let his head fall to his head again.

“Sherlock, all the psychologists in the world could do a study on you and understand why you did what you did.”

“But that doesn’t justify it, John! I just…I need this, alright?”

“I don’t understand where this is coming from,” John whispered, “and I don’t know what you think is going to come out of confessing to Greg, but it will start ignite a firestorm of consequences. Sherlock, you’re going through some kind of mental breakdown. Please, just let me help you.”

For a moment Sherlock hesitated, and John could only hope he was taking his words into consideration. Instead, he replied hotly:

“I didn’t call to ask your permission. I just wanted to let you know, just in case…”

He trailed off, and John wanted to throw his phone across the room in frustration.

“In case he does arrest you?” He challenged. “He’s a copper, Sherlock. First and foremost, he has to follow the law. Unless you want to be thrown into prison.”

There was another pause, but all hope that Sherlock would listen to reason was flooding from him.

“I need your help on this case,” John pleaded, “you need to talk to your nephew, and I just…I need you here, alright?”

“I love you, John.”

The other line went dead, and the frustration overwhelmed him so much that he let out a cry and kicked at his chair, sending it spiraling across the room.

Chapter End Notes

Over 50K hits?! Thank you all SO much for your encouragement! Your comments and the fact that you guys are still reading and enjoying this makes me so happy!!

Will Sherlock confess? What is it that he’s forgetting about tomorrow? Will they ever figure out what the dancing men are about? And will Sherlock and John finally have sex again? Stay tuned!
Sherlock shot straight out of bed, breathing hard.

Too hard.

And too loud.

He clamped a hand over his mouth as his eyes dashed around his dark room, hoping no one- or nothing- caught him in his moment of weakness. The ghosts watched him at night, in the dark, and he knew they waited for that one moment of vulnerability.

At least, according to Mycroft that’s what they did.

Sitting perfectly still, Sherlock visually checked his room. His closet door was still sealed shut, the light in the hall and his lamp were both still on. The window was shut but it shook from the force of the wind blowing against it. London was deep into the heart of summer, and while he had grown accustomed to the summer rainstorms, the pounding of the rain and the whirl of the wind still made him feel uneasy at night. He was still just six years old, and he couldn’t take waking up in this kind of panicked state every night.

But tonight, everything seemed okay. His dream was just that- a dream. It was the same one he had every night that week: dreams of eating ice cream, with a man he didn’t know. A man whose name sat just on the tip of his tongue, who he could have sworn he saw once before, but in the dream he didn’t seem to care that he didn’t know his name. The man didn’t feel like a stranger.

Then suddenly, everything wasn’t okay. The wind surged outside, the lights went off, and Sherlock let out an ear-piercing scream as he grabbed the torch from his bedside table. He leapt off his bed and threw open the door, fleeing down the hall toward Mycroft’s room. He didn’t hesitate to prod the door open and shine the light into his brother’s room.

“Mycroft?” He called carefully.

His brother was fast asleep. The blackout and storm didn’t seem to bother his older brother at all. Mycroft’s room was much bigger and more open than his, and he made sure to do the same check to this room before entering.

Something creaked down the hall, and Sherlock gasped. He slid into Mycroft’s room, slammed the door shut, and by the time he had run and jumped on the four-poster bed his brother had finally
woken up.

“What?” Mycroft protested as he shook him awake. His brother grabbed his glasses- he hadn’t yet switched to contacts- and frowned at the time on his alarm. “It’s two in the bloody morning Sherlock!”

Lowering his voice to a whisper, Sherlock leaned in close so that only Mycroft could hear him as he announced:

“The ghost is here.”

Mycroft shot up so fast Sherlock tumbled backward in the bed.

“What?!” His brother exclaimed. He tried to turn on his lamp, but of course it wouldn’t work. “It’s just a power outage!”

“I heard him in the hall!” His voice was barely audible as he climbed back up to Mycroft. There was another creak from outside, and he buried his head into Mycroft’s chest. “He’s coming for me! He’s going to eat me!”

“That’s zombies, you twat!” Mycroft snaps. “Ghosts don’t eat people, and they’re not real!”

Sherlock looked up at him, stunned. His chest felt heavy, and he felt oddly…betrayed. Even Mycroft looked crestfallen when he realised what he had said.

“I just made it all up to scare you,” his brother admitted. “I’m sorry. But ghost aren’t real. You’re perfectly fine.”

His tiny body began shaking, and he wasn’t sure if it were from fear or anger. Because what Mycroft said just couldn’t be true- it couldn’t!

“If you were making it up then why did I see one?” Sherlock asked quietly.

Mycroft made a face.

“You’re not going on about that face in the mirror again, are you?”

“It was there!” Sherlock protested, shining the light over Mycroft’s face, like a spotlight. “You know that room is creepy! And there’s the music playing, and that shadow out in the garden!”

“Sherlock,” Mycroft sighed, “come here.”

He pulled Sherlock closer, into an embrace. Sherlock made sure the light from the torch still shone brightly as he let his brother hold him. He closed his eyes, wishing he were away from the house. He wished he was with the nice man in his dreams, eating ice cream on a sunny day.

“Mye?” He asked quietly. After drawing in a deep breath he asked Mycroft a question he had never been brave enough to ask: “What was Dad like?”

Mycroft stiffened, and it seemed like ages before he answered.

“He was a coward,” he finally replied, his voice colder than Sherlock had ever heard. “And he doesn’t deserve to be called ‘Dad’ by anyone.”

There was another creak outside, the lights turned on by themselves, and Sherlock screamed as he buried his body further against his brother’s.
“Ghosts!” He hissed.

The door crept open, and just like when Mycroft watched horror movies and told him not to look, he couldn’t help but to look. He stopped breathing, just for a moment, until Mycroft grabbed the torch from him and shone it on the intruder.

“Mummy!” Sherlock cried as relief flooded through him.

Their mother swooped over to him, her long strawberry blonde hair bouncing against her upper back as she walked, and accept him as he held his arms out toward her. Over his shoulder, she shot to Mycroft:

“What’s all the screaming about? It’s two in the morning!”

“Tell that to the baby,” Mycroft sighed, collapsing back in bed. “It’s the ghost thing again.”

“I’m not a baby!” Sherlock protested.

“I told you not to let him watch those movies!” Their mother exclaimed. “And stop telling him those stories.”

His mother slipped from the embrace and took him by the shoulders instead. He kneeled on the bed while she kneeled on the floor. Her hand reached up, and she smiled as she tucked a strand of his curly hair behind his ear.

“This house has been in the family for many years. There is a lot of history in it but it is good history.” She kissed his forehead, and a small smile crossed his lips. “Ghosts only haunt places where they have unfinished business. It’s not even always bad unfinished business. We always leave a piece of us behind, but some of us just aren’t ready to go. Just think of these spirits as souls trying to get back to the people they love.”

“Or the people they never got a chance to murder,” Mycroft chimed in.

His mother playfully slammed at the leg hidden under the sheets, and Mycroft grinned as he turned around and pretended like he was trying to go back to sleep.

And that’s when he realised: *Mummy believes in ghosts too!*

“Have you ever seen a ghost?” Sherlock whispered.

His mother shook his head and placed a hand on his arm.

“No, it’s more of an idea that I like,” she admitted. “No one’s going to hurt you, Sherlock. There are no evil spirits in this house. But if you would like, you could spend the night in my room.”

She held out her hand, but despite her reassuring words all he could think of was that his mother’s room was the scariest in the whole house.

Well, besides the music room, because he could have sworn he heard the sounds of a violin playing in there once when he hadn’t even started practicing yet.

“Mycroft, can I stay with you?” He asked quietly.

“No,” Mycroft moaned into his pillow.

“Mye,” his mother warned.
“Fine!” His brother sighed, rolling over. He held out his arms, and Sherlock didn’t hesitate to climb back into them. Their eyes met, and Mycroft scolded: “If you start snoring I’m throwing you into the hall.”

Sherlock nodded.

“Goodnight,” their mother said, planting a kiss to each of their foreheads.

Sherlock drew a shaky hand across his face as he sniffled. He was doing a horrible job of holding himself together, and every noise he made seemed to echo through the empty cemetery. He looked around, just to be sure he was alone, before withdrawing a boquete of irises and white lilacs - his mother’s favourite.

It had been years since he stopped by his mother’s grave. The last time had to be after his first rehab stint, when he had kidded himself to thinking he had been fixed. When he slipped back into drugs he had been too ashamed to even face a grave. Mycroft had said it to him many times - what would Mother say? - and Sherlock knew. Disappointed.

Carefully, he bent forward to place the flowers on the grave. When he straightened himself up again he found himself unsure of what to do. He did not need to talk to a piece of marble to make himself feel better, right?

So why did he suddenly want to?

“I’m sorry I haven’t stopped by,” he muttered to himself. “I’ve been…”

But he couldn’t say busy. He couldn’t lie to her, not even to her grave.

“Things have been a bit rough lately,” he admitted. “I did something unforgiveable, and when I did it I thought that didn’t matter. I thought by doing I’d be…free. But I don’t feel that way, and I don’t know what to do anymore. I’ve been going around saying it all day, and I thought I owed you a visit to say… I’m sorry. Mycroft says you would have be proud of me, but I know you would have expected so much more. Just know…I’m working on it.”

He looked around again to make sure he was still alone, and his heart skipped a beat when he realised an older woman had walked up to a grave a few rows over. Their eyes met and she offered him a small, sympathetic smile. From her clothing, her shoes, and choice of handbag he knew her husband died of cancer exactly a year ago today, and he returned the same smile out of respect.

Turning back to the grave, he thought of his last good memory of his mum, from the Christmas before she died.

“I love you Mum,” he whispered.

He turned on his heels and fled the cemetery.

In the end, he decided not to tell Lestrade. The Kirchoff case involved Mycroft too. What if Lestrade didn’t know his partner was involved? What would he think if he found out that Mycroft, too, kept that secret from him? It might have been a coward’s excuse, but it was an excuse and his head felt a bit lighter when he slipped through the door of 221B.
The sun was setting by now, and he still had not phoned Dan to talk about the case. He knew John was right- Dan would take this very hard, and he deserved to have someone sit him down and tell him it wasn’t his fault. He was only four and a half, after all, and while he might have been brilliant enough to discover the case he still had a child’s emotions. Dan had a fragile heart, and from his talks with Laura he knew Dan had been a bit more sensitive than usual since the kidnapping.

John was still in the kitchen, cooking an early dinner while a movie played on his laptop. Sherlock didn’t say anything as he stepped into the kitchen and leaned casually against the fridge.

“It’s chicken and vegetables,” John announced. He bit back a groan. “I know it’s not your favourite, but even you freakishly skinny people still need to eat properly.”

“You can’t make me,” Sherlock teased as he slipped his arms around John’s waist. For a moment he just held him there while John continued cooking. “I’m sorry I yelled at you.”

“When did you yell at me?” John asked. He turned around, revealing how completely confused he was. In fact, he almost looked amused.

“On the phone,” Sherlock said, looking just as confused.

“Oh…” he offered a sympathetic smile and brushed his hand down Sherlock’s arm. “Don’t worry about it. Things have been rough lately, for each of us.”

You took the words right out of my mouth.

“I’m sorry I left you with the case,” Sherlock said. “Are you okay?”

Nodding, John replied:

“Yeah, it’s fine.”

He was lying, but he’d never admit it. Sherlock swooped down, kissing his cheek; John’s skin was hot beneath his lips.

“And you?” John asked.

“Yeah, fine,” Sherlock echoed.

They both nodded, each fully aware neither was telling the truth.

“I guess there’s not really a case anymore,” John said, shying away from him as he turned back to his cooking, “but the detective said he could still walk you through the crime scene. Via Skype, obviously.”

“Of course!” Sherlock said. “Never turn down an opportunity to look at a crime scene. Every crime scene is a learning experience.”

John turned off the stove and grabbed two plates.

“You’ve changed your tune,” he commented. “Did you find what you were looking for?”

“Perhaps,” Sherlock murmured under his breath.

“Harry’s all moody again,” his partner sighed while he dished out the food. “She was fine earlier, then suddenly an hour ago she just snapped. I swear, sometimes it’s like she’s speaking in code.”
Sherlock stopped.

“How did I not see it before?” He muttered as he stretched across the table to retrieve his laptop. “Code! John, you’re brilliant!”

He swirled around to trap John in an abrupt, bruising kiss. He grabbed the pictures of the dancing men he printed out, lined them up, and got a pen.

“It’s a code!” Sherlock explained. “Some kind of message. All I have to do is decipher it. So let’s start with…”

His eyes scanned the dancing men drawings to find a common denominator. And then-

“A-ha!” He exclaimed. He hadn’t felt this alive in weeks! “This one, here. He pointed at a stick figure whose leg was sticking out. “This one pops up the most in all the drawings, therefore if this is a code it must be the most common letter in the alphabet which is-”


“You have your moments,” Sherlock agreed. “I should have known this is where the case was heading but my head was just too full of stuff.”

“That stuff is called emotions, love.” Ignoring him, Sherlock went on:

“The next order of letters should be T, A, O, I, N, S, H, R, D, and I. If you look at these drawings here, these characters are holding a flag. Only some of them are, so there must be some significance. If these are sentences, the flag must symbolise a period.”

He placed a period above each stick figure that was holding a flag. Adrenaline pumped through his veins as his mind churned, spitting out dozens of ideas.

“So if this drawing is one word, and the second and fourth character are ‘E’-”

“Then it would have to be something like server, lever-”

Sherlock’s eyes lit up as everything clicked into place.

“Never!” They both exclaimed at the same time.

At that moment Harry trudged back down the stairs, obviously curious about all the commotion.

“What’s going on?” She asked. John’s eyes narrowed in disapproval when he noticed she was still in her dressing gown.

“We’re solving the case,” John replied, hiding his frustration well, “come here.”

He pulled her over so she had a view of the drawing printouts.

“It’s about time you guys realised it was a code,” she muttered.

“You knew?!” John shot.

Harry just shrugged.
“Well you weren’t listening to me this morning!” She complained. “Obviously it’s a code, probably from the guy she ran away from. Who else would be stalking her?”

Sherlock and John stared at her, and he had never felt so betrayed by his own intelligence.

“You two don’t know anything about women, do you?” Harry’s eyes twinkled as she explained: “I would assume her ex found her in America. She’s been too afraid to tell her husband. I’ve been thinking, and I don’t think she would just kill her husband like that. She’s afraid, not psychotic. If I were you, I’d be looking for the ex.”

The two men stared at her as she casually placed a hand on John’s shoulder before wandering over to the stove.

“Maybe I should have asked her to be my flatmate last year,” Sherlock teased.

The comment earned him a playful punch to his arm, and Sherlock found himself grinning as he turned back to the drawings.

“Right, well if Harry is right then we should be thinking about threatening words. John, now is the part where you might want to phone Detective Martin.”

“On it.”

Sherlock leaned forward to get a closer look at the drawings.

“Her name would be in here somewhere, so she knew the message is for her,” Sherlock mumbled to himself. He found two ‘E’s in the first word and wrote ‘Elsie’ over it.

He tapped the pin against the table faster and faster, determined that the answer lay somewhere in the depths of his mind. He thought of everything John told him about Elsie and her ex and every piece of news he’d heard that week until…

“Oh,” he whispered.

“‘Oh’ what?” John asked. On the other line, Martin’s muffled voice demanded to know what was going on. His boyfriend warned the detective: “Quiet, he’s got something.”

Closing his eyes, his breathing slowed as he thought back to a squat he and Luke stayed in for a few weeks. It was when they first started sleeping rough and hadn’t quite learned which areas to avoid. There was a gang fight in alley behind the building that night, and as they coward inside Luke mentioned that he noticed some strange drawings on the walls outside that morning. They realised only then what the graffiti meant.

“Are you okay?” John asked quietly. He placed a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder, bringing him back to the present.

“Who would have a code like this?” Sherlock asked, rhetorically. “It’s a gang, John. Elsie was a member of a gang, and this must be some sort of code for that gang. She and her ex wouldn’t have a code just for the two of them. Something must have happened to make her want to run away to America and start a new life. She and Hilton had such a quick engagement, something that didn’t make sense for someone who was so secretive and protective of themselves. Someone that secretive, who was subjected to the abuse she was, wouldn’t normally be able to trust someone so quickly. Perhaps she wanted his protection- or more likely, money.”

“But neither her background check nor her ex’s brought up anything about gang activity,” John
pointed out.

“Not that the police knew of.”

He heard Martin try to say something on the other line, and John put him on speaker so Sherlock could hear.

“Hey Sherlock,” Martin greeted. “I appreciate the help, but with all due respect, why does all of this matter? This was a murder-suicide.”

“Because she didn’t kill herself,” Sherlock announced. He glanced at Harry. “I’d suspect there’s a third bullet in that crime scene. Perhaps he surprised her at home. Perhaps she tried to shoot him in self-defense, shot her husband instead, and in the end tried to kill herself out of guilt. Perhaps the ex shot the husband and her, in which case there wouldn’t be a third bullet and it would be the perfect crime. Either way, Elsie is innocent, and if she lives she will be tried as a murderer. That’s why it matters.”

He took another look at the drawings.

“The boyfriend’s name was Abe Slaney,” Sherlock announced. He found two sets of words that matched up with the name. “The first drawing was electronic— he could have sent it from anywhere. There is a word in both sentences that is the same, and the word has an ‘E’ as the second and fourth letter. It’s probably ‘here’. For the first word the last letter is ‘E’— if it was sent electronically, and it’s too short to be a ransom, it’s probably a command. ‘Come here Elsie’. He wants her to return to Manchester. She doesn’t, so he goes to her. He wants to scare her first so he warns her he’s there— a two word letter, followed by ‘here’, followed by his name. ‘Am here Abe Slaney’.

The next sentence has a four letter word with two consecutive ‘E’s. Meet. Next, three letters but no ‘E’. The first set of drawings was a command, the second a warning, the third— execution. If we look at the numbers in sequence, I would bet it ends up as…”

He wrote down the final phrase and for a moment he, John, and Harry simply stared.

“What?” Martin demanded over the phone. “What does it say?”

“Am here Abe Slaney,” John announced, his voice cracking like ice over a pond. “Elsie meet thy God.”

“It’s a bit dramatic, isn’t it?” Harry asked, glancing between them. She shrugged. “I’m just saying…”

“I’m at the crime scene, if you want to turn on your webcam,” Martin offered.

They wasted no time setting up the Skype call. Martin had the camera fixed on the living room of a small townhome. Right away Sherlock noticed a bloodstain by the door, a bloodstain by the opposite wall, and a few specks of blood that stained the carpet, leading out the door.

“Can you get me closer to the door?” Sherlock asked.

Martin obeyed, carrying the camera to the front door. Sure enough, there was a bullet lodged into the wall right next to the door handle. Sherlock pointed, and Martin shook his head in disbelief.

“Jesus,” Martin said, letting out a low whistle, “you’ve still got it. You’re an absolutely genius. If you ever think of relocating to New York—“
John’s eyes snapped toward him, and Sherlock immediately knew what he was thinking— and he did not want to open up that can of worms.

Instead Sherlock smirked.

“My bet is that Slaney confronted the Cubitts at their home. Hilton was a strong, well-built, man. If he answered the door and found Slaney he wouldn’t have gone down without a fight. He got shot during the fight. Elsie tried to wrestle Slaney off her husband and managed to get the gun, only to send a stray bullet into the wall, possibly nicking Slaney in the process. That would explain why he left right after shooting Elsie, without making sure she was dead. I’d look for him in area farms, judging by the dirt.”

Martin looked down at his feet, as though he were just noticing the dirt tracked in from outside.

“I’m getting right on it,” Martin announced. “Thanks Sherlock, I really owe you one! I’ll talk to my guys about compensation.”

“You don’t owe me anything,” Sherlock said, shaking his head.

The detective just grinned as he shut off the webcam. John punched him in the elbow again and glared.

“You never turn down crime scenes, and I never turn down free money,” his boyfriend shot.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock began collecting the drawings. His adrenaline high was slowly fading as the answer sat in front of him, in his own handwriting, in a neat pile.

Back to reality.

“Basically, you just did a case for free,” John pointed out.

“Maybe Sherlock wanted some pro bono work,” Harry offered. “Here, it’s really not that bad.”

She handed Sherlock a plate of food that he reluctantly accepted.

“Yes, and maybe Mrs Hudson will become a pro bono landlady,” John mocked.

“The client is dead,” Sherlock announced. His stomach turned to knots as it really hit him. “We didn’t solve the case in time. No one gets paid.”

He shoved the food into John’s hands, grabbed his mobile, and headed toward the door. Laura’s number seemed to automatically pop up on his phone, and he took a deep breath as he pressed ‘call’ and waited for the sound of his sister’s voice.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Your comments make my day! I love hearing what you think so please leave feedback! :)

I know I’ve been teasing smut. I promise that will be soon!

Coming up next...Dan, a family dinner, and Sherlock meets his idol.
P.S.: I'm working on a parentlock series called Amelia if you would like to check it out!
He needed air. Sherlock walked as he listened to his ringing mobile, waiting for Laura to pick up. When she didn’t answer he phoned her again, crossing the street as he did.

“Sherlock?” Laura finally greeted.

Settling for a simple street corner, Sherlock sank down to sit in front of a closed clothing shop. He purposely chose the spot so he could look out onto the street from this level and be reminded of what it was like to be homeless. The feel of the concrete beneath his arse, knowing that this ground was what he used to call a bed, that there used to be nothing else but just sitting, was numbing.

“Sherlock, are you there?” Laura asked, sounding worried.

“Yeah, I’m here,” he replied. “I’m afraid I have some bad news. Hilton Cubitt is dead. His wife is in the emergency room; they aren’t sure if she’ll make it.”

“Oh my god!” Laura took a moment to take in the news, and she sounded weak when she said: “What happened? I just thought it was a harmless stalker case.”

“There’s no such thing as a harmless stalker,” Sherlock told her. “Especially in Elsie’s case. Her ex-boyfriend had come to America to terrorise her. The drawings were a code: they were threats and demands. When she didn’t give into them he found her. There was a struggle, and she was shot and her husband died in the fight.”

“Oh god.”

For a moment they just sat in silence, breathing quietly.

“I’d like to talk to Dan,” he finally said.

“I’m not sure how he’ll take it. I’m worried it will be too much for him.”

“He’s stronger than you think.”

“He’s barely five years old.” It sounded like Laura choked back a sob. “He just wanted to help…he wants to be a detective like you.”

A sad smile crossed Sherlock’s face, and his heart seemed to melt in his chest.

“We win some, we lose some,” Sherlock said quietly, “but if Elsie survives this, she’ll be able to get proper protection, and all because of Dan. I’d like to talk to him, detective to detective, if that’s
okay.”

He imagined Laura smiling on the other end at the phrase, or at least he hoped she was.

“Okay,” she finally agreed, “but be gentle, Sherlock. He’s a child, he’s fragile.”

“I know.”

Despite popular belief he did remember being that young. He could still remember how much it hurt when Mycroft so much as flicked his finger at his face or threw a pillow at him too hard. He could remember how maddening it felt when no one listened to him or took him seriously because he was little.

He smirked to himself.

Sometimes it still felt like that.

“Here’s Dan,” Laura suddenly said.

“Uncle Sirlock?” Dan asked.

Closing his eyes, Sherlock rest his head against the shop window. Dan did sound fragile, and he wished he was better prepared for this.

“Hey Dan,” he greeted. He drew in a deep breath. “I’m afraid I have some bad news. I solved the case, but it wasn’t in time. Mr Cubitt died.”

There was a long pause. He was imagining eyes swelling up with tears, fists punching at the wall. Instead Dan calmly replied:

“What did the dancing men mean?”

And Sherlock smiled, proud of him for trying to be strong.

“It was a code; a warning,” Sherlock explained. “It was a warning from a very bad a person. He attacked Mrs Cubitt, and her husband tried to save her. He got very hurt, and she’s in the hospital.”

“The hospital!” Dan cried in shock. “Is she going to be okay?”

Sherlock bit his lip.

“She’s trying to pull through.”

Before he could say anything else he heard Dan say to Laura:

“Mommy can we go visit Mrs Cubitt in the hospital?”

“Maybe once she’s feeling better,” Laura’s voice said in the background.

“You did a very good job on this case,” Sherlock said. “I’m proud of you.”

“You did a good job too!” Dan chimed in. “You solved it!”

With the way he was acting, Sherlock might as well have caught Jack the Ripper. Anyone passing by would have never thought this was over a simple code and a fight he was too late to stop.

“But not in time,” Sherlock admitted.
Maybe he was the one who sounded like he needed cheering up, but Dan didn’t seem bothered at all as he offered his words of comfort.

“But you tried. Mrs Cubitt didn’t want help. She was scared. But you helped anyway. That matters.”

He couldn’t help but to grin with that. How could he argue with a four year old?

“That’s why it’s always important to observe,” Sherlock agreed, “because a lot of times when people need help they won’t ask for it.”

“I love you Uncle Sirlock,” Dan proclaimed. “Thank you. I would pay…but I only have twenty-five cents and Mommy says it’s too ‘spensive to mail it.”

Laughing, Sherlock replied:

“This one’s pro bono.”

“What?”

“It’s free.”

“Cool! I guess you can tell Detective Gweg now.”

He had to bite his lip to stop himself from bursting out laughing- and to stop himself from admitting that going to the police was one of the first things he did.

“I have an idea,” Sherlock offered, “why don’t you phone your Uncle Mycroft and tell him and Detective Greg yourself? I’m sure they’d love to hear the story straight from you.”

“Yes! I’ll tell them. Mommy says I should go now. Bye-bye, Sirlock!”

“Bye Dan. I love you.”

“Love you!”

Laura came back on the line, laughing.

“That went better than expected,” she admitted.

“He’s a strong kid,” Sherlock said. He glanced down at the concrete beneath his feet. “Stronger than me, anyway.”

“Hang in there, Sherlock. “You’re stronger than you know.”

“Yeah.” Looking around, he was surprised to see how dark it had gotten. “I better go back home. I think John’s having a really tough time with his sister.”

“Alright. Tell him I said hello, and that I’d love to hear from him.”

“I will. Goodbye, Laura.”

“Bye, Sherlock. I’ll talk to you soon.”

The call ended and for a moment Sherlock just stared at his mobile. He was beginning to get looks from passersby and shopkeepers, so he finally sighed and got to his feet.
When he reached the flat he found John cleaning the dishes. He threw the clean ones into the cabinet with more force than necessary, indicating that he was pissed off. Harry was nowhere to be seen, and the light inside her room was off. Either she chose to just sleep it off or had stormed out as well. The air felt tense, and at first he was hesitant to say anything at all.

But then he had an idea.

He snuck up behind John, grabbed his shoulders, and spun him around. His boyfriend’s mouth fell open in shock, and Sherlock took the opportunity to kiss him hard. John fell back a bit against the counter and had to place his hands around Sherlock’s waist to steady himself. His own hands traveled up to John’s neck to caress him as they snogged.

They broke apart just as the kiss started to deepen. Lips swollen, cheeks flushed, Sherlock announced in a low voice:

“I love you, John Watson. I’m sorry I’ve been a complete arse this week, but believe me when I say it has nothing to do with you. I don’t give you enough credit. The people I’ve been with in the past have taken advantage of me, and worse, I let them. You, you’re just…you’re brilliant, and I don’t say it enough. I love you.”

He kissed John again, softly this time, but his boyfriend didn’t seem interested in taking the kiss any further. Instead he pulled away, placed a hand on Sherlock’s chest, and with a lopsided grin on his face said:

“You said people.” Sherlock froze. “Who else was there?”

Sherlock grabbed his hand and decided distracting him would be the only way out of this.

“Not important,” he lied. “Come on, bed.”

“It’s just six o’clock!”

Eyes sweeping around the room, Sherlock noticed Harry’s shoes that had taken up home by the kitchen door were gone.

“Yes, and your sister is gone,” Sherlock said. He leaned into John’s ear and murmured. “And I would like to thank you, properly, for your help with this case.”

John’s eyes lit up. His hand, suddenly sweaty, grasped Sherlock’s palm.

“Let’s go,” John agreed.

Sherlock grinned as he was dragged into the bedroom.

Chapter End Notes

The long-awaited, long-overdue smut is next! I was going to include it in this chapter, but it seemed a bit wrong when the first part focused on the conversation with Dan.

Also, that mysterious dinner party is coming up too...

Thanks for reading! Personally I'm a big romantic!Sherlock fan. How about you?
Sherlock pinned him against the door as soon as they stumbled into the room, but John didn’t let him take charge for too long. John had this planned, and he wasted no time shoving Sherlock back against the bed. They hadn’t done this in days, and his body was crawling with need.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock whispered, twisting his head to expose his neck as John’s kisses traveled southward.

“Stop apologising.”

He sucked Sherlock’s neck hard enough to make a tiny red mark. His hands ran down his lover’s chest, grasping at his shirt. God he needed this. John needed normalcy, he needed the physical release, and he needed Sherlock. Closing his eyes, he thought of their first time. Those days almost seemed simple and innocent compared to now.

Sherlock pulled off his shirt and gazed at John. His eyes were glazed over with arousal. His hair was a mess, and John ran his hand through it, pushing the bangs out of his eyes.

“John, please.” Sherlock’s soft cries echoed through the dark room.

“What do you want?”

His lover grunted when his hand landed on his clothed-cover cock. John rubbed him through his trousers and watched as a flush ran up his body.

“I…just…” Sherlock stammered. John knew there was an erotic request at the tip of the tongue, but he couldn’t get it out. He went for Sherlock’s zip and tugged out his cock. Throwing his head back against the pillows, Sherlock cried out a throaty: “John!”

Grinning, John wrapped his hands around the shaft and offered a few, teasing, rubs. His hands were still cold, and Sherlock shuddered at the feeling of the cold hands on his warm cock. He leaned forward to place kisses down his lover’s chest, concentrating mainly on his sensitive nipples. As his tongue lapped around one hardening point, then the other, Sherlock buried his hand in his hair to encourage him.

The closer he was to Sherlock’s body the more he realised how physically distant they had been that week. He kissed his way down Sherlock’s chest, to his hips, and then scooted down so he could start a new trail down each thigh. As he licked his way back up he squeezed his legs gently until he reached his cock again and took him in his mouth.

“John!” Sherlock gasped.

His lover closed his eyes, breathing in sharp, staccato breaths as he sucked him down, holding onto his thighs as he did. Somewhere in the back of his mind John noted that Sherlock had lost weight.
again, and he filed it under things to lecture him about later.

John moaned as he felt the cock hit the back of his throat, and Sherlock arched up in bed as he slowly let the shaft slide out of his mouth. His tongue dove further down this time, lashing out teasing licks to open him up some.

“Ah-ah,” Sherlock moaned in response as his arse shifted against the bed. He thrust gently against the intruding tongue, indicating that he was ready to more.

As he pulled away Sherlock reached over to the bedside table for the lube. A sloppy grin crossed John’s face as his partner took his hand, kissed the tips of his fingers, and helped him prepare.

“Ready?” John rasped, though he knew it was unnecessary.

Sherlock nodded anyway and closed his eyes. His body naturally tensed as John pushed the first finger in, but he slowly relaxed as he pulled the index finger in and out. A soft grunt escaped his love as he pushed the finger in all the way past the knuckle. He twisted the finger around, adding more pressure as Sherlock’s arse tightened around him.

“God,” Sherlock groaned, breathing heavily as John pulled out and pressed in two fingers this time. John could feel body was relaxing, but his eyes were glazed over with intense arousal and desperation. Sherlock needed this, needed him, and who was John to deprive him of that relief?

He was able to push in more this time, the rhythm of his fingers picking up.

“Yes!” Sherlock suddenly hissed when he hit his prostate.

“There?” John teased, poking at the spot again before pumping his fingers in and out in earnest.

With his free hand he grabbed Sherlock’s cock and rubbed his thumb over the head in unison with his fingering. When Sherlock’s arse was finally relaxed and opened he pulled out, earning a deep groan. He reached for more lube to prepare his own cock and shuddered at the touch of his hands on the sensitive shaft. Breathing hard, he lined himself up against Sherlock and leaned forward over him. John kissed his lips as he slid in, just a little at first before pulling out.

“John!” Sherlock gasped against his lips.

John kissed him again as he slid back in. He began pumping in light, teasing, motions as Sherlock simply lay back with a mixture of pleasure and tension in his face. Suddenly his lover grunted and twisted in the sheets; his fingers grasped at John’s hips hard enough to bruise but he didn’t mind.

“You okay?” John asked with a sly grin. “Not getting too old for this, are you?”

He waited for Sherlock’s retort, but instead his boyfriend stilled and stared at him, perplexed. John couldn’t help but to laugh as he continued to push into him and leaned down to brush his lips over his flushed cheeks.

“What?”

But he didn’t give Sherlock a chance to protest.

“Turn around,” John murmured.

Sliding out of him, John practically pushed Sherlock over onto all fours. His hand roamed his lover’s arse, leaving Sherlock shivering with need.
Then John had an idea.

He pulled his hand back just a bit and, without warning, brought it back down against Sherlock’s arse cheek. A small gasp of surprise resounded beneath him, but when he didn’t protest John spanked him again. John grabbed a handful of his arse before quickly pulling back and bringing his hand down again.

A tiny whisper filled the room. He grinned; he had a feeling what it was that Sherlock wanted to say, but he wanted to hear him say it.

“What was that?” John demanded, in a cool, collected voice that made Sherlock shudder.

“Harder,” Sherlock croaked.

He turned toward John just enough to let him see his reddening cheeks. With a low growl John obeyed, slapping each cheek this time. Sherlock pushed himself into the mattress, needing the friction, and John decided it was time to on with it. He buried a finger deep into Sherlock’s arse and twisted it, opening up just a bit more.

“Ugh!” Sherlock grunted in response. “John!”

It wasn’t a plea but a demand. John took the hint and lined himself up again. They both moaned as he pushed deep inside of him. Placing either hand next to Sherlock’s, John began rocking gently first before quickly resuming his pace of pounding him into the mattress.

“John. John.” Sherlock chanted, rubbing his cock against the sheets.

John reached beneath Sherlock, fumbling around for his cock until his hand wrapped around the shaft and began massaging up and down. Sherlock groaned loud enough for the low cry to echo through the bedroom, and that was enough to send John over the edge. He pulled out and came with a grunt just as Sherlock grabbed his own cock and took over the hand job. Spurts of cum dribbled over both their hands as he joined him in orgasm, and for a moment they just rested there, catching their breath.

When John finally rolled over Sherlock onto his side of the bed he was grinning like an idiot, and he was surprised to see that his bedmate was too. John drew in a deep sigh and barked with laughter as he let it out; Sherlock had thrown him the most ridiculous, amused, look.

“Who’s old now?” Sherlock shot. “What was that about, anyway?”

“You know to be a genius you’re really daft sometimes,” John teased. Sherlock just stared at him, and he sighed. “You’ve really forgotten, haven’t you?”

He reached over for his mobile and showed Sherlock the desktop, which displayed the date.

“First hint,” John offered.

Sherlock blinked.

“I see a mobile that you now need to clean because your hand was just up my arse.”

With a snort John opened his calendar, clicked on tomorrow’s date, which pulled up a picture of Sherlock from last Christmas. He was wearing a horrendous red jumper with a reindeer on it Mrs Hudson knitted him and was dangling a piece of mistletoe over his head.
“I see an embarrassing picture of me from Christmas that I know I deleted,” Sherlock complained. He tried to snatch the mobile away from John, but he pulled his hand back just in time.

“I have my ways,” John giggled. He moved the picture down so he could show Sherlock the entry underneath. The look in his boyfriend’s eyes as he read it was absolutely priceless. He looked like a child who just realised Christmas was coming up, all while at the same time he seemed…sad.

John glanced down at the caption and felt a bit guilty for ‘breaking the news’ to him this way. They stayed silent as they read the two words over and over again together:

*Sherlock’s birthday.*

Finally Sherlock tugged the phone out of his hands, and John let him.

Of course the first thing Sherlock did was delete the Christmas picture.

“Hey!” John exclaimed. “I like that picture!”

The next thing Sherlock did was drop the phone on the bed and threw himself on his side, away from John. A knot formed in his chest as he realised the significance of the day might mean a little more to Sherlock than he thought- or perhaps the significance of *forgetting* the day meant more than he thought.

“You okay?” John asked quietly, placing a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder. He leaned over to find Sherlock gazing into darkness, looking lost in another world. His cheeks were pale again and his skin caked in a cool sweaty. John ran a hand up and down his bare arms to comfort him, but Sherlock didn’t flinch.

“My mum loved birthdays,” he admitted quietly. “As you can imagine, Mycroft and I didn’t have much friends so she would always cook a big dinner and let us watch films.”

“Films?” John teased.

Sherlock threw his head back toward him, just a little as he shot:

“I *was* a child once.” John didn’t argue with that. Quietly, Sherlock turned away and tucked his hands under his face, looking very child-like even as an almost 36 year old man. “Birthdays haven’t meant anything to me since.”

Oh.

Now that he thought about it, Sherlock’s birthday hadn’t been too big of a deal last year. In fact, he had put the reminder in his mobile just so it wouldn’t slip his mind since Sherlock never brought it up. He recalled simply going out for a single drink, and the entire time Sherlock was preoccupied with a case.

Now that he thought about it, he was probably only pretending to be concerned about the case.

“I don’t want a birthday dinner, if that’s what Mycroft has planned,” Sherlock announced quietly. John lowered himself into the bed and draped an arm over Sherlock’s body to hold him close. His lover didn’t seem to mind, and John buried his face in his hair as he held him.

“Greg promised me you would enjoy yourself,” John said, “the worst that can happen is that we eat some good food.”
His lover simply closed his eyes, as though he already knew there would be much worse things at that party than that.

“Your brother wants you over for your birthday,” John murmured against his neck. “Things have really improved between you two. Maybe you should just…enjoy it.”

But Sherlock didn’t answer. He was pretending to be asleep and John sighed, knowing that was his signal to leave it be. Closing his eyes, he lay tucked against Sherlock’s body and finally fell asleep as the clock struck only seven.

Chapter End Notes

Like John will let him be miserable on his birthday! Family dinner next chapter, a special guest, and is Harry keeping a secret?

Speaking of anniversaries, this month marks the one year anniversary of this fic!!! YAY! I absolutely love writing this fic, it's so much fun, and I'm so pleased that even after a year and 121 chapters people still enjoy it! Thanks so much to everyone who has shown their love and encouragement along the way!

Thanks for reading! I'd love to know what you thought about the new chapter!
In Which Lestrade Is Actually French. Sorta.

Chapter Notes

I am SO sorry for the delay! I feel horrible, especially after all the really nice comments about last chapter. I've been really sick, like not even able to write fanfic sick. This chapter is supposed to be MUCH longer, but the second part is going to take more time to finish so I decided to break it into two. I think it will be worth it thought because there's a twist here I think you will really love!

I got a request awhile back for another family dinner...here you go! Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“And then, Mycroft actually went to the interview thinking he had an advantage because of his red hair!”

Although Sherlock had been dead set against enjoying his birthday dinner, one thing he would always enjoy was tormenting his brother. When he realised he had never told everyone the story of the Red-Headed League he just couldn’t help himself. Lestrade’s face was red with laughter, and even Harry had giggled once or twice. Mycroft, on the other hand, was practically sinking in his seat with embarrassment.

“In my defense, I did get the job,” Mycroft muttered.

“Yes!” Sherlock exclaimed. “And he spent his entire summer as a sixteen year old copying the Encyclopedia Britannica.”

Mycroft scowled at him as he snatched the last of the bread.

“At least you must have learned a lot that summer, love,” Greg teased.

He leaned over and stole a kiss to Mycroft’s cheek. Sherlock wasn’t sure he had ever seen his brother’s face so red, and he himself hadn’t smiled so much in days.

“Only if the subjects began with ‘A’,” Sherlock grinned. “One day he showed up to work and the place was closed up.”

“Did you actually earn any money?” John asked.

With a sigh, Mycroft replied:

“It was a decent salary for a sixteen year old.”

Sherlock snorted, knowing that was a lie.

“So what was the scam?” Lestrade asked.

His brother finally stopped eating and looked them each in the eye before returning to Sherlock.

“I originally had a job at a small business that summer doing some light office work. The owner
took a few weeks off on holiday while business was slow. It was during that time that I saw the ad about the League. A customer mentioned I would be an excellent candidate- my hair was much more of a **flaming** red back then. The money was too good to pass up so I phoned the shopkeeper, quit my job, and decided to take the risk. The ad had a very specific time period for when interviews would take place and when the job would start, and I couldn’t waste any time. Quitting that job like is still one of the most shameful things I’ve ever done.”

*Says the man who can stop and start wars,* Sherlock thought.

“And it was the last risk of the sort Mycroft would ever take,” Sherlock concluded. “He hid in his room for the rest of the summer.”

John let out a bark of laughter next to him as he reached for the bowl of peas.

“What did your mum say?” He asked.

“Better yet, what was the deal with the League anyway?”

Folding his hands under his chin, Mycroft looked down at his empty plate and confessed:

“As it turns out, the customer who suggested the job to me was in on it. The job was all a scam built especially for me. Apparently the shop was built on a lot that used to be owned by a bank. Legend had it there was still money buried underneath the building. The owner told one of his mate’s about it and his friend took the legend seriously. He suggested the owner take a much-needed holiday during the slow season and practically tore the place apart while he was away and while I was distracted with the Red-Headed League.”

Lestrade finally burst out laughing and offered Mycroft a sympathetic pat on the back.

“You’ve come a long way since then,” Lestrade said, “and I will rest easy knowing those robbers are probably locked in a white room somewhere for the rest of their lives.”

His brother’s lips turned up in a small smile.

“I can neither confirm nor deny that,” Mycroft replied smugly.

“Was there actually money under the shop?” Harry asked.

Mycroft looked up to Sherlock and winked.

“I can neither confirm nor deny that either,” he replied.

Smirking, Sherlock turned back to his half-eaten plate. Even he could admit that Mycroft was a good cook, but being in the same room as Lestrade ruined his appetite. He had spoken to everyone but Lestrade about making amends. He had even spoke to his dead mother, but he still couldn’t bring himself to talk to the man who had done nothing but give him second chances for the past few years.

“Oh, Sherlock,” Lestrade spoke up, “we have something for you.”

“Right,” Mycroft said, getting to his feet. He walked over to an old chest sitting in and took an envelope out of the top drawer. For a split second Sherlock actually thought it was an envelope full of money, but what was actually in there was even more surprising than a cheque.

“What are those?” John asked, snatching the tickets out of his hands.
“You’re like a child,” Sherlock murmured.

But John just frowned as he stared at the two pairs of tickets.

“I can’t read any of this,” John admitted. He handed it back to Sherlock.

“Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Paris,” Sherlock read. His boyfriend just blinked, mouth agape, and Sherlock explained: “They’re symphony tickets.”

He could tell John was slightly disappointed, after all Sherlock did tend to act as his own private symphony most nights.

“de Paris, John,” Sherlock said.

A grin slipped from John’s lips as he realised the meaning.

“You’re sending us to Paris?” John exclaimed.

“What?!” Harry complained. “I go to rehab and you get to go to Paris?”

“Get sober and maybe I’ll take you,” John shot. He turned back to Mycroft, looking like a kid at Christmas. “You’re sending us all the way to Paris for a symphony?”

Sherlock snatched the tickets away from him and frowned. It wasn’t too extreme for Mycroft to suddenly pick up and fly to another country, he had just never offered that privilege to Sherlock before. It did seem a bit…much. And for a university symphony too?

Suddenly he grinned.

“It’s for a case, isn’t it?” He asked.

Mycroft nodded, and John’s face fell.

“There’s always a catch,” he sighed. He turned to Harry. “Still want to go?”

“Let’s see, go out of the country to listen to hours of boring music while Sherlock runs around showing off?” She asked. “I’ll pass.”

He hadn’t noticed that Lestrade was watching him with interest the entire time, like he was waiting for Sherlock to say something to him.

“A case in Paris,” John mused. “I can see it now…” The Eiffel Tower Mystery.”

“You are not calling it that,” Sherlock teased. “They’re sending us to Paris, John. This case has to be good. What is it, Lestrade? A murder? Serial killer? Blackmail?”

The DCI swallowed nervously and folded his hands; that was usually a sign that the case would fail to meet his expectations.

“The director of the orchestra has recently reported some of his sheet music has been stolen,” Lestrade admitted.

Even Harry didn’t look impressed.

“And they’re consulting Scotland Yard?” Sherlock shot. He couldn’t hold it back-he burst out laughing, and John joined him.
“Actually, the director is a good friend of mine and a fan of yours,” Lestrade confessed. “He just joined the university last term, so the stakes are understandably high. The theft comes just before holding auditions for first violin for next season’s orchestra.”

This case was slowly sounding like less and less of a good idea. He was not going to travel all the way to France just to tell some poor sod he left the music in his bedside table.

“No offense Lestrade, but any mate of yours is not-”

“The director is Jean-Marc Charbonneau,” Lestrade explained.

Sherlock froze.

Yes, Christmas had most definitely come early.

“Sherlock…you okay?” John asked. “Does that name mean something to you?”

“You know that Stefan Steilberg person you’re always going on about?”

“You mean Steven Spielberg?”

“Well Charbonneau is like the French violinist version of him,” Sherlock explained. “He’s a brilliant composer, musician, and has conducted his fair share of world-renowned orchestras. Why the hell is he wasting time at the university level?”

Rolling his eyes, Mycroft remarked:

“How dare we focus on education.”

“He’s not just auditioning for the university orchestra,” Lestrade went on, “he wants one of the students to study underneath him and eventually audition when he takes over one of the national orchestras next year. Clearly stakes are very high. Anyone who is caught sabotaging those auditions may face expulsion. So far he’s gotten nowhere with basic investigation and he called in a favour from me. Besides, I kind of owe him one.”

“You owe Jean-Marc Charbonneau a favour?” Sherlock challenged. It would be like Alexander Fleming raising from the dead and asking John’s advice on penicillin.

“Yes, well, as he pointed out there was that one summer he convinced my dad to let me live with him in Paris so I could ‘study abroad’.” Mycroft chuckled as Lestrade used air quotes for the last words. He wasn’t surprised he would pass up a perfectly good opportunity to study in Paris for partying. Nevertheless, Sherlock’s eyes nearly bulged out of his head, and Lestrade explained: “When I say mate, Marc’s really my second cousin.”

“Marc? You’re related?”

"Yes, I'm half-French, remember!” Lestrade cried. Mycroft rolled his eyes. "Well...sorta. On my dad's side."

“Okay, we get it,” John said, waiving him away, “basically you’re paying us to go on holiday in Paris?”

Crossing his arms, Mycroft pointed out:

“I never said I was paying you!” He and John threw him unimpressed looks. “Fine. You can stay in my flat.”
“Why in god’s name do you have a flat in Paris?” Sherlock demanded. “Is there anything else new anyone would like to tell me?”

“Yes, Laura is considering going blonde,” Mycroft announced. Sherlock’s eyes widened in horror, but instead of reassurance his brother only pressed his lips together firmly and offered: “I’m sure it’s only a phase.”

“Are you taking the case or not?” Lestrade asked.

Sherlock snatched the tickets back up from the table and replied hotly:

“Yes, Laura is considering going blonde,” Mycroft announced. Sherlock’s eyes widened in horror, but instead of reassurance his brother only pressed his lips together firmly and offered: “I’m sure it’s only a phase.”

“Are you taking the case or not?” Lestrade asked.

Sherlock snatched the tickets back up from the table and replied hotly:

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Sherlock snatched the tickets back up from the table and replied hotly:

When do we leave?”

Chapter End Notes

Our boys in Paris...what do you think?

(PS: Picked a random French university and made up the musician. Hopefully I'm not embarrassing myself *too* much here!)

Thanks for reading!! I'm excited about this next adventure...though there are still a few things that need resolving before they go.

Thanks, DeathFrisbee221 for the beta and feedback!!
In the Rain

Chapter Notes

Thanks to deathfrisbee221 for the beta, feedback, and suggestions!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

An hour later Sherlock sat in the silence of the garden as a steady rain fell around him. His dinner had been- surprisingly- not that bad. Mycroft and Lestrade even made him a cake; he couldn’t remember the last time he had a birthday cake. But it still didn’t feel like his birthday. He didn’t feel like he had anything to celebrate. He’d made amends but he still felt like something was holding him back…

Suddenly the rain stopped falling on him but continued to fall around him.

“We literally have a wardrobe full of umbrellas by the door and you couldn’t grab one?”

Sherlock’s eyes snapped to Lestrade, who stood over him holding one of Mycroft’s umbrellas. He didn’t wait for Sherlock’s permission before sitting down on the bench beside him and joined him in staring off into space.

“Thanks for coming over, I know birthdays aren’t really your thing,” Lestrade said. He made to place a hand on Sherlock’s knee and stopped halfway, saying instead: “Happy Birthday, Sherlock. I hope you and John have a good time in France. You really deserve it.”

He thought about standing in this same place and apologising to his brother. Now might be his last chance to say the same to Lestrade before catching the plane that weekend, and he knew he wouldn’t be able to focus on the case otherwise.

You owe it to Lestrade. Confess.

John’s voice popped into his head in reply:

Think of the consequences!

Closing his eyes, Sherlock tried to block out the thoughts but they just kept bouncing back and forth. It had been like this for too long, for too many sleepless nights and to the point where he couldn’t concentrate on anything anymore.

I have to do it.

I have to.

“I killed Kirchhoff.”

He wasn’t sure whose eyes went wide, his or Lestrade’s.

And then the unexpected happened…the unthinkable.

Lestrade laughed.
A smile broke across the DCI’s face as his laughter echoed against the pattering rain.

“Why are you-” Sherlock spat.

“Don’t you think I know that already?” Lestrade said, bringing his hand to his mouth to stifle his laugh. “Jesus Sherlock, the look on your face. I’m bloody DCI remember? I can deduce some things. For starters, anytime my case becomes Mycroft’s I get suspicious. But the way you two acted afterward…the way you’ve acted since. You two were both traumatised, Sherlock. Obviously something happened.”

“You two?” Sherlock repeated.

Lestrade finally calmed down as he ran a hand over his face; caught.

“Yeah he kind of went off the rails for a while too,” Lestrade admitted, “and I don’t think he’s slept through the night since.”

Personally he didn’t think Mycroft had gotten a full night’s sleep since he started working for the government, but he had a feeling Lestrade probably knew that too.

“Why didn’t you ever say anything?” Sherlock asked.

“For the same reason I never said anything about John and the cabbie!”

“You know about that too?!”

“You’re a good man, Sherlock,” Lestrade said, slapping him on the back. “I’ve been saying that for a long time now and I truly believe it.”

“I killed someone,” Sherlock mumbled. “I never thought I was capable of… I mean, I went in that warehouse knowing I might… knowing I wanted him dead, but I never thought…”

He closed his eyes as his voice broke.

For a long moment Lestrade remained silent, and Sherlock was afraid that his friend was finally disgusted with him.

“Human beings are capable of extraordinary things,” Lestrade began. “The kinds of people you and I put away are just… wired differently. They’re mad, they’re mental… there’s just no explaining it. I think you’re genuinely a good person, Sherlock. Witnessing the things these people do… seeing it first hand and having them do it to the people we love, to us…”

“Stop,” Sherlock announced hoarsely. Lestrade looked up at him, startled to hear him interrupt. “Please don’t justify it. I took another life. I…”

Suddenly his eyes started burning, and he thought the wetness in them was from the rain but he quickly wiped his arm across his face at the horrific realisation that he was crying.

But Lestrade didn’t ask for any explanations. Instead he put an arm around him and, for possibly the first time ever, embraced him. Sherlock breathed in deeply and pulled away, too embarrassed to let the hug last any longer.

“Jesus, sorry, I haven’t done that since you were throwing up all over my bathroom floor,” Lestrade laughed.

“I don’t remember,” Sherlock admitted.
“Well you wouldn’t, you were high as a kite.”

“Yeah.”

Lestrade’s hand fell on his shoulder, offering him a comforting squeeze.

“Thanks for coming clean, but seriously Sherlock, I share a bed with your brother,” Lestrade pointed out.

“God, don’t remind me,” he shook his head, blocking out the thought. He breathed in deeply, knowing there was something else left that he had to say. If he could say it to Mycroft, he could say it to Lestrade. “Look, Lestrade…I’m sorry.”

For a long moment the only sound was the pattering of rain against the umbrella. He swallowed nervously as he watched Lestrade just stare at him. Reaching up, Lestrade scratched his face, opened his mouth, closed it, and repeated the same steps.

“What do you have to be sorry about?” Lestrade demanded.

It was Sherlock’s turn to be speechless. While he was use to Lestrade acting like he had a brain the size of a pea, this was the last reaction he expected to an apologising.

“What don’t I have to be sorry about?” Sherlock asked, jumping up and letting the rain fall around him. “I nearly botched a major murder investigation because of a cocaine overdose. I wrecked your flat during withdrawal. I’ve yelled at you, I’ve embarrassed you- in front of your entire team, in front of the bloody press. I’ve been awful to you over the years, and you’ve done nothing but give me second chances and opportunities and…why are you laughing again?!”

Lestrade was doubled over now, and Sherlock was fighting the urge to knock him to the ground.

“John put you up to this, didn’t he?” Lestrade asked.

“I…what?”

“Sherlock, you don’t owe me anything!” His friend exclaimed. “Jesus Christ, you’ve solved what…a few dozen cases for me, free of charge? And yeah, you’ve made me look like a fool in front of the press more than once, but the media never even paid attention to me before you came along. Quite frankly, you made my career, Sherlock. Through you I met the love of my life-”

Sherlock cringed.

“-you may have put me through some complete, utter, shit, but you’ve helped me put away some of the most dangerous people in the city. As for the withdrawal…I’m just thankful that I was there. I’m glad you let me help you.”

Getting to his feet, Lestrade stared down on him with sympathy. It was horrible. No one was supposed to feel sympathetic toward him. He was hoping to feel something akin to the relief he found after talking to Mycroft, but now he just felt sick.

“You’re not getting my point,” he mumbled.

“The things we see, the things we deal with everyday are things the average person would never be able to comprehend. But deep down, we’re both human, and I think the human inside of you is starting to come out. You snapped. You confronted someone who murdered someone you loved, and you snapped. I think you’re finally realising that you didn’t deserve go through all of that. You
just snapped…”

“I can’t just snap like that!” Sherlock said. “What if it happens again? What if it happens during a case?”

Lestrade frowned.

“Then your brother will make sure you escape the country safely,” he pointed out. “You’re a good person, Sherlock. You’re protective, you’re caring, you’re…in love. Embrace it, and enjoy France.”

With a half-smile, Lestrade turned and disappeared back inside the house. Sherlock considered following him, but he was frozen to the bench.

That was it, then.

He had talked to everyone. He made amends with his brother, finally visited his mother’s grave, and reconnected with John. Lestrade even thanked him.

So why did he still feel like shit?

“Lestrade told me you were out here.” He looked up and was surprised to find John in the DCI’s place with a different umbrella over his head.

“Are you guys taking turns or something?” Sherlock shot.

Smirking, John replied:

“Yeah, and if you don’t come around soon Harry’s going to come out here to talk to you too. Scoot.”

Sherlock moved over and watched as his lover took a seat beside him. Throwing the umbrella over his shoulder, John leaned over to cup his face with his free hand and kiss him on his lips. He couldn’t help but to smile a bit through the kiss and grab John by the shoulders. As lost as he had been feeling, somehow this always felt right.

“Come on,” Sherlock said, grabbing John’s hand.

“Sherlock,” John whined as he pulled him into the woods behind the house.

But his boyfriend was smiling all the same. He waited until they the house was no longer in eyesight before he suddenly spun around, pinning John against the nearest tree. The umbrella slipped out of his lover’s hand as he trapped him into a fierce kiss. He wrapped his arms around John’s back, pulling him closer.

“Sherlock,” John whispered against the rain as the momentarily broke apart.

His tongue dove down John’s throat and tight hands grasped his forearms in response. Eyes closed, he concentrated only on the taste of John’s mouth, which still tasted faintly of icing. Rain quickly soaked them to the bone as he deepened the kiss. John trembled under his touch and moaned as they broke for air. He laughed, and when John echoed him; Sherlock buried his head in his shoulder. He hummed as strong hands stroke his back and lips teased at the sensitive skin of his wet neck.

“We can’t do this here,” John warned.
“Why not?” Sherlock challenged, speaking into his jacket.

“Because…” John murmured, “because…”

Sherlock’s hands slipped down to his arse, grasping him there-

“Bastard,” his lover teased. “What were you and Lestrade talking about anyway?”

“He knows,” Sherlock confessed.

John froze, horrified.

“It’s fine,” Sherlock promised, “he already knew I killed Kirchhoff.”

With a sigh, John settled back against the tree and dropped his hands.

“What did he say?” John asked.

With a shrug, Sherlock said:

“He acted like it wasn’t a big deal. It was…weird. Oh, and he knows you killed the cabbie, too.”

John’s eyes lit up with alarm.

“What?!” He exclaimed. “How could you tell him that?”

“I didn’t tell him, he just knew!” Sherlock said. “Think about it, Lestrade and my brother, together as a couple. They’ve probably figured out everything by now.”

“We should have seen this coming,” John sighed. “I hate to say it, but they’re kind of perfect for each other.”

He didn’t want to admit it, but he agreed with John.

“Yes,” he mumbled, “and between the two of them they can track my every move. They’re probably in there gossiping about us right now.”

“In our defence, we’re out here gossiping about them.”

Sherlock grinned.

“Lestrade’s still Lestrade, though,” he said. His face fell. “I tried to apologise, like with Mycroft, and it was like he wouldn’t even hear of it. He just told me my human side must be coming out.”

His face contorted into disgust, and John gripping his forearms. The rain was beginning to lighten up, leaving them shivering from being wet.

“Well, yeah. You just dragged me into the woods in the rain and pinned me to a tree.” Without wasting any time they kissed again until they were breathless once more and John finally pulled away with a soft groan. Their foreheads rested together once again as they breathed easy for a moment. “I think this is the most privacy we’ve had in a week. Last night was amazing, though.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock nodded. “Sorry things have been so…off.”

Their foreheads fell together, and John’s breath was hot against his face. His eyes searched Sherlock’s as his fingers gently stroke his cheek. Slowly they both leaned in, letting their lips dance
together once again.

“It’s fine,” John said between kisses. “It’s all fine.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading and for the lovely comments! I think they were due for kisses in the rain, don't you?
Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay, this chapter was quite hard to write.

Thanks DeathFrisbee221, for being an amazing beta and for all your very helpful advice and suggestions!

Warnings for alcoholism and addiction.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When John awoke the day after Sherlock’s birthday he felt…absolutely perfect. With a small groan, he rolled over to his boyfriend’s side of the bed and wrapped his arms around what he expected to be Sherlock’s scrawny body but instead only found a pillow. Feeling completely relaxed, John opened his eyes to find…

Mycroft Holmes.

He groaned louder this time as he rubbed his eyes and rolled back over.

“Disappointed?” Mycroft smirked.

“Wrong Holmes brother,” he mumbled.

“Sherlock went to help Gregory on a case,” the elder Holmes explained. He glanced down at his mobile. “I estimate it will take him exactly an hour and a half to solve the case so that gives us plenty of time to talk.”

John sat up in bed, carefully, minding the fact that he was naked.

“Talk?” He asked. “About what?”

Mycroft crossed his arms; that was never a good sign.

“I want to talk to you about your sister,” Mycroft announced. John froze, so stunned he couldn’t say anything. “John, I didn’t want to be the one to tell you this, but I caught you sister pouring vodka into her coke yesterday. She had a miniature bottle and stuffed it back into her purse instead of throwing it away. She probably disposes of them in public bins or places you cannot find them.”

His heart leapt to his throat, and he wrapped his arms around his abdomen. How could he have been so stupid? Why didn’t he keep a closer eye on her? How could she have been buying alcohol right under his nose…and sneaking it into his flat?!

“How-?” Was all he managed.

To make matters worse, Mycroft’s face melted with sympathy. Mycroft felt bad for him. Mycroft, who saw Sherlock through his drug addiction, who delegated wars and fixed elections felt bad for him. He had failed as a brother. His family was in shambles, and everything he did to fix it only made things worse.
“She lied to me,” he finally whispered.

What about her health? He thought. He could see that she was obviously depressed, but he thought that, with the insomnia, were just side effects of withdrawal. What if he had been missing important symptoms?

How can I call myself a doctor when I can’t even keep track of my own bloody sister?

“Come, John,” Mycroft offered. “I’ll make tea.”

As he sat in the kitchen, wearing his dressing gown and nursing his tea the only thought he managed to get through in his head was…

“Funny, this. You cooking for me twice in a row…”

Yes, he had completely lost it.

Mycroft only raised his eyebrows as he watched John stare at the plate of eggs sitting untouched in front of him. He must have looked in quite a sorry state for himself, for Sherlock’s brother to offer to cook breakfast for him.

“It must be nice,” John said eventually, “having a brother who listens to you, who talks to you, who appreciates the things you do.”

Frowning, Mycroft’s face contorted into confusion as he responded:

“John, you and I know very well none those things are true. Sherlock and I might have managed to patch things up over the past few months, but I suffered with him just as long as you have suffered with Harriet.” He paused, as though realising being on the defensive would achieve nothing.

“I tried to help her,” John stammered. He sat perfectly straight staring at the kitchen table, his eyes not really focusing on any particular spot. “I took her into my home. I helped her through detox. I never told our parents about her sneaking out at night or how she cheated at maths or why she really got fired from her job! I didn’t tell them about how I picked her up from jail when I was twenty or that she was the one that wrecked their car or-”

“John,” Mycroft interrupted, carefully placing a hand on his forearm. John jumped at the touched and glared at him, making the elder Holmes quickly back away. “I think we’re getting off track here, don’t you?”

With a sigh, John admitted:

“Everything has led to this moment. I’m an utter fool, Mycroft. An utter fool.”

“Yes, I think I’ve got the message the first five times you said that.”

“A complete and utter fool,” John mumbled.

He finally took a sip of his mug and winced, realising the tea had gone cool.

“I thought I could ‘fix’ her,” he admitted, “I didn’t want to think that she is as bad as she is. I mean, I know how much she drinks and all, but I thought maybe if she lived with me I could control her. Instead I’ve been afraid to speak up against her, I’ve been afraid of making her angry and her away. Harry is just like this fragile piece of glass…if one tiny part of her life falls out of place she
shatters. She’s always been dramatic like that. Mum and Dad just thought she was being difficult, but I could tell it was something deeper. It was ages before she decided to come out, and when she did it was only to me at first. I was pretty shocked, but I accepted her and started to meet some of her girlfriends. I think some of the people she ran with were just bad influence. She started drinking and didn’t know when to stop...how can she not know when to stop? How can she not tell she’s ruining her own body? We used to be pretty decent mates growing up, but now I just feel...I feel bloody used, that’s what I feel!!"

Mycroft’s eyes turned dark as he stood up and grabbed John’s tea to replenish it. He looked a bit lost, like he was really five years in the past, and John couldn’t help but to draw similarities between himself and Sherlock’s older brother. Both of them had siblings they had to help through addiction. Both of them had looked after their siblings without any real parental guidance. Yes, if anyone could help him it was Mycroft.

*God how could I sink this low?*

“I only got to have Sherlock living with me after he was sixteen and then during summers at Uni,” Mycroft confessed, “and one of those summers he chose to stay with a...friend instead.”

Mycroft spat out the word like he was uncomfortable saying it. Seeing Mycroft become flustered was like hearing the Pope get tongue-tied. This was the first time John had ever heard of a school mate besides Luke and Sebastian Wilkes. Because it couldn’t be Luke, right? Mycroft would just come out and say it. So was there someone else then? Sherlock had hinted at another partner, but when he first started talking about Luke he made it obvious he was his first ‘in every meaning’.

What was the deal, then?

“During the times he did live with me we spent most of our days fighting, screaming, and breaking things,” Mycroft went on, “I absolutely despised having him around, but I knew if I let him go out on his own something traumatic would happen. I was determined that if I kept Sherlock under my roof for as long as possible I could control everything he did and everyone he met, but eventually I began to fear he was doing drugs just to spite me. I had hoped that even Sherlock wouldn’t fall that far, but he was in reality I was making excuses for him. My baby brother had an addiction, and a dangerous one at that. I read all the books, spoke with all the proper councelors, and even tried to get Sherlock to come along to a therapy session or two.”

He remembered his own therapy session with Harry and snorted.

“I’m sure that went down well.”

“If only I had known about Dr Agar back then,” Mycroft sighed. “When Sherlock overdosed for the first time I told myself it was because I hadn’t done enough. I should have made him drop out of Uni so he could be at home where I could watch him. I shouldn’t have let him go out so much. I shouldn’t have offered him so much money. But at the end of the day, it was an addiction. Sherlock was going to get the drugs regardless of whether I approved of it or knew about it. Addicts are clever, John. They knew how to work your heart and mind. When it’s family it’s even worse- they know the proper things to say to fool you, and they know you will never truly abandon them. And really, you are their safety net: at the end of the day they might claim to not want your help, they might do whatever they can to push you away, but they know they can always go to you. They become experts at hiding. But Harry loves you, John. I truly believe she is trying to get sober, but she’s struggling more than she wants to admit. She doesn’t want you to see that she’s failing.”

It took a full moment of silence before John realised a tear was trickling from his eye. He was aware Mycroft was watching him with interest as he began to break down, but he didn’t care. If what Mycroft said was true he didn’t know if he hated Harry or felt sorry for her for it. There was
one thing he did know, and it was that he could have tried harder.

“I’m a doctor,” he said, breathing in deeply as his hands turned to fist and his body tensed as he fought the tears threatening to keep falling. “It was different with you, you were just a kid yourself, but I’m an adult, and I’m a doctor. What kind of bloody doctor am I, hm? If I can’t even take care of my own bloody sister...if I can’t even see how much she is struggling. I used to be able to spot an addict as soon as they walked into my office but Harry...she played me. She played me like a bloody fiddle and god...I don’t even know where she is right now! I literally don’t even know where I can find her so that I can fucking throttle her and scream...”

“John,” Mycroft warned. “My point is that we’re too close to these cases. Just as Gregory would never let a relative investigate their own sibling’s murder, a doctor never wants a relative treating their sibling. We can love them and be there for them as much as we can, but at the end of the day they’re not going to take our word as God. I learned that with Sherlock time and time again and almost lost him for it.”

It was strange to hear Mycroft speak so openly, and even stranger to admit that he had been wrong about something. Around Sherlock, Mycroft always acted like he knew best no matter if they were talking about the past or present. It was comforting to know that secretly, Mycroft knew there were points in time when he was wrong. There was a time when Mycroft Holmes didn’t rule the world, when he couldn’t even have rule over his own brother, and even he had been forced to seek help.

But that was then.

*This* Mycroft Holmes had kidnapped him off the street just to say hello and bribe him to spy on Sherlock.

“I know you don’t believe that now,” John said. “You have him followed with cameras, keep an eye on his finances, hell, you’ve had his friends kidnapped off the streets so you can interrogate them!”

Mycroft smirked.

“Yes, and if I had the power I have now when I was twenty-nine years old Sherlock would have been in rehab within a week of his first hit,” he remarked. “But if I had been at that rehab centre screaming at him to get clean he would have never done it. I must admit it is quite convenient to be able to control the world from my mobile, but in all honesty if- god forbid- Sherlock was suffering from addiction again all that power would scare him away. People like you and I have to learn to let go. Once Sherlock met Gregory and was accepted under his roof the change was extraordinary. Yes, he had a few setbacks, but I truly believe without Gregory’s help he might still be stuck out there on the streets. You’ve done all you can, John, which is why I would like to help.”

John looked up at him, both surprised and relieved. In the beginning he had been reluctant to accept Mycroft’s help, but now he was willing to do anything in order to have someone guide him and Harry through this.

“I can get her into one of the best privately-run centres in England by the end of the day, tomorrow,” Mycroft announced. “It is ran by the same people who developed the drug programme Sherlock was in. I know you’ve been reluctant to ask for help in the past but-”

“Yes! Yes, oh my god, yes!” John exclaimed, jumping to his feet. He was one step away from kneeling down and kissing his feet. Swallowing nervously, he tried to pull himself together as he watched Mycroft’s bemused reaction to his outburst. He knew exactly which centre Mycroft was talking about, and getting in- especially on short notice- was extremely difficult. To know his sister
could get that kind of care was unbelievable. “You’re right, I’m not really one to ask for help like this, but this is Harry. I love her, Mycroft, and I know she can do this. If you can help me, I will owe you for life.”

He regretted saying that as soon as the words left his mouth, but he knew it was worth it.

“You will owe me nothing,” Mycroft replied.

John would have thrown his arms around the man if he didn’t think it would send Mycroft into shock.

“I thought I could do this,” John sighed as he sat back down.

“As did I, with Sherlock,” Mycroft confessed. “But, I suppose, as brothers we have to know when to step back and let other people take control.”

“Again, kind of hard to take that advice from Mycroft Holmes.”

The comment earned him another smirk, and Mycroft replied:

“I let him be in a relationship with you, didn’t I?”

“Let?” John teased, but he quickly remembered what happened between Mycroft and Luke and shut up. Instead he held out a hand, and the elder Holmes took it. “Thank you, really. Can you tell me more about the centre?”

“If you’d like I can arrange a tour and interview today, before she is admitted tomorrow.”

“Yeah, that would be-”

“Tomorrow?”

The room fell silent at Harry’s sudden interruption. John froze in place, unable to bring himself to turn and face his sister. He never liked working behind people’s backs, and he hadn’t even realised that’s what he was doing until just now.

“John, what’s going on?” Harry demanded as she stepped in front of him so they stood face to face.

It was the closest he had stood to her in days, and at this distance he could easily smell the liquor on her breath. How could he have been so naïve? He expected Mycroft to offer to see himself out but was secretly relieved when he stayed put. He wasn’t so sure he could do this alone, and if Sherlock couldn’t be here, Mycroft would have to do.

“Harry, I know you’ve been drinking again,” he admitted quietly.

He expected a lot of things to follow that statement—screaming, crying, hitting. What he didn’t expect was laughing. Harry’s face turned red as she first snorted and then broke into a fit of laughter.

“No you don’t,” Harry spat. He just stared at her until the giggling finally subsided. “John, you’ve been around me every day for nearly the past two weeks. You don’t think I’m drinking.”

“I don’t?” He repeated, crossing his arms. “Enlighten me, Harry, because Mycroft saw you pouring vodka into your Coke last night.”

Harry pointed at Mycroft, her face lit up with amusement. He was pretty sure she was the only
person he’d ever seen not be threatened by Mycroft’s spying.

Besides Sherlock, of course.

“He saw me?” She said. “And you believe him? John, the man’s…crazy. No offence, Mycroft. Whatever this job is of his clearly involves spying and conspiracy theories. He probably thinks he sees stuff all the time! But he did not see me drink yesterday. I’m sober, remember? Why would I bother living with you and signing up for rehab if I was just going to drink anyway? That would be a bloody waste of time and expense, wouldn’t it? I’m clean, John. I’m clean, and quite frankly happier than I’ve been in weeks. I’ll gladly do the rehab programme I’m on the list for because god knows I’ve got some stuff to sort through, but there’s no reason to rush that. There are people who have actually got problems, you know? I’m fine. I really, truly am.”

His hands formed into fists halfway through her rant to keep him from lunging at her. He must have looked royally pissed because he could feel Mycroft taking a step toward him, ready to reach out in case he made a move.

“Youre breath smells like whiskey!” He shot. “Your eyes are bloodshot. You’re drunk, Harry! It’s like ten in the bloody morning and you’re drunk! You came back to my flat drunk, and you didn’t think I would know? What, are you just getting in from a night out or is this like a regular morning routine from you?”

A loud smack rang through the room, and it took John a full moment to realise she had hit him. His cheek turned crimson as both of them stood perfectly still, breathing heavily, not daring to make another move.

Harry hadn’t slapped him since they were teenagers, and he was pretty sure even that was over some silly fight about her messing with his stuff.

“You do have a problem, Harry,” he said quietly, “and I wished you had spent these past couple of weeks talking to me about it instead of sneaking behind my back. Mycroft has been nice enough to help us get you into a programme sooner, and I think you should take him up on that.”

“Oh fuck Mycroft!” Harry exclaimed. She didn’t even sound like herself. Her voice was higher than usual, her eyes were wild, and she was waving her arms about like a lunatic. Part of him was terrified Mycroft would take offence to the insult, but he must have had lots of practice with Sherlock because he didn’t even flinch. “I don’t have a problem, John! Staying here has made me realise that. So what if I have a few drinks? I have a few drinks and stop. I can do that now.”

“But you can’t have a few drinks at ten in the fucking morning!” He screamed. “And you can’t have a few drinks every time you’re depressed or upset. You can’t drink your problems away, and you can’t live out of my flat, on my money, while you’re sneaking around drinking!”

Harry tugged at her purse and began to turn away from him.

“Fine, whatever then,” she mumbled. “I don’t need you, you know.”

For a horrible, split second, he imagined her storming out of the flat and ending up on the streets, like Sherlock. She had no savings, no job, no social circle to fall back on. She wouldn’t make it, and as pissed off as he was at her he had to stop her.

“Harry,” he pleaded, grabbing at her arm.

She jerked away at his touch and swung back around at him, grabbing his arms. He was surprised how easily she was able to push him back, and his hands caught the table just before he could fall.
Clearly, listening just wasn’t her thing anymore. If she wanted to fight, if she wanted to scream, she would get it.

So for the first time in decades, he pushed her back. He caught her off-guard and underestimated how weak the drinking had made her. She easily fell back against the cabinets, but bounced back quick enough to grab his shoulders.

“Harry, I’m a soldier,” he muttered through gritted teeth. “Don’t do this.”

“You’re a doctor!” She hissed as she fought back.

Soon they lost their footing, and John yelped as they tumbled to the floor. She grabbed at his hair as she pinned her arms to the ground. He felt absolutely ridiculous fighting with his grown sister, and his face turned red (not just from the fight) but at knowing Mycroft was watching all this.

What he didn’t know was that Mycroft was on his phone, talking to the centre even as they fought. As Harry managed to slap him for the second time the door to the flat opened up and the sound of Sherlock’s feet pounded up the stairs.

“Harry!” He exclaimed as she tried to roll over him. “This. Is. Stupid. Ugh!”

At last he realised that this was completely pointless: he was twice as big and twice as strong as she was and nothing would come out of this anyway. He grabbed one of her arms, unpinned it from her shoulder, and jumped up to find Sherlock staring at him.

“Apparently I missed something,” Sherlock announced. He glanced at his brother, who was still on the phone.

Harry was still squirming on the floor as he sidestepped her and pulled Sherlock into their bedroom and slammed the door. He stormed over to the mirror, checking out the red mark from Harry’s palm and let out a frustrated cry.

“I’m going to kill her!” John muttered.

“What did I miss?” Sherlock demanded.

John swirled around, jabbing a finger at his cheek.

“My sister just tried to beat me up!” He exclaimed. “She’s drinking again, Sherlock. Mycroft caught her at dinner last night. She came home drunk this morning. For all I know she has been sneaking out at night or drinking in her room. God I’m an idiot. Mycroft’s on the phone with a private rehab centre. She’s being admitted as soon as possible.”

He stormed toward Sherlock, a bit angrier than he meant to be, and his boyfriend visibly tensed as he stepped in front of him. Instead of being angry, John grabbed Sherlock’s arm desperately.

“I need you,” he whispered, pulling Sherlock into a hug.

Burying his head into Sherlock’s chest, he led out a muffled, choked sob.

“I hate her for this,” he whispered, “and I really want to just be angry at her and give up, but I can’t.”

Sherlock squeezed him, and John closed his eyes tighter. He felt a hand brush against the back of
the head as he clung to his boyfriend.

“I’m here,” Sherlock whispered. “Do you want me to go with you? To the centre, I mean?”

With a shaky breath John pulled away and tried to get himself together.

“This should probably be a me and Harry thing,” he admitted, “not that I don’t want you there. I just think having more people will scare her.”

His fingers rubbed against Sherlock’s arm and god he hated the sympathetic look he was getting right now. He couldn’t decide if everyone felt sorry for him because of what Harry did or because he wasn’t able to figure it out for himself.

“I’ll be here when you get back, then,” Sherlock promised. “She’ll be in good hands, John. Trust me, the only times I realised I truly had a problem were when I was in rehab. All it took was looking around at all the poor sods I was there with and realising…I’m one of them. If rehab worked for me, it will work for Harry. She’s a Watson, she’s strong.”

One of Sherlock’s pale, musician’s hands caressed his wounded cheek.

“And so are you,” Sherlock whispered.

Chapter End Notes

I’m really blown away by how much support this fic is still getting! I truly appreciate each and every comment! Thanks for the kudos and for reading! The boys will be in France soon, but John might not be in the romantic mood he thought he would be in...of course Sherlock will have to fix that!
John was still reeling from his fight with Harry and checking her into rehab when they left for France the following afternoon. He spent the whole trip with his head against the window as Sherlock babbled on about this musician they were about to meet.

“John?” Sherlock suddenly announced. “John, have you been listening to me?”

Jolted back to reality, John sat up for the first time and stretched.

“Sorry,” he said casually, rubbing his eyes. “Do you mind if I get some sleep when we get to the flat?”

“Sleep?” Sherlock spat. “People don’t go to Paris to sleep, John! Sleeping is not on the agenda.”

John closed his eyes in defeat. He didn’t sleep a wink after his fight with Harry; instead he spent the night listening to the distant sounds of her crying. Suddenly he felt Sherlock’s hot breath on his ear and a hand on his thigh, and he held his breath at the sultry whisper of:

“But sex is.”

He barely had time to take in the flat before Sherlock pushed him inside it, shoved him against the wall, and kissed him so hard it took his breath away. His hands immediately snaked down Sherlock’s body, straight to his cock.

“God you’re turned on for someone who just talked about a violinist for two hours.”

“Distractions,” Sherlock breathed before jamming his tongue down John’s throat.

A small moan escaped him as his lover’s tongue explored his mouth. He felt his back scrape against something cold and pulled away long enough to realised Sherlock had pinned him against a window. When he looked up to check out the view he froze.

Mycroft’s flat overlooked the Avenue des Champs-Elysees, and the sight of it was even more spectacular in person than in the photos he saw online. He imagined the money people spent on this street every night was more than what he and Sherlock made in a month.

“Wow,” he whispered.

Why had he waited so long to come here?

Reality was finally hitting him. A warmth overcame him as he felt Sherlock’s hand slip around his
waist and pull him close.

“I know you’re upset,” Sherlock whispered, “and I know you’re on edge, but please try to remember how excited you were about this. You deserve to have a good time, and that starts with—”

Instead of finishing, Sherlock planted a trail of kisses across the back of his neck. He shuddered as cold hands reached underneath his shirt and pressed gently against his skin.

“Come on,” Sherlock whispered. “We’re meeting Charbonneau for dinner to discuss the case. We need to get ready.”

“You got me all worked up for nothing?!”

Sherlock kissed him again and pulled him across the flat into the bathroom, but they both stopped as soon as he flipped on the bathroom light. Though the outside of the building was still late 19th century, the inside had been completely renovated to a contemporary taste John didn’t realise Mycroft had.

“Isn’t this a bit… posh, even for Mycroft?” John asked.

“There’s no such thing as too ‘posh’ for my brother,” Sherlock replied as he pulled off his shirt. “I think he let Lestrade decorate this one.”

“This one!” John exclaimed. “Your brother has more than one extra home?”

Sherlock sucked on his neck for a few moments before responding:

“Apparently, three. He didn’t mind bragging about it when he brought over the keys.”

John had a smart remark about that on the tip of his tongue, but he was too distracted by Sherlock stripping. He realised he was behind and quickly rid himself of his trousers and pants. Sherlock yanked him into the shower, and he was surprised how easily he was able to relax under the steady stream of warm water.

“John,” Sherlock said quietly, reaching out for his hands. As they stood together his eyes trailed up, meeting Sherlock’s for the first time since leaving Baker Street. “You did the right thing with Harry. You shouldn’t feel bad. She’s in fantastic hands.”

He let Sherlock kiss him a few more times before he had to say something. As much as he wanted to do this with Sherlock, he felt like he had to get this off his chest first.

“Harry told me I was just putting her in rehab early so I could go to Paris with you,” he admitted, “things just ended so badly between us this morning that I feel terrible about being here.”

A finger fell on his lips, and Sherlock silenced him.

“When Mycroft first suggested rehab I went on a hunger strike. When Lestrade talked to me about it I refused to solve cases for him for a week. Crime went up 5% in London! I refused to admit I had a problem because I didn’t think of myself as an addict. I thought I could just stop whenever I wanted, but instead of stopping I just got worse and worse until I ended up in the hospital. I never told either of them, but that scared me, John. Each time I woke up with someone telling me I almost killed myself, it scared me. It took two overdoses before I agreed to go to rehab, and it wasn’t until I was in rehab that I really realised I had a problem. All it took was one day of looking around at the people who were in there and realising… that’s me. I was that pathetic. She’ll come around, and she’ll learn to appreciate what you’ve done for her. But for now, you should be proud
of how you’ve handled this. You should be rewarded.”

Lips fell on his neck again, and John couldn’t help but to moan again. He wrapped his arms around Sherlock’s waist and tried to believe his boyfriend’s words of encouragement. John didn’t protest when Sherlock wrapped his hands around the back of his head, deepening the kiss. Glancing down, he could see that his lover was already hard, and he wasted no time in reaching for his cock.

“John,” Sherlock whispered as he slid his hand up and down the shaft. “You’re beautiful, I love you.”

He knew Sherlock was only trying to make him feel better about himself, and honestly he didn’t mind. John watched as Sherlock’s eyelids fluttered with each tug of his cock. They slipped for a moment but found their footing again; he pinned his partner against the slippery shower wall, using only the palm of his hand to keep him from falling.

“Fuck,” Sherlock gasped as John ran his thumb over the head. “J-John.”

Long, pale, musician’s hands fell on his own cock, and John shuddered. Their eyes met as they each pumped harder and faster.

“Shit,” John whispered.

He could feel his orgasm building from deep inside, and it only took a few more tugs of his cock before he let out a powerful gasp and came, showering his release over Sherlock’s abdomen. Sherlock came a moment later with a sharp cry of John’s name, and they were both left panting for breath.

Twenty minutes later John stood in front of the massive bathroom mirror straightening his tie. He was surprised when Sherlock stepped into the room behind him, decked out in a sharp navy suit and bow tie.

“Bow tie?” John teased.

Sherlock shrugged.

“Charbonneau’s old fashioned,” he admitted, “I thought he might appreciate the touch.”

With a grin, John turned around and straightened Sherlock’s bow tie.

“I think it’s very classy,” John complimented. “You know, I think we’re both avoiding the elephant in the room here.”

“Which is-?”

“Sherlock, I don’t speak a word of French!” He exclaimed.

Laughing, Sherlock waltzed up to the mirror and ran his fingers through his hair.

“It’s not my fault you didn’t bother learning a second language in your fancy medical school.”

“No, I was too busy learning how to save lives.”

Sherlock grinned at him in the middle, muttered something in French that was probably an insult, and rolled as his eyes as he walked away.

Shaking his head, John decided he should have known his boyfriend was secretly fluent in French.
“I have to admit, I am impressed,” John murmured as they walked through the entrance of the Taillevent. He understood why Sherlock took Mycroft up on his offer to get them fitted for custom-made suits. So far everything he had seen in Paris had only made him think of money. It was odd, since he was used to the cost of living in London, but it wasn’t like he lived like this back in Britain. First-class flying, contemporary flats, world-class dining, it just wasn’t something he thought he could ever get used to.

Sherlock, on the other hand, seemed to fit right in.

There was a tall, bearded, man who looked to be in his fifties waiting by the hostess’ stand, and his partner’s eyes immediately lit up.

“That’s him!” Sherlock hissed.

He actually jumped up a little as he grabbed John’s arm. He grinned; it was like he was taking Sherlock on his very first date. It was absolutely adorable, and he had to admit he was happy to see him indulge in something cultural for a change.

Then suddenly, Sherlock stopped.

“What’s wrong?” John asked.

His boyfriend’s face paled more than usual.

“I-I don’t know what to say,” Sherlock confessed. “I’ve never really met someone like him before, John. What if I have nothing to talk about? What if he thinks I’m a joke? Look at this place, John it’s it’s…” he turned to him and grabbed his arms. “Don’t let me get drunk, please. I’ll make a fool out of myself.”

Grinning, John assumed Sherlock wasn’t counting the glass of wine he already had at the flat. He had never seen Sherlock so nervous. It was almost charming, seeing him act so…human.

“You’ll be fine,” he promised.

He went out on a limb and looped his arm with Sherlock’s. His lover’s eyes lit up, but he didn’t protest as John led them toward Charbonneau.

“Mr Charbonneau?” Sherlock asked. The bearded man looked up at them, as though trying to decide if they were crazed fans or the people he was there to meet. “I’m Sherlock Holmes. This is my partner, Dr John Watson.”

He didn’t get very many chances to be introduced like that, and he couldn’t help but to feel better about himself as Charbonneau beamed down at him. The man was even taller than Sherlock was, making him feel ridiculously shorter than normal. He made up for it by straightening up and offering Charbonneau a firm handshake.

“Ah, yes, Mr Holmes,” Charbonneau replied. His accent was so thick John almost had a hard time understanding him, and he worried he the language barrier wouldn’t be his only problem. “Thank you for coming to see me. Please, let us sit. Le Rostand is wonderful. I thought it would be an excellent start to your French adventure. Do you like French food, Dr Watson?”

John’s heart leapt to his throat as he was called on, and he looked to Sherlock for help on how to answer. His boyfriend just shrugged as they were led through the crowded dining room to a private
“I… I haven’t really tried it before, to be honest,” John confessed.

“Of course you don’t like it!” Charbonneau exclaimed, laughing. “But Greg made me promise I’d get a picture of you two trying French food, and I always keep my promises.”

As they were seated the waitress greeted them in French and lay down menus in front of them. To his horror, John realised he couldn’t understand a single thing on the menu. How had he not prepared for this more? He glanced over to Sherlock, who was too busy commenting on the shade of red Charbonneau was wearing to notice his anxiety. Charbonneau ordered them some wine, and he was grateful when the waitress brought over whatever type of white wine it was. God did he ever need a drink- and he felt terrible for thinking that with Harry in rehab.

He felt a brush of Sherlock’s finger against his hand and was comforted knowing his boyfriend was thinking of how nervous he was.

How nervous they both were, really.

“I’m so pleased you were able to come on such short notice,” Charbonneau told them as he took a sip of wine. “I’m incredibly embarrassed to have to reach out to a consultant on this matter, but I cannot stress enough how important these auditions are.”

“No need to explain,” Sherlock said, waving the comment away. His hands were shaking a bit as he tipped his own wineglass to his lips. “I’m happy to help.”

“Greg tells me you taught yourself violin,” Charbonneau stated.

John turned to Sherlock, stunned. He had never talked to Sherlock about his history with the violin, but he had always assumed it was something he picked up through school. He noticed the musician’s cheeks turn a shade of pink as he replied:

“It was really something my mum encouraged me to do. After she passed I decided to stick with it. I was living with my grandmother then, and I didn’t want to pressure her to keep paying for lessons so I taught myself. I really didn’t find it all that difficult.”

“Didn’t find it difficult?” Charbonneau laughed. “You must be a natural! Most of my students still struggle with technique, it’s very frustrated. They’re very ambitious, yes, but I don’t think some are as passionate as they claimed to be. The three students who are auditioning for me are the most promising of them all. All three, very talented, but all three are very competitive.”

“So you think one of them stole the music to prepare for the audition?” John asked, grateful to be able to contribute to the conversation, even though he was stating the obvious. “Obviously there are only three suspects. They can’t seriously think they’ll get away with this, can they?”

“Oh obviously?” Sherlock echoed. “I’ve taught you better than that, John.”

John rolled his eyes at ‘taught’ but didn’t argue. The waitress reappeared and (he assumed) asked for their order. Charbonneau and Sherlock both ordered in French, and when John just stared at his menu, overwhelmed, his boyfriend finally spoke up for him. All he caught was ‘legumes du moment’. John opened his mouth, not sure if he should protest or thank him. He only received a wink.

“These students, they’re just children,” Charbonneau explained once the waitress walked away. “They don’t think, they don’t consider consequences. Honestly, after everything that has happened
I regret ever offering this proposal to the university.”

For a few moments the three sipped at their wine, and John took the time to admire the restaurant. The architecture of the building- of the entire city, for that matter- was truly astounding. He could see why Mycroft would want to sneak away to somewhere like this. If he were as rich and powerful as Mycroft, Paris might be the first city he would buy a second flat in.

“Mr Charbonneau, if you don’t mind me saying-"

“Please, call me Marc, all my friends do.”

A shy smile slipped across Sherlock’s face as he sipped more wine.

“I was surprised to find out you were Lestrade’s-" John kicked him under the table, and Sherlock corrected: “were Greg’s cousin.”

It wasn’t what John was trying to get his attention for, but he was relieved when Marc let out a laugh.

“Greg and I are great friends,” Marc replied. “I’m jealous of him, actually. Your brother is quite handsome.”

John burst out laughing as Sherlock nearly spit his wine over the table.

Obviously desperate to change the subject, Sherlock spoke up, in the fake ‘innocent’ voice John was so used to hearing him use with clients:

“I hate to ask, Marc, but do you mind if I use your mobile? I left mine back at the flat, and I just remembered I forgot to let my sister know I arrived here okay.”

Even John was nearly fooled, but he had seen Sherlock play this card before. He knew the consultant made a point to fish around a client’s mobile, and for good reason: phones could hold the clues to a person’s deepest secret, as seen with The Woman, of course.

Unfortunately for John, this meant being left sitting with some famous French musician he knew nothing about. So he played it cool and did what anyone in his situation would do...he turned his attention to the wine.

“This wine is delicious,” he said, wincing at how fake the comment sounded.

As Marc watched Sherlock use his mobile in the lobby of the restaurant, his eyebrows furrowed, and he sounded absent-minded as he replied:

“He’s a funny man, Sherlock Holmes. You know, I was not even aware the Holmes brothers had a sister.”

“Oh, interesting story,” John chimed in. He was so grateful to have something to discuss that he didn’t notice Marc was obviously aware Sherlock was up to something. “His father left when Sherlock was two and had a secret family in America. Turns out he and Mycroft have a younger sister in New York. It was a bit of a shock for them both, but they’ve been really amazing about it.”

“Is that so?” Marc mumbled under his breath.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Sherlock fumble with the phone, like he was looking for an excuse to be looking at the data on the device instead of talking into it. He knew Marc was
catching on and a distraction was needed.

Luckily at that moment a group of giggling young French students wandered up to their table. John couldn’t understand a word they said but understood when they each held out pieces of paper for Marc to autograph. The musician put on a fake smile and thanked them, and by the time they walked away Sherlock was back at the table.

“Thank you, that was very kind,” Sherlock said as he passed the phone back to Marc.

Nodding, Marc got to his feet and pocketed the mobile. He muttered something about the toilet before disappearing. Sherlock wasted no time before turning to John. His eyes hardened with disappointment, like he had just had his heart broken.

“John I’m not so sure about this case,” he whispered.

“You okay?” John asked, placing a hand on his.

Crestfallen, Sherlock confessed:

“Marc is sleeping with one of his students. It’s one of the suspects.”

John’s heart ached for his boyfriend as he realised what this might imply.

“Do you think he’s helping them cheat, like maybe it’s a setup?”

“I don’t know,” Sherlock sighed before swallowing a large gulp of wine. “But I think this case just got a bit more complicated than we had hoped.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I hope you enjoy our boys’ venture in France. I love hearing your thoughts, so thank you for the reviews and kudos!
This should be one of the best moments of his life. He should literally be jumping up in down in excitement. He should be running around in circles!

Instead, here he was, standing in Marc Charbonneau’s Paris home, feeling completely miserable.

Sherlock felt tricked; in fact he felt used. It was pretty obvious what was going on here, and he felt guilty for even being involved in it himself.

John stood beside him in the grand foyer of Charbonneau’s estate, mouth agape and watering as his eyes trailed from the crystal chandeliers, to the portraits of past French kings, to the grand piano in the distant ballroom. His boyfriend nudged him, as though to say, ‘You’re in Marc Charbonneau’s house! Aren’t you excited?’

“No,” he mumbled out loud to himself.

“What was that?” John asked.

With a sigh he pulled John aside and whispered quietly:

“This case doesn’t taste right.”

His partner blinked.

“It doesn’t taste right?”

Wrinkling his nose, Sherlock took a look around the house. Where John saw mesmerising beauty and impeccable classic taste, he saw suspicion and distrust. Before he could answer, Marc appeared behind them and slapped his hand down on Sherlock’s shoulder.

The part of him that was still untouched from the disappointment of his case was screaming ‘he’s actually touching me!’ John grinned at him, and he rolled his eyes.

“Thank you for indulging me,” Marc said. “You came all this way, I hate for you to spend the evening alone in your room. I wish to tell you a little more about me, about the case, and why this matter is so important.”

They were led through the main corridor into a massive kitchen. Sherlock could tell by the architecture the house was late 1800s, and while the halls and decorations still rang true to that, the kitchen was very modern. There was a chef waiting for them as they entered. He asked Marc in French if he wanted something to eat, and he was grateful when the musician replied that some wine would do. As the chef disappeared to fetch the wine, Marc turned to him, their eyes suddenly
dark.

“There’s something you two should know,” Marc confessed. His eyes wandered to Sherlock. “Something I would like to confess, though I presumed you have made the presumption already Mr. Holmes.”

John looked between them with interest, but Sherlock didn’t hesitate to blurt out:

“You’re sleeping with one of the students! It was one of the suspects, and you believe she may have taken the music as revenge.”

Marc’s face paled as he folded his hands behind his back and bowed his head to the floor.

“Yes,” Marc announced quietly, but with dignity. He looked back up to meet his eyes. “Yes, I am afraid you are right. I am very ashamed of what I did. The student was of age, of course, but fifteen…sixteen…years younger than me. The affair was a terrible, horrible, mistake and she has been blackmailing me ever since. I am not 100 percent certain she is the culprit, but the motive is there. I was too afraid to admit this to any investigator but you. I have great respect for you, Mr. Holmes, and I do hope you understand the position I’m in.”

He hesitated to reply, because he did understand. While he was embarrassed and ashamed of his hero, he knew that one leak of this story and his career would take a swan dive.

“Your secret is safe with us,” Sherlock promised. Marc closed his eyes, visibly grateful. “I do require your complete honesty from this point forward.”

“Of course! Yes. Whatever I can do.” Marc said. “To make it up to you, how about an offer? I’m conducting a show tomorrow night at the university. I would be honoured if you two would come. I could even escort you backstage and give you a tour of the university.”

Even John looked pleasantly surprised at the offer, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to let his face light up with delight.

“That would be fantastic!” He exclaimed.

Marc laughed.

“Excellent, excellent!” Marc said. “Now, for the second secret. Yes, there is another! This is very top secret, incredibly private. The reason this music, this orchestra, is so important to me is because it is my chance to prove myself.”

Sherlock blinked, confused.

“But…but you’re...you,” Sherlock pointed out. “What else do you need to prove?”

Marc’s eyes twinkled as he replied:

“I have been offered to build a new, world-class, orchestra for the city of Paris. The orchestra will premiere in the Philharmonie de Paris at its opening ceremony. It would be a grand opportunity for any violinist, let alone an up and coming student. I was lucky to be offered the position, but the orchestra will be a great treasure to the city. Any negative press at all will be met with swift action, I assure you.”

“But this is just stolen music,” John spoke up.
He resisted the urge to stomp on his foot.

“I’m afraid it was only a draft,” said Marc. “It was nothing copyrighted, nothing official. It was part of a score I was hoping to complete for the new orchestra. With those ideas any talented musician could build on that music and make quite the masterpiece.”

Sherlock wasn’t sure what to say. Marc clearly had such a personal connection to his music that he felt guilty for ever thinking badly of him. Whatever happened with the student, it seemed to be a thing of the past. Unfortunately for Marc, that thing of the past could threaten his career.

“Well,” Marc said suddenly as the chef brought in their champagne. “The staff has gone home, the night is young. I say we make a toast, to music, to inspiration, to opportunity.”

As their glasses were poured he and John murmured in agreement.

“Come, let me give you a tour of the house,” Marc said. Clutching their wine glasses, he and John followed Marc through to the ballroom they noticed near the entryway. There was a grand piano with a violin beside it, and Sherlock’s eyes bulged as he recognised the clear make.

“You own a Stradivarius?” He said; he looked quite like John did when they first arrived as he gaped at the violin. “A real, actual, Stradivarius?”

John frowned.

“How can you tell the difference between a ‘real’ one and the one you own?”

Glaring at him, Sherlock decided to not justify that question with a response.

“I’m very proud of it,” Marc confessed. “I only place it in this room. The acoustics are excellent. Go ahead, give it a try if you’d like.”

It was like being offered to stay in Buckingham Palace for the weekend. For a long moment, Sherlock could only stare at the violin, frozen in place and too afraid to step any close to it.

“No,” he said, shaking his head, “no, thank you for the offer, but I really couldn’t.”

“Yes!” Marc argued. He reached down for the violin as casual as one might pick up a football. Sherlock’s stomach flipped at the sight. “Go ahead, try! I’d love to hear you play.”

Marc Charbonneau would love to hear me play!

He couldn’t say no to that. John beamed beside him as he carefully accepted the instrument in hand and picked up the bow. His hands shook ever so slightly; he was partially convinced the violin might snap in two just from holding it. As he lifted the violin to his shoulder he forced himself to relax, and when he lifted the instrument to his shoulders he found himself in his comfort zone. Eyes closed, he recalled the piece of music he was working on, and began to play. Instead of imagining Marc watching him, in his mind he placed himself back at Baker Street. He was instantly surprised by how effortlessly he could play the instrument. There was no struggle for dynamics, and the tone…those acoustics. He felt like he was in another world.

He was in violin heaven.

When he stopped playing a few minutes later Marc and John were both gaping at him. Slowly, he lowered the violin back to its resting place and cleared his throat.
“Right,” he said. “Thank you, Marc, that was—“

“Brilliant!” Marc exclaimed, clapping his hands together. “Absolutely brilliant, you are him.”

“I’m…who?”

“My first violinist!” Marc replied. “I was to hold auditions tomorrow and allow the winner to play at the show, but I haven’t the time to arrange auditions now. Not when my three leading violinists are suspects of crime.”

The very thought of being onstage with Marc made his face warm with excitement, but at the time his stomach crawled with nerves.

“I’ve-I’ve never played in front of a real audience,” he confessed. He shook his head, realising that was hardly the point. “Besides, I’m not a student. I’m flattered, really, but it’s not fair for the students who worked hard for this.”

“You mean the students who steal from me?” Marc asked. He barked with laughter. “If I’m quite honest with you, Mr Holmes, I would retire before taking any of those three under my wing as professional, high-profile musicians. But you- you are fantastic. The natural, raw, talent you possess could take this orchestra to new levels.”

He had to stop this. Marc couldn’t be serious…right? Sherlock had this nightmare before, and it ended with him forgetting the music and standing on stage in only his pants.

“I…I can’t…” he stammered, struggling to find a proper excuse.

“Of course he’ll do it!” John announced, slapping him on the back. His boyfriend was absolutely beaming, from ear to ear, and Sherlock didn’t have the heart to disappoint him.

“I can’t…I don’t…I don’t know the music,” Sherlock finally pointed out.

“Nonsense, here,” Marc said, grabbing a nearby music stand.

With one glance at the music Sherlock knew he could easily learn it in one day. It was very close to the style of music he wrote, and from the first few measures he could see the theme Marc was going for. Even just in his head, the song sounded beautiful.

It would be an absolute honour to be able to play it, but he knew it wasn’t his honour.

“I really shouldn’t,” he said, “now please, Marc, if I may- the case? You are right, the most important threat here is not the integrity of the orchestra but that someone might try to publish the music.”

Even as he was speaking Marc was picking up the violin and replacing it into his hands. He kept pointing at the sheet music, like a child pointing at a toy they wanted.

“The music was taken from your office at the university, yes?” Sherlock asked. Letting out a dramatic sigh, Marc nodded. “Then I will need to interview everyone who has access to it first thing tomorrow morning.”

But Marc wasn’t listening. Instead, he picked up Sherlock’s right arm and forced him to lift his shoulder so he could hold the violin up. With a sigh, Sherlock finally gave in.

“Alright,” Sherlock mumbled, “but only a few measures.”
A few measures quickly turned into a few lines. A few lines turned into pages. Pages turned into nearly hours of playing, both at Marc’s house and back at the flat. John watched him from the bed as he practised on a borrowed violin (not the Stradivarius, sadly), and Sherlock watched himself in the mirror. After another hour of practising the same few measures over and over, he glanced up in the mirror to find John naked. Smirking, he asked:

“Are you trying to distract me?”

His boyfriend grinned.

“You should be prepared,” John teased. “Anything could come up during your solo. You should be prepared to deal with it. Go on, play. It sounds lovely.”

“It sounds like it should be played by a university student.”

He put the violin down and crossed over to the bed. Leaning down, he gently placed a kiss to John’s lips and took his hands.

“You’ll be brilliant,” John promised.

Sherlock shook his head, unconvinced.

“I still don’t agree with it,” he admitted. He pushed John back carefully onto the bed and watched as his doctor slid backward until his head met the pillows. “Thank you for coming here with me. I promise you, I’ll have this case solved by this time tomorrow.”

A giggle escaped John, and he reached up to run his hair through Sherlock’s curls.

“Yeah,” John agreed, “we probably shouldn’t stay too long or Marc will end up proposing to you. I can’t tell who’s the bigger fan of whom.”

“Oh please,” Sherlock said, though secretly he was delighted at the thought. He leaned down to steal another kiss from John. “You know, we can always wait until Thursday to tell Mycroft we solved the case. We can spend another day in France, just you and me.”

“Really?” John said. “Are you actually offering me a proper holiday?”

Sherlock’s finger dipped in between John’s legs. He squeezed his cock gently, just enough to make his boyfriend gasp in shock and arch of the bed. Catching him, Sherlock whispered into his ear:

“Really.”

“Can we go to Disneyland?” John asked, his eyes twinkling.

He honestly couldn’t tell if John was teasing him or not, but he decided the best course of action was to distract him from the idea.

One by one, he let his fingers travel up John’s leg until he reached his thigh. He bent over to kiss each thigh before returning to his cock, taking it in his mouth. He licked around the head before pushing his lips down the shaft. As the cock slipped further down his throat his hands jumped from John’s thighs to his arse. John had his eyes closed so he didn’t see when the tip of Sherlock’s finger teased at his arsehole. He reached over for a pillow and shoved it under John’s hips; his boyfriend squirmed and opened his eyes.

“Keep your eyes closed,” Sherlock ordered as he reached for some lube they hid in the bedside
A smile slipped across John’s face.

“Okay,” John said, sounding amused and uncertain at the same time.

“I used to have a rule about distractions during cases,” Sherlock said as he pushed the finger inside him. “Whatever happened to that?”

His boyfriend let out a gasp as he placed his lips over his cock again. As his mouth travelled up and down his finger pushed in and out, developing a rhythm that was already leaving John trembling.

“I happened,” John replied proudly, “and I’m not sorry… oh god.”

John’s cock hit the back of his throat just as his finger pushed all the way in. His lover was hard in his mouth, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to let his free hand roam around his body. His fingertips crawled across John’s thighs, up his hip, over his abdomen. Giggling, John brushed his own hand over his chest so it could join Sherlock’s. They managed to hold hands as Sherlock fingered him with his other and sucked him down.

“Maybe you needed sex during cases,” John teased. He squeezed Sherlock’s hand. “It would have helped you to not be such an arse to everyone.”

Even Sherlock laughed at that.

“Too much talking,” Sherlock whispered.

He planted kisses down John’s cock, to his balls, and across the bones of his hips.

“Are you going to kiss every inch of me?” John asked.

“Maybe.”

His lips brushed against his lover’s abdomen, planting gentle kisses there as well. Their hands unlatched and Sherlock resumed pumping his cock, rendering John speechless. Pre-cum dribbled across his fingers, and John moaned when he rubbed his thumb over it, massaging the head gently. As he kissed his way up John’s stomach he stopped at each nipple, sucking each before he hovered over his face.

“I love you,” Sherlock whispered.

John strained underneath him; Sherlock could tell he was on the edge of his release.

“Yeah,” John breathed. “Sherlock.”

It was a plea, and John looked so perfect beneath him that he didn’t have the heart to torture him any longer. Sherlock kissed him hard before murmuring against his lips:

“Cum for me.”

“Oh fuck.”

“John.”

He quickly dipped his finger back inside his lover. He added a second and John whimpered. He pushed in harder, faster, and reached his prostate just John came.
“Fuck,” John whispered, his entire body shaking as he came again. Sherlock was so fascinated by watching John’s face as he orgasmed the he didn’t mind being hit in the chin, then the cheek. His lover’s eyes closed as he sighed happily. His chest heaved, and Sherlock’s hand left his softening cock so he could climb his body and kiss him once again. Their faces lingered together as they kissed and John asked: “What about you?”

His cock was rock-hard in his pyjama pants, but he hadn’t even focused on that until just now.

“I’m fine,” he lied. He kissed John one final time. “I really do need to practise. I’ll be spending the entire day focusing on the case so I need to practice as much as I can now.”

“Great,” John sighed. “You’re going to be playing all night, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

Sherlock kissed his nose and sat up, but John grabbed him before he left the bed.

“John,” Sherlock sighed.

He secretly wanted it. John didn’t know it, but he’d give anything to spend the entire trip with him. He enjoyed reconnecting with John, and he’d enjoy watching the performance tomorrow night with him just as much as he was going to enjoy playing in it. His boyfriend kissed his neck gently and his eyes fluttered closed. For a moment he forgot all about the music.

“I’m proud of you,” John whispered as they sat side by side on the edge of the bed. “I think I would have melted to the ground if someone like that asked me to play in their orchestra.”

They burst into giggles; it was really the last thing he expected John to say after seeing him be so romantic.

“Can I tell you a secret?” Sherlock asked. John brushed a finger down the side of his face and nodded. Suddenly a big grin crossed his face as he admitted: “I’m really nervous.”

John laughed again and kissed him again, soft and sweet.

“Nervous about what?” John teased. “The case or the performance?”

“The performance!” He slapped John playfully in the arm. “I told you, I’ll solve the case by tomorrow evening. There’s a reason I never went into music, John. You know how I am around people. You know I don’t work well in groups. An orchestra isn’t just a violinist it’s…magic. Everyone has to work together in an incredibly precise way. You can’t just waltz in and take over.”

Cold hands picked at the rim of his shirt and lifted it up enough to gain access to his skin.

“Since when do you have a problem with waltzing in and taking over?” John challenged.

Sherlock squirmed as his lips trailed down his neck.

“I just…ah don’t think I’m…John.”

He completely forgot was his point was as John’s lips hit a certain sensitive spot on his collar bone. When his lover’s hands went for his waistband he didn’t protest as his pants were shoved just past his hip, enough to expose his hard cock.

“I think you need to relax,” John whispered.
Sherlock found himself falling back onto the bed. John leaned over, pinning him against the mattress as he snogged him and rubbed his hands up and down his cock at the same time. His hand massaged the back of John’s neck as they kissed, and it wasn’t long before his body went into overdrive. With one final scrape of thumb across the head and he was gone. John held him as his breath turned into sharp gasps of air and he came. As he breathed in heavily, coming down from his high, they found themselves laughing again.

“I really need to practise now,” Sherlock said.

He ran his fingers over John’s hair one last time before he sat up, pulled up his pyjama pants, and reached for the violin once again.

Behind him, John’s voice warned:

“Maybe you should wash your hands before you touch that.”

And he headed to the loo to wash up instead.

Chapter End Notes

As soon as I decided I wanted to use "The Adventure of the Three Students" in the story and turn it into a music thing, I wanted to see Sherlock playing in an orchestra. I hope you're enjoying the boys in Paris! I'd love to know what you think!
“This brings back memories,” John murmured as they stood in the middle of campus, staring at the building that housed Marc’s office. “My days at uni…I honestly don’t know if I miss them or not.”

Sherlock chuckled as his eyes roamed the bustle of students rushing around them, bags over their shoulders, books in their hands.

“I just remember feeling like I didn’t fit in,” Sherlock confessed. “Not with my classes, the other students. Just…Luke. I thought all of it was pointless, really. I could have learned everything from books and experiments. I never understood why I needed any kind of degree.”

Taking a deep breath, he led John up the steps and into the music hall. The entrance was massive; it was elegance and class, like the building hadn’t changed in a hundred years. Paintings of past conductors and professors hung along the walls, starting from the first years of the university until the present. They found Marc’s portrait just as they reached his office at the end of the corridor.

“Can you imagine a painting of yourself like that hanging up somewhere?” John said, shaking his head.

“Mycroft has one,” he shrugged.

“Seriously?”

He grinned and raised his knuckles to the door, and as soon as he knocked Marc called for them to come in. A young woman was in the room waiting for them. Office worker, judging by her pencil skirt and blouse. She was out of university but had yet to find a real job. She glanced up at the two of them, her eyes falling on John, narrowing in…checking him out.

Not the woman who had the affair, then.

Feeling rather protective of John all of a sudden, Sherlock put an arm around his waist and pulled him close.

“This is Sherlock Holmes, the detective I told you about,” Marc said. He smirked as he waved an arm toward John. “And this is his partner, Dr John Watson.”

“Hello, Dr Watson,” the assistant said with a twinkle in her eye. She shook John’s hand before turning to him. “Mr Holmes, nice to meet you.”

She didn’t offer to shake Sherlock’s hand.
“This is Analise Bannister, my personal assistant,” Marc explained. “She was hired as an office worker for the department before I took my position with the university, and I recruited her to be my assistant. She is, essentially, like my manager. On a typical day, wherever I am, Analise is. She does everything from scheduling meetings to managing the press. I couldn’t ask for a better assistant.”

A pink blush rose in Analise’s cheeks as her eyes fell to the floor.

“He’s too kind,” she whispered. “It’s my fault the music was stolen. I came by his office to clean up after he left that night, and I was stupid enough to leave my keys in the door.”

Sherlock took a moment to examine the office. Marc’s office was big and open, but he was in the back corner of the building. His window faced the back entrance to the music building and a carpark. Essentially anyone who walked by could see what was going on inside.

The walls filled with awards were the only thing in the room that could be considered cluttered. A bookshelf filled with music theory books and sheet music sat opposite Marc’s desk, and besides that his only other furniture were a small sofa and a locked wardrobe. On a typical night, there really shouldn’t be all that much to clean.

There were, however, two shards of broken glass on the floor next to the desk. The very bottom of one of the desk legs was stained red—much like the red wine Marc kept in good quantity in his home.

“Do you mean to say you left to go home and forgot the keys in the door?” Sherlock asked.

Analise looked like she might faint at the question.

“No I…I had a bit of a medical emergency,” she admitted. “I came in and saw the drawer where he keeps the music was unlocked. I texted Marc to ask if he took the music home with him, and when he texted back that he didn’t I panicked.”

“You had an anxiety attack?” John asked in his doctor’s voice.

The assistant’s face melted with gratitude at his sympathy. It was all so put on Sherlock couldn’t resist nudging John in the side.

“Do you frequently battle with anxiety?” John asked. He scratched at the back of his head; it was a nervous tick that indicated he too noticed how drawn Analise was to him.

“Yes, Dr Watson,” Analise confessed. “I just remember feeling very faint, and I passed out on the sofa. It was, with no doubt, the most embarrassing moment of my entire life.”

Marc reached out to place a comforting hand on Analise’s forearm. His assistant squirmed at the touch, but the musician only tightened his grip, as though reassuring her it was okay.

Perhaps he was wrong about her relationship with Marc.

“I keep telling her that is ridiculous!” Marc said. “What we really should be focusing on are the three students with the most motive to sabotage the auditions, starting with Jabez Gilchrist. He’s an…athlete. He has rugby practise this morning, perhaps you’ll find him there.”

The pause before ‘athlete’ and the disgust in Marc’s voice at the mention of one of his students practising a sport instead of music indicated he didn’t take Gilchrist very seriously.
“That won’t be necessary,” Sherlock announced.

Marc blinked.

“I thought that was the point—”

“He didn’t do it,” Sherlock said. Even John was staring at him, confused. He couldn’t help but to let out a dramatic sigh before explaining: “Marc obviously has no confidence in him. He knows Gilchrist isn’t fully devoted as a musician. We would be wasting our time. Who is next?”

Mouth agape, Marc stared at him for a long moment before could speak again.

“Mr Gilchrist came into the music program when he was injured last year,” Marc admitted. “He had to take a term off from the team, and during that time he discovered a passion and talent for music—”

“Pointless,” Sherlock interrupted. “Next.”

“Daulat Ras,” Marc said. “He’s a very bright student. His technique is beautiful, and he has a real passion for music theory. He studies all the greats, and he’ll stop by my office for discussions after hours. I think he’s far too honest to steal from me, but he is highly motivated as a musician. He, of all my students, is most capable of finishing the music.”

Twenty minutes later he and John found were strolling across campus, heading for the dorms. His hand brushed against his lover’s palm the whole way, touching it without holding on. As they passed the pitch he noticed John’s eyes wander to the game. He knew John could step into the middle of any kind of sports game and know exactly what was going on, just like he could tune into any classical piece and understand the theme and history behind it. Sports were a subject he tried to avoid with John- mainly because he made a fool out of himself every time it was brought up. He imagined his brother fared even worse with Lestrade on the topic, considering the DI still went to matches on the weekend.

“There’s Gilchrist,” John said, nodding toward a tall, muscular, ginger student. “Wow. He is good.”

John watched, fascinated with whatever play it was Gilchrist was making. Sherlock didn’t have a clue what was going on, and he wasn’t about to pretend like he could tell a good rugby player from a bad one, so he let them linger by the pitch for a moment.

“How did you know Marc has no confidence in Gilchrist?” John asked.

“It’s elementary,” Sherlock replied. “Judging what someone thinks about someone else by the tone of their voice, by their eyes, is really just basic human observation. For example, Ms Bannister was clearly smitten with you.”

“Smitten?” John teased. “Look out, Sherlock, you might have some competition after all.”

“Don’t insult me,” he said, laughing at the very thought of John trying to woo the young assistant. “She must have been ten years younger than him, at least.”

“Yes, Marc does like them young. Did you see his hand?” John shook his hand. “He’s a womanizer. If a man like that pisses off the wrong woman it would make him a target for a level of revenge like you couldn’t imagine.”

A smile lingered on Sherlock’s face. He tried to forget that John used to be yet another desperate,
single, man going after any woman who dared to make eye contact with him. He laughed to himself at the memory of seeing many a woman sneak out of their flat early in the morning.

“Has a woman ever taken revenge on you, then?” He asked.

“More than once, actually,” John shot. “When I was thirteen, I stood this girl- Hailey, something-up instead of taking her out on a date. She sat behind me at school and every day for two weeks she flicked bits of paper at me. She even stuck gum in my hair!”

He burst out laughing again. He couldn’t even imagine what a thirteen year old John would look like, but he could just imagine a mini-John begging poor, innocent, school girls to be his girlfriend.

“Well you stood her up for a date!” Sherlock pointed out. “’Hailey-something’. You probably broke her heart!”

“Yeah, well, she went out with this Jake fellow after that and she paraded him around like he was her puppy.” John grinned as they continued their walk down the path: “Do you really think someone couldn’t manage being an athlete and a musician? I was an athlete in uni, you know.”

“Yes,” Sherlock grinned, “but you’re not a musician.”

“Fair point.”

A light breeze brushed through them, and Sherlock found himself longing for the coat he left back home. Even as they passed the pitch, John’s eyes still seemed distant; he didn’t seem as focused on the case as he would normally be.

“Are you okay?” He asked, reminding himself it wasn’t too long ago that John checked his sister into rehab.

“Yeah,” John’s voice was uncharacteristically quiet as he admitted: “I’m just worried about Harry. I wish I could check on her.”

Throwing caution to the wind, Sherlock grabbed John’s hand and squeezed it.

“She’s in good hands,” Sherlock promised. “The best.”

“Yeah.”

John didn’t sound convinced, but Sherlock didn’t press him. There was a reason neither he nor Mycroft liked talking about his time in rehab. Addiction was such a deeply personal topic that he didn’t dare try to tell John how to feel about it.

A few moments later they found themselves in front of a dormitory. Marc told them Ras spent a lot of his time reading or practising beneath the shade of a tree by his dorm, and sure enough the sound of a violin greeted them as they approached the building. They walked around the side to find Ras, playing a song from memory. His violin case was open on the ground; some students threw coins into it as they walked by. Even John threw some in; he assumed as an icebreaker.

“Bonjour, merci!” Ras greeted them.

“Do you speak English?” Sherlock asked.

Ras nodded, still beaming at John.

“It sounds brilliant,” John said.
“Yes, except for the C natural that was incredibly flat,” Sherlock shot. When two sets of glaring eyes fell on him, he reminded himself he wasn’t there to criticize someone’s playing skills. “Sorry. Bad habit. My name is Sherlock Holmes, and this is my partner, Dr John Watson. We were asked to come to the school to help Mr Charbonneau with a certain matter.”

Ras’ eyes lit up and he placed his violin back into its case and began to pack up.

“Wait, hang on!” John said, reaching out to stop him.

“I didn’t see anything, I promise!” Ras rambled, desperately. “I thought I left my shoulder rest in a practise room so I went back to the music building. I saw the light on in Marc’s office, I heard…I didn’t see anything, okay. If you two are the police, I don’t know anything.”

Even he was alarmed by how scared Ras sounded. The student clearly thought he was in trouble, which meant he must have had some reason to suspect someone else knew he was in the building that night.

“We’re actually here about some stolen sheet music,” Sherlock explained. “A piece Marc was working on for the auditions went missing. I’m not the police, I’m a consulting detective.”

“And you consult with the police, correct?”

He didn’t care how smart or talented this kid was. He didn’t like him.

“I’m a private investigator,” he insisted. “Please, this is not only a matter of theft but possibly copyright infringement. We believe whoever stole the music Marc was working on may have intended to complete the piece and publish it themselves.”

Ras looked between him and John, with his eyes lingering on the doctor. Why did people always trust John over him?

“I saw Ms Bannister sneak into Marc’s office,” Ras admitted. “I practise after hours a lot; Marc lends me a key. When I was done practising I noticed Ms Bannister’s car was still in the lot. I walked up to Marc’s door, thinking maybe she was doing something wrong, but instead I heard…noises. You know, like…like someone’s having an affair. I like Marc. He’s been a great mentor to me. I don’t want to see anything happen to him. I don’t want to damage his reputation.”

“That’s not going to happen,” John promised. “All we care about is the music.”

The student looked a little relieved at that, but he took his mobile out, obviously looking for an excuse to escape.

“I’ve got class,” Ras said. “I’m really sorry. I don’t know anything about the music. All I knew about the audition was to show up, prepared for anything. I didn’t know what he was working on, and I didn’t know what he had planned for the audition. I don’t even care if I don’t make first violin, I just want to play. Just being on stage with him it’s…it’s the opportunity of a lifetime. I would never do anything to put that opportunity in jeopardy.”

With that he nodded to both Sherlock and John before grabbing his case and practically fleeing across campus.

“What do you think?” John asked.

“I think everyone loves Marc,” Sherlock replied. “Marc.”
"Why is everyone so friendly with their professor?"

“Michelle McLean, aka the younger student Marc had an affair with, that’s our final suspect,” John spoke up.

“One of them,” Sherlock said under his breath. “Do you really think a woman would be so pissed off about an affair that she would sabotage university auditions- and possibly someone’s career?”

“Do you just not watch news?” John asked. “Hell, Sherlock, half of our cases are about revenge and love. McLean is young and naive. She might not see this as putting Marc’s career in danger… in fact she might feel like she’s in danger.”

“Really?” Sherlock fell silent for a moment, considering the thought.

“Maybe she feels threatened by him,” John said quietly, making sure no one could overhear them. “He’s an older man, he’s famous. He could be having affairs with multiple students. Maybe she even found out.”

“But there would be blackmail,” Sherlock pointed out. “She doesn’t sound bright enough to do anything with the music.”

“She might demand money.”

Even as they glanced at each other, considering their theory, Sherlock didn’t feel too convinced.

From the corner of his eye he noticed Ras dashing back across campus; he apparently backtracked and looked like he was running back toward the music building.

“I think we should go back to Marc’s office,” Sherlock said. He glanced down at his mobile. He still had nine hours before Marc wanted him at rehearsal. “I’d like to talk to Analise again.”

“Sure, whatever you want,” John offered.

They stayed silent at first as they made their way back toward the music building. As they passed the rugby pitch once again he caught himself watching Gilchrist play. He noted the type of cleats he wore and the mud-covered field he played on. He remembered the broken glass and wine-stain and recalled something else too: there were a few specks of dirt just beneath Marc’s window.

“Actually, change of plans,” Sherlock announced, “come on.”

He led John toward the athletics building and around the side to a door marked ‘locker room’.

“Isn’t it illegal to just barge into a university locker room?” John asked.

Sherlock easily pushed the door open and waved his hands toward it as though to say ‘see?’ He ushered John inside, letting his arm drape around his back.

“If it’s so illegal they shouldn’t just leave it open,” he announced.

“It doesn’t exactly work that way,” his boyfriend mumbled.

At that moment the entire team burst into the locker room, singing some chant in French. Gilchrist led the group but stopped as soon as he saw Sherlock and John waiting for them.

“Can I help you?” Gilchrist asked, in French.
John turned to him, clearly frustrated he couldn’t understand.

“I’m Sherlock Holmes,” he replied, in French, “and this is my partner Dr John Watson. Do you speak English, Mr Gilchrist? For the sake of my partner.”

Crossing his arms, the six foot tall rugby star glanced around at his teammates, as though looking for their permission.

“No,” Gilchrist spat. He nodded to the rest of his team, telling them it was okay to go about their business. He continued in French: “I have a big game tomorrow. Do you mind?”

“Yes, I do,” Sherlock replied. “An important piece of Professor Charbonneau’s has disappeared. We think whoever stole it intends to finish the music and publish it under their name.”

With a bark of laughter Gilchrist turned away and searching through his locker for something.

“No one would publish that shit,” Gilchrist replied. Sherlock’s eyes lit up in surprise at the comment. The athlete looked around the locker room again, this time like he was hoping no one was listening. “I regret going into that programme. Professor Charbonneau picks favourites- mainly women. He picks his favourites and forgets everyone else. It’s like we’re not even part of the class.”

He looked to John, wondering what he thought of it, but at his partner’s blank face he remembered he didn’t know what was going on. Of course the one person he thought for sure wasn’t involved seemed to hate Marc the most. Maybe he was looking at this case all wrong.

“But he did pick you to audition for first violin?” Sherlock asked.

Gilchrist let out a dramatic sigh before he grabbed a towel and slammed his locker door shut.

“I never wanted to audition,” he snapped. “I have a game, I told you. Now leave me alone.”

He stormed off before Sherlock could get another word in, and John immediately rounded on him.

“What was that about, then?” He asked.

Sherlock pulled him out of the steamy locker room and back into fresh air.

“The problem with students, John, is that they’re selfish. Look at them all.” It was noon, and many students must have just gotten out of class for their lunch break. The quad before them and paths around them quickly filled with young twenty-somethings chatting with friends or talking on their mobiles. “They care about their careers and money instead of what they’re learning. They care about sex instead of relationships. Students take everything personally. I might have been wrong about Gilchrist, John. He’s just as much of a suspect as everyone else.”

“Oh, you were wrong?” John teased. He raised his voice as he shouted playfully to anyone within earshot: “Sherlock Holmes was wrong.”

“Enjoy it while it lasts,” Sherlock snickered. “All of these students have proper motive to commit the crime, but Gilchrist has something the others don’t.”

“What’s that?”

“He has nothing to lose.”

His boyfriend glanced back toward the rugby pitch.
“What about rugby?” John asked.

Shrugging, Sherlock replied:

“What about it? It’s a sport. He doesn’t care about his music career. He enjoys sports because it makes him popular. If he was expelled, right now, it would make no difference to him.”

John snorted, but he ignored him when he noticed Gilchrist had also left the locker room and was headed for the music building.

“Both he and Ras are headed for the music building, let’s go.”

Before John could open his mouth to ask Sherlock grabbed his hand and off they went, dashing back toward the building. As they arrived he saw Ras disappearing through the doors and Gilchrist pounding up the steps.

“I don’t understand!” John complained as they pushed past the sea of students in the corridors.

“Yeah, well it’s not one of your cases, is it?” Sherlock asked. “It’s not action and danger, it’s all mental. Think like a student, John.”

When they arrived to Marc’s office, he didn’t bother knocking as he burst open the door. He wasn’t at all surprised to find Gilchrist, Ras, and a short, pale, brunette he recognised from Marc’s phone as Michelle.

“They all did it,” he explained.

Chest heaving as he tried to regain his breath, John looked between each student.

“What?” John demanded.

“They were each in the music building last night,” Sherlock said. He stared down each student in turn, and they each shifted positions and looked away before their eyes could meet. “Except Ms Miles, she was with Marc, of course. She was too busy seducing the professor at home. She mistakingly thought he had the music at his house.”

Taking a step toward him, Michelle spat:

“I didn’t steal anything!”

She crossed her arms over her navy sweater, but thought her posture might fool everyone else into thinking she was sure of herself she still refused to meet his eyes.

“Of course you didn’t,” Sherlock said.

“But you just said-”

Two other figures slipped into the room before John could finish. The students turned and froze in unison, petrified to see their professor enter with his assistant.

“It’s quite alright, Mr Holmes,” Marc said. “Analise has told me everything. I’m afraid I have wasted my time bringing you here.”

Gilchrist’s face scrunched up in confusion, but he seemed to understand he was off the hook because he attempted to shove past Sherlock. The detective grabbed him by the shoulder and forced him back around to face his teacher.
“I assure you, my time wasn’t wasted,” Sherlock promised. He glanced down at John, who was still fuming from not knowing what was going. “Ras and Gilchrist both came to the music building that night with the intention of breaking into Marc’s office to steal the music. Gilchrist walks by the office every day after pracise. He’s tall enough to see through the window, and he must have noticed Marc was gone for the night. He broke the window- you can see dirt and cleat marks on the floor, just there. What he didn’t count on was Ms Bannister being in the office at such a late hour. She and Gilchrist are old friends and, as a good friend would do, she tried to talk him out of committing the crime. She even poured him a drink to calm him down. She sat him down on the sofa and managed to…comfort…him…”

He stumbled over his wording, not sure of how to explain himself. John frowned, trying to figure him out, and everyone else looked around to see if anyone could understand him.

“Comfort-?” John asked.

“They had sex,” Sherlock blurted out. Marc’s eyes lit up with fury, and though Gilchrist didn’t speak English he must have caught the gist of what happened because he immediately rounded on Analise. All he had to hear were a couple of insults in French before he mustered up all his strength, grabbed Gilchrist’s arm, and flung him from the room. “It wasn’t Marc you heard, Ras. I just thought you’d, um, want to restore your faith in your mentor. Although you did lie to me about pracise. There are marks on the outside doorknob where someone tried to break in. Marks made by a left-handed individual...obviously, you. You just heard the noise on the inside and got spooked.”

Ras looked like he might be sick, but it was Marc who held his fist to his forehead and mumbled:

“Oh god.”

“I’m really sorry, Professor Charbonneau!” Ras pleaded. “I just…I…I don’t know what to say.”

“It’s quite alright, Mr Ras,” Marc sighed. “After all, you did not actually steal anything. Or seduce me. Or had an affair in my office!”

His voice boomed across the walls as he turned on Analise.

“How could you leave this out of your story?” Marc said. He was obviously hurt, and even Analise’s eyes filled with tears as he lectured her. “I have trusted you for years. I appreciate that you admit you stole the music, but this? You know I cannot accept this.”

“I know,” Analise whispered, wrapping her arms around her waist. “I know, I’m so ashamed. I’m sorry. I am sorry to everyone.”

“But why did she want the music?” John asked.

“First, let me say that Gilchrist wanted it because he is lazy and did not want to prepare for the auditions. He was lying earlier- he did want to audition, he was just upset when he realised he just had to work for it. Ras wanted the music because he was so nervous about the audition he thought he might cheat. You were right about Ms Miles, John. I think she found out Marc has been hitting on other students and wanted revenge.

Ms Bannister, however, was one of the top students when she was in the programme, but her career is going nowhere. Perhaps she thought she could learn the music and impress Marc. Whatever the case may be, Gilchrist must have found out what she intended to do when he caught her. After he realised she wouldn’t let him take the music he slipped some drugs into her wine and managed to
take the key, but he must have heard Ras and escaped without getting the music. He put the music in Ms Bannister’s bag, hoping to see her today and get it back. Ras must have also seen the music in her bag and came back here today hoping to confront her. Ms Bannister must have woken up the next morning, unaware of what happened. She never realised she had it, until now, but she was too embarrassed to admit what might have happened that night and took the blame.”

Analise burst into tears as he finished the wrap-up. John gaped at him, awe-struck, and he honestly did feel quite proud for figuring it all out. The case certainly wasn’t more than a three or four, but he enjoyed being surprised by puzzles that turned out to be harder than they appeared.

“So…” John spoke up, “basically, you just threw our criminal out of the room.”

With a bright smile on his face, he withdrew a set of keys he had nicked from Gilchrist’s pockets.

“He won’t get very far,” he boasted proudly, “Marc, I will leave you to decide what you want to tell the police. John- I do believe we have a show to get ready for.”

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed the case :) The next chapter is actually mostly finished, so hopefully you'll see that soon, and I must say I *really* like the next chapter!

Thanks for reading! I'd love to know what your thoughts are about the story!
Sherlocked

Chapter Notes

Thanks to my beta DeathFrisbee221 for the beta and advice!

Enjoy!!! :D

Sherlock swallowed nervously as he looked himself over one last time in the mirror. The dressing area felt claustrophobic, with other musicians rushing about and various instruments being tuned around him. It was too hot, the air felt too thick, and he kept subconsciously tugging at the collar of his tux to help himself breathe better. He blinked rapidly, trying to fight his dry eyes and sleep deprivation following two straight nights of practice. John snored away while he was up at all hours, playing the same measures over and over. The group had one rehearsal that afternoon, and while it went well enough he was fully aware of the dozens of eyes watching him, judging him.

He had never felt less confident in his entire life.

“Nervous?” He looked up to find Analise, dressed in a simple navy dress and carrying a notebook.

“A bit,” he admitted, laughing at himself. “Any advice?”

“Besides picturing the audience naked?” She teased. “Not really, just…be yourself, you know? I always picture myself in my room, playing alone. But for you, Sherlock, this is once in a lifetime.”

Even as she cheered him on he noted a longing, disappointed, look in her eyes and he knew she would rather be in his place.

“Marc didn’t sack you, then?” He asked.

Closing her eyes, she admitted:

“No. He was actually quite horrified to hear what…what happened to me. I still can’t quite believe it. I really am sorry, for what I was going to do.”

“Never be sorry for being ambitious,” Sherlock replied. Her eyes lit up with that, and her demeanor seemed to soften. “You should be the one playing this solo, you know. Marc showed me a video of a recital you were in. You are…very, very talented.”

With the shadow of a smile on her face, she said quietly:

“Marc gave you this opportunity. Who knows, maybe one day I will have mine.”

She winked, spun around gracefully, and disappeared into the sea of students. As soon as she left, John appeared by his side, and his body instantly relaxed. He greeted John with a kiss and didn’t argue when his boyfriend pulled him in for a quick embrace.

“Hot,” John murmured into his ear. He was beaming when the two broke apart. “How are you feeling?”
His stomach turned to knots just at the question.

“I feel like I shouldn’t be here,” he confessed.

“That’s ridiculous!” John replied. “You’re Marc’s special guest for the evening. It’s actually how you’re introduced here, look!”

A programme was shoved into his hands, and his heart stopped when he read:

An Evening with the Arts

With music by Marc Charbonneau

Special Guest: Sherlock Holmes

His thumb traced over his name as his mind (which seemed quite numb at the moment) tried to process the idea of his name being on the same concert programme as Marc’s.

“Yeah, that’s going in a frame on the wall at Baker Street,” John grinned. “Oh, speaking of which. Look up.”

Sherlock glanced up obediently and found a camera phone in front of him. He let John snap a couple of photos before his partner threw his arm around him, held the phone above their faces, and took a shot of them.

“That’s the new profile pic,” John said.

He couldn’t help but to think he hadn’t seen John this proud of him in ages. What would it have been like, then, if he had become a musician instead of consulting detective? Would he have still met John? Would John still have been interested in him?

“I’m sending that one to Laura,” John announced. An announcement came on in French, warning audience members they had ten minutes before the show started.

“Ten minutes!” A nearby stage manager called, in French, holding up both hands as he did.

“Ten fingers?” John asked. “I guess that means ten minutes? I should get back then. I just wanted to wish you luck and tell you that you’re going to be absolutely brilliant at this.”

“Then why do I feel like melting to the floor?” Sherlock mumbled.

Reaching up, John straightened his bowtie and ran a hand through his hair.

“I’ve never seen you so nervous,” John said.

“This time it’s not about cases, or victims,” he explained. “It’s about me. It’s high stakes on a level I’ve never experienced before. If I fail at this-”

“You won’t.”

“If I do it will change how I feel about the violin forever.”

“That’s insane!” John hissed. “It’s just butterflies in your stomach, you know that. Just go out there, give it your best, and just enjoy being here. Don’t put so much pressure on yourself.”
He patted Sherlock’s shoulder and leaned in to kiss his cheeks before disappearing. After noticing most of the other musicians were already gathered on stage, Sherlock grabbed the violin and music and raced for his seat.

First violin.

What would he have (secretly) given in school to be sitting in this seat? As his eyes wandered around the massive symphony hall, with its beautiful arches, golden columns, and hundreds of packed seats.

So many people.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

In what seemed like no time Marc walked out onto the stage, and the audience clapped. Sherlock’s heart pounded and his mind filled with silly questions- am I in tune? Do I have the right music? Is this really happening?

Even as Marc raised his arms to cue the orchestra, it still didn’t feel real. Sherlock felt like some other force was controlling him as he raised the violin to his shoulder. The bow shook ever so slightly in his hand, and the violinist next to him threw him a worrying look. He felt a single trickle of sweat run down his forehead, and he let out the smallest breath to calm himself down. But in the massive auditorium, the breath seemed to echo as far as the balcony seats.

The music began abruptly. Keeping up with the orchestra made him feel almost robotic: his mind seemed to automatically know what to do. It was almost effortless on his part, which helped him keep his cool. He knew his solo wasn’t until the sixth line, but while the line always seemed so far away in practise in performance the music moved twice as fast. All of a sudden he was the only person playing, and the sound of his own music flowing gracefully throughout the hall was beautiful enough to take his breath away. He wasn’t sure he breathed through the entire five measure solo; when the orchestra joined back in and the audience clapped it felt like his lungs had been punctured, allowing him to breathe easily.

One song flowed into another, and before he knew it Marc was waving a hand toward him. It took him a good few second before he realised he was being asked to stand and bow.

He was certain his face was bright red as he did.

After saying a final goodbye from Marc (and receiving a hefty case fee for their efforts) he and John found themselves dining in another restaurant on Champs-Elysees. Their champagne glasses clang together in a toast, both of them still beaming.

“This is all on Mycroft’s credit card, right?” John teased as their appetisers were set out.

“I think our drinks cost more than we spend on groceries in a week,” Sherlock replied happily.

“Cheers.”

They tipped their glasses; he had to admit, it might have been the best champagne he had ever tasted. He let out a long breath, letting the alcohol calm his nerves. He was still running on adrenaline, his hands had been shaking uncharacteristically all night. Sherlock knew for certain now he could never live the life of a professional musician. Having hundreds of eyes on him, jumping into a major performance with little rehearsal…it made him realise how lucky he was to get to work on his own. To be able to call all the shots.
“Have I mentioned how proud I am of you?” John asked. “If that were me up there, I would have fainted.”

“I felt like fainting,” he admitted. “I’d take solving a murder over that any day.”

John shook his head as he nibbled on his brochette.

“Do you want to do some shopping?” He asked.

Sherlock stared at him, honestly not quite sure what he meant.

“It’s just that Champs-Elysees is one of the best streets in the world for shopping,” his boyfriend explained, “and I could use a new pair of jeans.”

Blinking, Sherlock stared at him another moment before echoing:

“A new pair of jeans?” John nodded. “We’re in Paris, and you’re concerned about shopping?”

“Oh, sex!” John grinned and gave Sherlock a look while stepping close enough for a kiss. “Rest assured we will get to that later,” he pecked Sherlock’s lips before stepping back again, “But first I want to see the sights!”

Normally he would skip all things touristy, but he really didn’t mind making a stop to see the Eiffel tower. Seeing John’s eyes light up at the sight of it made the entire trip to France worth it, and as they lay in the grass in the middle of Champs de Mars he thought to himself that he hadn’t seen John smile this much in a long time.

“You’re beautiful,” he whispered, tracing a finger alongside John’s jaw.

They bought a bottle of red wine from the restaurant and settled in to enjoy the mesmerising view of the Tower at night. He wished they had a bit more privacy (though some nearby couples didn’t seem too shy to make out in a public park), but it was enough just to be there.

John sighed happily as he turned back onto his back, shoved his hands behind his head, and gazed up.

“You know how usually famous places usually live up to the hype?” John asked. “This does.”

“Yes. Maybe.”

“Is it better than Disneyland?” Sherlock teased.

With a laugh, John admitted:

“You know, Laura said the next time they came over she wanted to take Dan to Disneyland,” he confessed. “She’s never been to France either. Of course, she lives on the other side of the ocean so she has an excuse.”
His eyes twinkled as he winked at John. He had been teasing him the whole trip about how he had never been.

“My family just weren’t ones for travel, alright?” John replied, laughing, “and I’ve been busy you know, saving lives, fighting wars, and chasing you around London. I just haven’t had the time.”

“I’m just glad you’re here with me now.” He scooped up John’s hand in his, and his body relaxed as their fingers fell together. “We can go shopping in the morning if you’d like. I actually saw a coat I might like.”

He was surprised when John’s eyes lit up in horror.

“And replace the Belstaff?!”

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock replied:

“Everyone gets a new look every now and then, John,” he pointed out. “Even me. I might go for some shoes too.”

Their conversation faded away into the sounds of the city around them as their eyes bore into the sparkling Tower.

“Do you want to do a pub crawl?” John suddenly asked.

It sounded very much like something he did not want to do.

Should not do, in fact.

“A what?” He asked.

“You know, going around to different pubs and trying their drinks,” John explained. “Come on, it’ll be fun. We never go out drinking.”

Sherlock frowned, wondering if he must be missing something here.

“Yes, and for very good reason. Do you remember what happens whenever we get drunk?”

“Yeah,” John replied, reaching over andランキング a hand through his hair. “We have really, really fantastic sex.”

Somehow, even just thought the thought sent a roaring rush of heat through his body, and he didn’t hesitate to follow John when his lover jumped up from the grass.

He was certain John must have drugged his drink because he wasn’t sure how else he managed to find himself in the Marais district of Paris at a loud, packed…

“Gay bar,” Sherlock announced. John grinned at him and nodded over the pounding techno music. “You brought me to a gay bar?”

“Yeah!” John shouted back. “I thought it was time, you know?”

“Time for…?”

“It’s just something you try!” John acted like it was a perfectly reasonable explanation, but as classy as the rest of Paris seemed to be, this place seemed to be the opposite. They were packed like sardines amongst dozens- possibly hundreds- of young, sweaty French men who didn’t all
seem to believe in wearing shirts in public.

“I don’t think that’s what this is,” Sherlock said. He hated not being able to hear himself over music. Being in a crowd this side always made him nervous—anything could happen, especially in a place where everyone was vulnerable.

Yet John was still grinning like an idiot.

“You’re not…high, are you?” Sherlock asked.

He was almost certain John had lost it. His sister had driven him mad, and he had officially lost it. But instead of answering, John grabbed his hand and started moving in awkward, twitching, movements.

“What the hell are you doing?” Sherlock demanded.

“Dance with me!” John shouted.

Did John even remember who he was with?

“John, you’re over forty!” He exclaimed. “Have some dignity! If we’re getting drunk tonight, we’re doing it the classy way.”

“…classy way?”

He just really wished John would stop moving like that. One thing was for certain, the doctor he definitely had two left feet.

“Wine or…whiskey or…something that doesn’t involve…” he shuddered as a large, shirtless, man brushed by him. “Skin.”

“Aw, you’re uncomfortable.”

“Yes!” Finally, he was getting it. “Is that so wrong?”

John simply rolled his eyes. Somehow they had moved through the dance floor without meaning to, and Sherlock realised they had made it to the bar.

Thank god.

“Shots!” Sherlock called. John didn’t seem to understand so he acted out taking a shot with his hands. His boyfriend nodded enthusiastically, and he ordered them two shots of vodka. “Cheers.”

They both downed the shots quickly, and as he pulled John out of the bar and back onto the street he was starting to feel a buzz. He couldn’t help but to grin: it did feel good to be able to move around freely, to explore and have no responsibilities.

“Does this pub crawl require we stay on one street?” Sherlock asked. As he glanced around at all the nearby bars he knew none of them were really his style.

“You’re right, Moulin Rouge is more up your alley.”

He blinked. Was that supposed to be a reference he should know?

“Never mind,” John replied. “I have other ideas.”
He flagged down a cab, and Sherlock replied:

“You’ve researched this, haven’t you?”

“And planned accordingly. Though I do wish we could ditch the tuxes.”

They took a cab to the Saint Germain des Paris district, and though the amount of stop and go traffic was enough to make it feel like his buzz was wearing off, he was excited to be back in the Latin Quarter. He had been here once before, as a kid, and remembered being fascinated by all the art and culture embedded in the area’s history.

“We should come back tomorrow and have lunch at the Les Deux Magots,” Sherlock said, pointing to the famous café through the window.


Sherlock grinned.

“Exactly.”

For the night, however, they settled for Chez Georges and ordered a couple of shots of whiskey. As they settled against the bar and watched locals and students half their age show off their lack of dance moves, they both broke into fits of laughter.

“We’re far too old for this,” John finally admitted. “I miss being young.”

“The funnest days are ahead!” Sherlock teased. “Retirement. Whatever horrible cancer or heart disease we’ll probably inevitably end up with. Adult nappies.”

“Sherlock!” John giggled, swatting at his arm. He waved an accusing finger at the detective. “You make me feel much younger than I am. The war aged me, you know.”

He studied John’s deep brown eyes and admitted, a bit too quietly:

“I know.”

He still saw the war in John everyday: in the way he carried himself, in the way he jumped at sudden noises. In the way he noted emergency exits as soon as they entered buildings, as he did now. He understood why John longed for carefree nights like this: he wanted to be able to let loose, to trick himself into being normal, just for one night. Sherlock greatly admired John for being able to pick up his life after the war and take control of his future.

The music changed to some modern slow song, and as he saw the crowd form into couples he couldn’t help but to let his hand slip into John’s. He wasn’t sure if it the alcohol rattling through his blood or how bright and happy John looked right now, but somehow he wanted to join the crowd of dancing people.

Or at least hide in the corner and awkwardly sway to music.

“Can I have this dance?” Sherlock asked into John’s ear.

Nodding, John swallowed, almost as though he was nervous, and allowed Sherlock to lead him to a more private spot nuzzled between the bar and a dark corner. He placed one hand on John’s shoulder, one on his hip, and attempted to find the beat of the music as they began swaying back and forth. He didn’t argue when John rested his head on his shoulder. At one point John tripped on
his feet and giggled, but Sherlock only smiled and helped him regain his balance.

“Feeling tipsy?” Sherlock teased.

John just shook his head against his shoulder and held him closer. It was, quite honestly, one of the most intimate moments they’d ever had. Slow dancing in public apparently required much more of a deep, emotional, connection than even snogging or sex. Somehow the music made him feel…feel something he couldn’t explain. He embraced John’s warmth, embraced his worries and his fears for that moment everything was okay.

When the song ended a moment later they broke apart, clearing their throats and avoiding each other’s eyes.

“Another shot?” Sherlock asked.

“Definitely.”

After the second shot they slipped out of the bar and into another cab. John had a list of things he wanted to see in Paris on his mobile, and he pointed to something called “Pont de l’Archevêché” and Sherlock asked the driver to take them there. The driver chuckled and grinned at them in the mirror, and he resisted the urge to pull out his own phone and look it up.

When the car stopped, all Sherlock recognised the river Seine and Notre Dame nearby. He had been hoping to visit this area of the city the next day and see some of the landmarks, but he had to admit as they stepped out of the cab the moonlight over the Seine was breathtaking.

John threw an arm around him- mostly because they were both stumbling drunk, but also because his boyfriend enjoyed being a romantic.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” John asked as they began their journey across the bridge. “It’s a bit dark, but take a closer look at the railing.”

He squinted through the darkness and saw the railing was lined with hundreds- no, possibly thousands- of locks. The locks all had names on them, names of couples it looked like.

“The bridge is nicknamed the ‘love-lock’ bridge,” John explained as they came to a stop at the centre. “Greg told me about it after we agreed to come here. He said it was…”

The doctor counted his steps beneath his breath and stopped on the fiftieth and turned, pointing a finger at Notre Dame and lining it up with the bridge. Kneeling down, John pushed aside a bright neon green lock to reveal a gold lock with red writing:

Greg & Myc

A smile slipped across both of their faces. He knew this had to be Greg’s doing- Mycroft wasn’t one for putting his name in the public eye unless it was absolutely necessary.

“Greg’s doing?” Sherlock asked.

“Yeah,” John said, laughing. “Can you imagine the look on Mycroft’s face?”

He was about to reply when he noticed John’s hand slip into his pocket and pull out a sky blue lock. The words ‘John and Sherlock’ were already written on it. His boyfriend was absolutely beaming when he stood up and placed the lock in Sherlock’s hand.
“I bet it looked something like the look on your face now,” John said quietly.

A hand raised up to gently cup his face and a pair of chapped, alcohol-tinged, lips pressed against his. The hand fell to his own, cupping the lock in his palm.

“Honestly, Sherlock it’s not…it’s not a proposal,” John said with his lips turned up in a smile. I just love you. I love you more than anything or anyone. This lock, it symbolises eternal love. That’s what I want with you.”

*Eternal love.*

Just the words made his heart pound faster than ever before. Faster than their first case, first kiss, first time. He was frozen; his lips were frozen. They’d had this conversation before, in whispers in the dark after sex. Never in public. Never so planned.

“Sherlock, it’s okay,” John said, still smiling. “You don’t have to say anything.”

Good, because it was like someone put his mind on ‘pause’. All he could think of were memories of him and John, running around London, getting themselves out of kidnappings. John, cleaning his wounds. John, holding him after Kirchhoff and John, being there after he found out about Laura.

*Love,* he was beginning to realise, was not just sex and romance. It’s life, it’s merging your life with someone else’s.

And somehow, that idea didn’t seem so terrifying anymore.

“You can say something though,” John continued to tease. “It’s usually polite, especially after one has crafted such a beautiful and romantic speech just for you.”

As Sherlock’s eyes lifted from the lock to John’s eyes it felt like something had punctured his heart and he was able to breathe again.

“Why is your name in front of mine?” He finally asked.

John glanced down at the lock, like it was the first time he realised it was like that. Sherlock’s fingers brushed over their names as he explained:

“It’s always ‘Sherlock Holmes and John Watson,” he joked. “What, suddenly we’re all…eternal love and your name comes first?”

“…you’re concerned about the order of our names?”

Somewhere in his drunken state of mind he realised that comment probably fell under the category of not good.

“No,” Sherlock replied. He pulled John into an embrace so tight they both nearly lost their balance and tumbled into the railing.

“Yeah, don’t throw us into the river,” John said. “The river is for the key.”

He showed Sherlock the key and knelt down again. Sherlock followed, and John gently took his hand in his. With a grin on his face, John guided their hands so that they put their lock in place, right next to Mycroft and Greg’s.

“Do we have to be in eternal love beside my brother?” Sherlock grimaced.
Rolling his eyes, John snapped the lock in place and stood up. They looked down at the key in John’s palm, and he nodded, signaling it was okay. With one quick movement, his boyfriend threw the key over the railing and into the river. The two watched as ripples formed where the key landed, and it wasn’t until the last one faded that Sherlock turned back to John and confessed quietly:

“I like ‘John and Sherlock’.”

Chapter End Notes

After the stag night sequence I couldn't resist doing something like this! Thanks to everyone for the lovely comments. Thanks for reading, and I would love to know what you thought!!
John woke the next morning with a splitting headache. The minute he dared to open his eyes he groaned: the sun was shining far too brightly through the curtains and he swore he heard the hum of a hoover next door. Something hard, like glass, was lying against his back, and when he turned to look he was horrified to find it was their wine bottle from the night before.

It was empty.

“Sherlock?” John called. His voice was hoarse, and he had to cough a few times before he could speak again. He looked to the side to find John’s naked body twisted in the sheets. “Sherlock, wake up!”

John hit him a few times until Sherlock jumped up with a groan and ran his hands over his face. His lover tried to sit up and fell over in a heap, his head landing in John’s lap. His own fingers brushed through Sherlock’s hair, comforting him. “How much did we drink last night?”

“How much did we drink last night?”

John exclaimed. “I did!” He kissed the top of John’s head. “You’re a bad influence on me.”

For a moment they lay in silence, both trying to adjust to their hangovers. His fingers continued play with Sherlock's hair as his lover’s fingers traced his own thighs. Sherlock’s eyes flickered around the room, taking in their clothes scattered about the floor, various books that had been knocked down from a nearby shelf, and lube that had fallen to the floor beside the bed.

“We had sex,” he announced.

“Brilliant, you are,” John said dryly.
“You know when you say we have fantastic sex when we’re drunk?” Sherlock asked. “It would be nice if we could remember said sex, for once.”

“I can give you a replay, if you’d like.”

He leaned down enough for their lips to brush against each other. A tired smile crossed his face as his hand cupped Sherlock’s neck, and his tongue teased open Sherlock’s mouth.

“John,” Sherlock murmured, pulling back. He looked down at his boyfriend, waiting for him to continue. Whatever it was, it seemed to be something Sherlock had been struggling with. His lover reached up, draping an arm around his waist. “About what you said last night. I just want you to know that I love you, so much, and I…I want what you want.”

John froze. Amongst the very little he remembered after they started drinking last night, having some deep conversation with Sherlock was not part of it.

“Yeah,” he said slowly, trying to pretend like he knew what he was talking about.

His boyfriend lifted up his left hand, kissed his ring finger, and John’s stomach did flip-flops.

“I’m sorry if I seemed a bit put off by it at first,” Sherlock went on, wearing a smirk. “It’s just not what I expected, you know? But it is what I want.”

Biting his lip, John forced himself to stay quiet long enough to get his thoughts together. The way Sherlock’s fingers were now playing with his left hand, the twinkle in his eyes…and suddenly, more pieces of the night came back to him. The moonlight, shining over the Seine, locks over the Pont de l’Archevêché, and him, down on one knee in front of Sherlock.

Oh Jesus.

His hands desperately ran through his hair. His breathing quickened.

What happened after that?

He wracked his brain, trying his best to remember what happened next, but it was hard to concentrate as a pair of lips suddenly fell around the head of his cock.

“Sherlock,” he whispered.

It was half a plea for release, half a please for answers. He didn’t really…? Surely not…? Sherlock’s lips went down further, and he couldn’t help but to moan. For a moment his lover’s mouth popped off his cock, long enough for him to announce:

“You’re mine, forever.”

“Oh shit.”

It was a few seconds before he realised he said that out loud. All the blood rushed to his head, his stomach churned, and the nausea become so much that he leaped off the bed and rushed to the loo. He threw up just before reaching the toilet. His skin immediately turned pale, and his hands began shaking as he reached up for a flannel to wipe his mouth with. He felt cold and clammy, and not just because of being sick.

Suddenly something soft and cold landed on his neck. He hadn’t realised that Sherlock followed him into the loo and knelt down beside him, running a cool, damp, flannel across his neck.
“Sorry,” John murmured, forcing a grateful smile. “It’s just the alcohol.”

He managed a half-moan before he threw up again. As he heaved all the alcohol, the French food, he’d eaten the night before into the toilet the world seemed to spin upside down.

Proposing to Sherlock.

That’s what he must have done last night.

In a drunken, stupid, stupor, he must have proposed to Sherlock.

Without actually discussing it first.

Without thinking of how Sherlock felt about it, from the sound of it.

He must have just sprung it on him

As he looked at Sherlock now he realised how distant he seemed, like he was trying to make John feel like he was okay.

“I just need some air,” John said quietly.

It wasn’t a lie. He left Sherlock alone in the loo while he stumbled across the flat and out to the balcony, grabbing his mobile on the way. The street traffic was a bit too loud for his hangover’s liking, but it didn’t stop him from hitting Greg’s contact. He breathed a sigh of relief when Greg answered on the first ring.

“Hey John,” the DI greeted. “What’s up? I figured you two would be hiding out in Paris, biding your time before you have to go back to reality.”

John let out a low, steady, breath before admitting:

“I did something really, really stupid.”

Greg burst out laughing so loud that John had to hold the phone away from his ear for a moment.

“Oh god,” Greg snorted. “You two got tattoos or something, didn’t you?”

*If only.*


The phone was silent for a full moment. John breathed heavily, giving his friend time to take it in.

“You w-what?” Greg stammered.

He honestly couldn’t tell if he was pissed or just stunned.

“We got drunk,” he confessed. Saying it out loud just made it sound so much worse. No one, *no one,* deserved to be proposed to while drunk. “God I’m so stupid.”

“You’re a bloody romantic, that’s what you are!” Greg said; he could just imagine his stupid grin spreading across his face.

“I’m just worried…I’m worried I might have pushed him into it,” he said. “He woke up this morning saying over and over again that he meant it, he really meant it. Almost like he was
convincing himself- or convincing me that he wanted to. He kept playing with my left hand like…I
don’t even know. I just…”

“You’re freaking out!” Greg replied honestly, but with an undercurrent of barely suppressed joy.
“John, it’s okay, it happens to everyone. Hell, it happened to me after I proposed to my wife.”

“Yes, your ex wife!”

“John, just take a breath,” his friend pleaded. “He said yes, right? That’s a good thing. Sherlock
wouldn’t say yes if he didn’t really mean it, you know that.”

It was a good point. There was no telling Sherlock what to do or say. There was no pressuring
Sherlock to do anything.

“Just calm down,” Greg said slowly. “What you’ve got to do is sit Sherlock down and talk about
this sober. And I mean talk through everything. Not just the lovey dovey, growing old together
part. I’m talking financials: your wills, your debt, everything. Marriage isn’t just an act of love.
You’ve got to put everything on the table, up front, or it will come back to bite you later. Talk
through everything. Worst comes to worst, give yourselves time. You were drunk, you’re in one of
the most romantic places on the planet, it happens. Say that yeah, you might want to do this
someday, but give yourselves time. Wait until it’s right, until you’re ready.”

For the first time since waking up John could breathe easily. Greg made a lot of sense, and he
hated himself for not thinking of it first.

That was exactly what he and Sherlock needed.

“Oh, John breathed. “Okay, yeah, you’re right.”

“’course I am.”

“Listen, just…don’t tell Mycroft, please? I don’t need him on my case.”

Greg let out another laugh.

“Deal,” he offered. “Of course, you realise that if you and Sherlock actually do this you and
Mycroft will be brother-in-laws.”

He hung up the phone, not daring to give that statement a second thought.

Taking a deep breath, John slid open the balcony door to find Sherlock lounging on the bed, still
naked.

“I was hoping sex was still on the table,” Sherlock admitted, “but if the nausea is too much-“

“No,” he interrupted, holding up a hand, “no, it’s not just the alcohol.”

Sherlock’s face contorted into confusion as he crossed the room and sat down beside his love on
the bed. John took Sherlock’s hand in his and studied the musician’s long, graceful fingers for a
moment before admitting:

“Sherlock, I think we should wait.”

With a pained look on his face, Sherlock swallowed. His eyes dashed away.

“Oh…” Sherlock said slowly. “I supposed we could come back for a quickie before we head
He couldn’t help but to snort. “No, it’s not that,” he promised. “God no. I mean, about last night. I just want to make sure we’re ready for this step before we take it. We were both incredibly drunk last night, and that’s just not a decision you make while you’re wasted, you know?”

Sherlock just looked so hurt that he felt sick again. He raised a hand to his boyfriend’s face, caressing his cheek gently. “I do love you,” John whispered, “and I want to take care of you, for as long as I can. This is the strongest relationship I’ve ever been with. I’ve never been so close to anyone, so addicted to anyone. But we both have so much going on in our lives; we’ve been through so much, especially you. I want you to be ready. I want us to be ready. So let’s give it some time, okay? Just wait until the moment is right…preferably a sober moment.”

He forced a small laugh to break the ice, but Sherlock still looked as confused as before. John felt his lover stiffen under his touch, and he held a hand on Sherlock’s knee to steady him.

“John…” Sherlock breathed, “…what the hell are you talking about?”

John blinked.

The world crashed down around him, like the end of a bad joke. “About…last night.”

“So you…you love me, and you want to be together, and take care of me forever. What am I missing?”

God, this was going to be harder than he thought. Maybe he was the problem, not Sherlock. Maybe he was too afraid, too insecure.

“I’m just, Sherlock I…I’m just not ready for marriage,” he confessed. “In reality we’ve only been romantically involved for what, four months? It’s just such a huge commitment, and we haven’t even considered everything! I mean, we have our financials, our debt- well, I have my debt. We’ve never even discussed our wills; I don’t even know if you have one-“

A hand clamped down over his mouth before he could go any further. His face turned bright red, but from embarrassment and not lack of oxygen. He held his breath as he watched Sherlock figure it all out…

And burst out laughing.

The hand disappeared from his mouth as Sherlock doubled over laughing.

“What?” John demanded. His boyfriend only laughed harder. “Sherlock!”

Sherlock grabbed his hand and looked him in the eye, trying his best not to smile.

“We didn’t get engaged, John,” Sherlock explained.

He was embarrassed at the amount of relief that rush through him at that statement.

“Oh thank god,” he murmured, closing his eyes for a minute. They shot open again when he
realised how horrible that must have sounded. “Well great, now I sound like a dick!”

“What?”

John threw himself back against the pillows, disgusted with himself.

“I’ve been going around all morning worrying about us getting engaged,” he said, “meanwhile I thought you were excited about it.”

The pillows shifted as Sherlock leaned back to join him at the head of the bed. When he spoke up again his voice was the soft, sympathetic, tone he only ever used with him. John could tell he was still trying to not laugh, but it was nice to know that he was at least attempting to be serious about this.

“Why would you think we got engaged?”

“I don’t know,” John said, throwing his hands in the air in defeat. “All I remember after the concert was being on a bridge over the Seine down on one knee.”

Sherlock lost his battle and started laughing again.

“You know what?” Sherlock teased. He actually hit John with a pillow. “This is what you deserve. This is what you deserve for being such a wonderful romantic.”

But John could only stare at him, clueless. Sherlock grabbed his hand again and their eyes met.

“You took me out to the bridge and told me about how the locks symbolized eternal love,” Sherlock explained, “it was really sweet, John. But you specifically said it wasn’t a proposal.”

He offered John a reassuring smile and let out another laugh.

“You’re never going to let me forget this, are you?” John sighed.

“Not a chance.”

They shared a quick, soft, kiss before they settled back into bed. Their hands fell together again, and John began planting kisses down Sherlock’s neck. A soft moan escaped his lover, and John’s hands trailed down beneath his legs in response.

“How hungover are you?” John asked quietly.

“I’ve had worse,” Sherlock admitted. “You’re not going to throw up again in the middle of this, are you?”

Even at the question John’s stomach churned and a wave of nausea overwhelmed him. He fell back beside Sherlock just as the dizziness hit him.

“Mmm, maybe you’re right,” he mumbled. He rolled toward Sherlock and his eyes just as a cool hand fell on his own cock. Sherlock ran his hand gently up and down the shaft, enough to get him hard and he warned: “I might fall asleep.”

“Is that a threat?” Sherlock grinned.

He nuzzled John’s neck and let his fingers trail down to his balls, teasing them before his hands moved back to his shaft. John moaned against Sherlock’s hair and breathed slowly, letting his body relax to the movements. Soon his hips began thrusting ever so slightly against the hand roaming
his body. Suddenly one of Sherlock’s hands untangled from his and dipped down to join the other on his cock. He gasped as the fingers trailed slowly to his arsehole; he lifted his hips to give his lover better access. John let out another gasp as Sherlock’s finger teased him open and bit his lip as he heard him reach for lube.

“We’re terrible drinking mates, you know that?” Sherlock said, right into his ear. “Bad influences. I think I remember us dancing.”

Grinning, John lifted his head and replied:

“We did dance. Slow danced, as a matter of fact- oh!”

“Did I hit a sweet spot, Dr Watson?” Sherlock murmured.

“Yes,” he breathed and buried himself into his boyfriend’s chest.

Effortlessly, the finger pushed all the way in and his hips thrust along with the movements. At that moment, John’s mobile buzzed

“You two okay?- GL

Sherlock added another finger, and his body nearly curled into half at the tight push-pull sensations.

Yes :)

With shaky hands, John just barely managed to finish the text just as Sherlock sped up his penetrations.

“I’d love to be in you,” Sherlock confessed, right into his ear. He shuddered as his lover added: “But my head is pounding, and I have really got to piss.”

“Romantic,” John hissed. The comment earned him a kiss on the neck, and he teased: “Your breath stinks.”

“Just…there, right?” Sherlock asked, pushing into that perfect sweet spot just enough to send him over the edge.

He cried out softly as he came into Sherlock’s hands. Dizziness overwhelmed him for a split second, and when he opened his eyes again the room seemed to spin. He found Sherlock, gazing at him with a lazy smile on his face, and smiled back at him.

“Now you,” John whispered.

Sherlock held up his hand in protest.

“No, seriously,” he mumbled.

John laughed as his boyfriend sank down into the bed next to him, and they tangled their bodies together as closely as possible. Foreheads touching, holding hands, their eyes search each others' for a long, quiet moment.
“I would, you know,” Sherlock suddenly announced quietly. He kissed John gently on the lips before explaining: “I would marry you. If that’s what you’re looking for.”

His heart began pounding as his eyes went wide.

“Are you…asking?” John whispered.

A long, pale, hand ran through his hair.

“When we’re ready,” Sherlock said, so quietly John could barely hear him. “I know it’s what you’ve always dreamed of. A wedding…a spouse…a family.”

He could only stare, wondering where this was coming from. What can of worms had he opened?

“Yeah, but Sherlock…I’ve dated women all my life, and none of them made me feel the way I feel about you,” John replied. “All I want is…whatever you want. Whatever makes you happy. I just want us to be together forever…whether that’s officially or privately or-“

Sherlock’s lips crashed into his before he could finish. After a long moment of a kiss so powerful it took his breath away, Sherlock finally announced:

“Is that a yes then?”

John blinked. Was this really happening?”

“Is that a proposal?” John challenged.

His lover’s eyes lit up.

“Consider it a pre-proposal,” Sherlock offered, “but I’ll be ready, John. Whenever we decide to…if we ever decide to….whatever happens.”

He caressed Sherlock’s cheek and replied:

“Yeah. Me too.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all SO much for the nice comments and kudos on the last chapter! I really have been super overwhelmed with all the encouragement and love for this fic!! I’m glad you guys enjoyed the boys in France as much as I did! And I hoped you liked the ’pre-proposal’! I’d love to hear your thoughts on it.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Please forgive me
If I act a little strange
For I know not what I do.
Feels like lightning running through my veins
Every time I look at you

-David Gray

Sherlock’s knee bounced with anxiety the entire trip back to London. He kept checking his mobile, hoping there would be a new case waiting for him when they got home. He had basically just proposed to his boyfriend- the boyfriend he had been dating all of about four months- and this was after John was in panic mode all morning at the very thought of them getting married. Even if it was only a “pre-proposal”, was it too soon?

The adrenaline rush from the case, concert, and his morning with John cooled off as their cab left them off at Baker Street. He and John exchanged glances, as though to say ‘ready for this?’, like they were embarking on something new. It was then that a new panicking thought settled in: this was new. They had sailed past the infatuation phase and had entered into a kind of race. Who would propose to who and when? How?

Who was he kidding? There was no such thing as a pre-proposal. The pre-proposal was a proposal, and up until the very moment he blurted out the idea of it to John it was the first time in his entire life he had ever considered anything like getting married.

“Are you okay?” John asked, smirking. “You look like you might throw up.”

He swallowed nervously as his eyes flashed over the new black leather jacket, dark denim jeans, and maroon jumper John bought. It was all so classy, so hot, and he instantly felt his skin crawling with warmth.

Since when did I turn into a sixteen year old?

“I’m fine,” he lied.

John kissed him.

“You look pretty sharp yourself,” he teased, straightening the collar of Sherlock’s new charcoal blazer.


His boyfriend snorted as he fished the flat key out of his pockets and opened the door.

“Smells like Mrs Hudson,” John murmured as they climbed the stairs. “She must be in-”

They stopped as they rounded the top of the stairs and entered the living room. Crowded around their living room furniture were Mrs Hudson, Molly, Lestrade, Mycroft, Mike of all people, and some short bloke he hadn’t met before.
“Surprise!” They all shouted in unison.

All except Mycroft, of course. He simply sat quietly in John’s chair with a faint, but knowing, smile on his face.

He and John just stood and stared. His heart pounded at the shock of finding their usually empty flat full of people, but at the sight of the cake waiting for them that said ‘Congratulations’ he understood.

“John,” Sherlock murmured under his breath, “they think we’re engaged.”

John simply let out a long breath and closed his eyes.

“Greg I made you promise-!”

“I know!” Greg exclaimed, grinning wildly. He jumped up, bouncing with excitement like a kid. “But you know I’m terrible at keeping secrets, John.”

Sherlock’s eyes locked with his brother’s. He couldn’t quite read Mycroft’s expression: he wasn’t sure if it was one of pride, excitement, or- even worse- forewarning. Like he knew Sherlock was getting into something he couldn’t handle. But instead of protesting, Mycroft simply stood up, quietly approached him, and held out a hand.

“Congratulations, baby brother,” Mycroft announced quietly.

Mrs Hudson let out a squeal of excitement and dabbed at her watering eyes.

“Oh Mycroft!” She cried. “Your brother just got engaged, the least you can do is hug him!”

“I’m here, aren’t I?” Mycroft remarked, but he smirked as he turned back to Sherlock and said, with more honesty than he knew his brother was capable of: “I’m happy for you.”

Before he could open his mouth he found himself engulfed by his brother’s arms. His ears filled with clapping and soon everyone was else was closing in for hugs as well.

“I just couldn’t believe it!” Molly admitted, appearing next to him as soon as Mycroft pulled away. “I mean, you two really have only been together a few months, but a quick marriage can be quite romantic. My mum and dad only dated six months before they got married and they were together fifteen years before they divorced!”

Romantic, Molly, Sherlock laughed to himself.

His eyes dashed to John. He was in true panic mode now, and it looked like his boyfriend was too.

“Um, everyone,” John stammered. The room immediately fell silent, and John’s face turned a shade of pink. “We didn’t actually get engaged.”

Disappointed mumblings filled the room, and John held up a hand to call for silence once again.

“Sherlock and I had a rather romantic time in Paris-“ Mycroft rolled his eyes, “but we’re still just partners. Someday I’d love to marry him, and god does he know it, but there will be a proper time for that.”

John beamed up at him, and Sherlock decided he couldn’t have explained it better himself. His boyfriend looked nearly as teary-eyed and proud as Mrs Hudson as he went on:
“But you should still be very proud of him because Sherlock was absolutely brilliant in the concert. Really, truly, brilliant, and I couldn’t be prouder to be his.”

He stole a kiss from Sherlock so quick it took his breath away. With their luggage hanging in one hand and a bag of shopping in the other, he let John hold him steady as they kissed long and hard, right there in front of everyone. His ears were burning when they pulled away, and he caught sight of Molly’s hand grabbing the stranger’s.

So Molly had a new boyfriend. He and John exchanged glances; his boyfriend grinned, signaling he understood what was going on too. The fact that Molly was still trying to make him jealous was adorable, flattering, and kind of sad all at the same time.

“Well, play the song from last night, then!” Mike shouted from the back.

“Yeah, we want to hear your solo!” Molly chimed in.

But suddenly Greg stepped forward, looking pale and nervous.

“Actually, there’s something I want to say,” Greg announced, speaking uncharacteristically quietly. He turned to Mycroft, who froze as he was suddenly made the centre of attention. Sherlock watched, feeling as though he were in a trance, as he and his brother saw at the same time what was happening. Greg’s hand reached in his pocket and stayed there for a moment, holding onto something inside it before continuing: “John, Sherlock, I’m sure one day you two will be ready to take that next step. And god is it ever a big step. I’ve thought about this a lot, and we’ve talked about it- Mycroft and I that is. Mye, I know you have to work it out with your job. I know it’s a risk, and I know I’ve failed at this before, but I know we can do this. I know we both want it. So, please, Mycroft, would you do me the honour of becoming my husband?”

The entire room froze as Greg fell to one knee and presented a small jewellery box that held a small, golden, band. Sherlock was certain his heart stopped and his body was running off of pure shock. To say his brother was stunned was an understatement- he looked like the future itself had punched him right in the face. Mycroft Holmes was someone who definitely lived in the moment; he was someone who fought a daily battle to keep his life together. He’d fought for his family before, for Sherlock, for his job and for their country. Sherlock knew he fought for Greg and their relationship, and he fought so hard to make it work every day that he wouldn’t have ever thought Mycroft gave one thought to getting engaged at all. He was too busy living day by day. After all, he and Greg had been together two and a half years now and they were just now coming out to other people.

By the look on Molly’s face, Sherlock couldn’t even be sure that she knew about them.

But Greg.

Greg was a different story.

Greg was a dreamer and a romantic. He admitted to Sherlock once during his drug withdrawals that he proposed to his wife too early and had too short of an engagement. They had only been together seven months, he said, and had never looked any further into the future except for planning their dream wedding. He was cautious with Mycroft but clearly madly in love. For Greg, marriage was the end-game to any relationship. His brother, he knew, would probably be perfectly happy living in secret inside the Holmes estate for the rest of their lives. But Greg, Greg wanted it all. The full package, as John once explained it to him. It was what most men looked for: dating, sex, beauty, fun, a best friend, a partner, a spouse, a family.
He honestly wasn’t sure how it would end between Mycroft and Greg if his brother turned him down.

While John’s face was frozen in a sort of half smile, half look of puzzlement, Sherlock tried to not show how afraid he was of what happened next. All he could hope was that if it wasn’t going to work out they didn’t hurt each other too badly.

“You’ve got to say something to him, love!” Mrs Hudson said softly. Even she seemed to be in utter disbelief.

Mycroft’s mouth fell open, as though he were being controlled by a puppeteer, but instead of reading his script he just stood there.

“Gregory,” he finally whispered after a long moment.

Greg cleared his throat as he got back to his feet. He looked absolutely crestfallen, as though he were preparing himself for the worst.

“Let’s go talk,” Greg said, so quietly Sherlock could barely hear.

His brother nodded stiffly as he let Greg usher him away from the crowd.

The tension could, as they say, be cut with a knife as the two disappeared down the staircase.

“Poor sod,” Mrs Hudson sighed. “Everyone knows that’s not really Mycroft’s style.”

“But it is Greg’s,” Molly pointed out, “the big romantic that he is. He’s probably been planning his speech for weeks.”

“Can you even imagine your brother being someone’s husband?” John asked, shaking his head beside him.

Sherlock’s eyes were transfixed on the top of the staircase. He tried to picture it: Mycroft and Greg, growing old together in his own childhood home. Possibly adopting a kid. Travelling. Retiring. Living in eternal happiness.

And…oddly enough…he could picture it.

Mycroft did so well with Dan and seemed so at ease while around Laura’s family. He couldn’t help but to think that maybe if it wasn’t for their father ruining their life and their mother dying so young that maybe his brother would have met someone long ago. But he never let anyone love him until he met Greg, and Sherlock knew if this didn’t work out that he never would again.

His feet were pounding down the steps before anyone could stop him.

“Sherlock!” John called after him. “It’s not really your place!”

But it was.

Because this was his brother, and his brother was about to make a huge mistake.

He threw open the front door to find Mycroft and Greg holding each other in their arms. His brother’s head rested on the DI’s shoulder in an embrace that seemed far too soft, comforting, and sincere to be real.

“We’ll do whatever we need to,” Greg was murmuring.
“Mycroft!” Sherlock announced.

His brother’s eyes widen as he looked up. Mycroft’s face was even paler than normal. His eyes looked bloodshot, like he was drained from being so overwhelmed with emotion. Greg glared at him for interrupting their intimate moment, but Sherlock turned to his brother and pleaded:

“I need to talk to you.”

When Mycroft continued to stare at him, mouth agape, Sherlock simply grabbed his brother’s wrist and dragged him away, like he did when they were kids.

He led Mycroft into the café next to his flat and ushered him toward a table in the back. Sherlock ordered them two coffees, just the way he knew Mycroft liked it, and a couple of pastries. His brother scowled at the food, but Sherlock encouraged:

“I’ll allow you to indulge just this once.”

The remark earned him a glare, but nevertheless Mycroft eagerly accepted the cheese Danish he was offered. Sherlock himself was coming down from the high of the case, which meant a sudden rush of hunger.

“Paris went well, then?” Mycroft asked casually, as though they weren’t in here to discuss his pending civil partnership.

“Yes,” Sherlock replied, taking a sip of his coffee.

He decided to keep his response simple and clammed up right after; he figured it was best not to tell Mycroft he and John spent a good portion of their time in France having sex in his flat.

“So John took you to Pont de l’Archevêché?” Mycroft mused.

“I have Greg to thank for that,” he shot playfully.

“Yes,” Mycroft replied, taking a sip of his coffee.

He decided to keep his response simple and clammed up right after; he figured it was best not to tell Mycroft he and John spent a good portion of their time in France having sex in his flat.

“So John took you to Pont de l’Archevêché?” Mycroft mused.

“I have Greg to thank for that,” he shot playfully.

“Yes, the bridge is a real…” his brother’s nose scrunched up as he thought of a polite way to say it.

“Eye sore?” Sherlock offered, a small grin forming from the corner of his lips.

“A safety hazard,” Mycroft chimed in, “I’ve read more than one complaint about these so-called ‘love-lock bridges’. But, I must confess, it does have its own charm.”

He wasn’t sure if he had ever heard his brother use the word ‘charm’ before.

“Yes, I must admit it was beautiful at night,” Sherlock agreed. “John and Greg are quite the romantics.”

“They try to be.” There was a faint smile on Mycroft’s face, and Sherlock knew it meant he was using the conversation to mask his fear of giving Greg an answer to his proposal. “Look at us, baby brother: love, relationships, engagements.”

“What have we done with ourselves?” Their eyes met and they shared smiles. “Mum would be proud. She would have adored seeing you getting married…let alone seeing you marry another man.”

“No need to be so dramatic,” Mycroft sighed. “Civil partnerships are mainly all paperwork.”
“You always take the fun out of everything,” he shot. He peeled apart some of his Danish without eating any of it. After a long moment of awkward silence he felt like someone had to say it: “You’re worried about your career.”

His brother went completely still and hid his face behind his coffee mug. He watched as Mycroft’s hands clenched and unclenched around the mug, as his shoulders tightened, as his face twitched.

“Is there some kind of written rule that a government analyst can’t be gay?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft’s eyes widened and dashed from side to side, as though just saying it out loud would summon some kind of evil spirit.

“You know very well that I’m more than just an analyst,” Mycroft shot, “I have the entire reputation and future of this country on my shoulders.”

“And how long have you been in this relationship now?” Sherlock challenged. “You’re making up your own rules about what’s right and wrong. If you turn him down you’re going to ruin the longest and –only, to my knowledge- relationship you’ve ever had.”

After opening and closing his mouth a few times (and probably resisting the urge to yell at him in public), Mycroft finally rest his chin on his fingertips.

“How do you care more about?” Sherlock continued quietly. “Your job or your relationship?”

“That’s not fair.”

“Almost everyone has to make that decision at one time or another!”

“I’m not everyone!” Mycroft snapped. He stopped, like he realised that was more than a bit not good. “I didn’t…what I meant is…”

Sherlock smirked.

“As much as I like seeing you stutter, I know what you meant,” he admitted. “We both know I’ve never been an expert on love, but since being with John I’m finally beginning to understand it. Now my life isn’t just about the work, it’s about…him. This decision should be about how you want to spend the rest of your life.”

For a moment his brother froze, and for one of the first times in his life he thought Mycroft was considering his advice. Throwing the last of the Danish into his mouth, Mycroft stood up, and Sherlock followed him back to the flat.

They found Greg still waiting for them outside, leaning against the door of 221B with his head turned to the ground. As they approached Greg looked up, his eyes hopeful but red-rimmed like he was drained with emotion.

“Gregory,” Mycroft greeted quietly. He stepped up to his partner and took his hands in his own. “That was a beautiful proposal…and I accept it.”

Sherlock’s eyes lit up nearly as much as Greg’s did at the announcement. A grin spread across both the couple’s faces as they shared a kiss and brought their hands to rest in between their chests.

“I’ll do whatever it takes,” Mycroft whispered.

He cupped Greg’s cheek as they pulled away.
“We’re really going to do this?” Greg murmured.

“Yes,” Mycroft replied, “be prepared for a lot of paperwork.”

Greg rolled his eyes.

“Romantic,” he teased.

“I’ll make sure it all gets taken care of,” Mycroft promised.

They kissed again, and Sherlock cleared his throat to remind them they weren’t alone.

“Right,” Greg laughed as he pulled away, holding Mycroft close to him, “I guess we better go inside and tell everyone.”

“I suppose so,” Mycroft sighed.

He smiled at Sherlock one last time before they went back inside.

A couple of hours later all that was left of their party was he, John, Mycroft, and Greg. John sat in his armchair as Sherlock played Marc’s song one final time, and when he finished his lover was still beaming just as much as he was the night before at the performance.

“I think you missed your calling as a professional musician,” John announced, waving a finger at him.

Sherlock sat his violin aside as he leaned over to kiss him.

“And I think you’re banned from alcohol for the next few days,” he teased.

“You’re right,” John said, handing Sherlock his empty whiskey glass, “besides, what kind of brother deals with his sister going to rehab for alcoholism by drinking?”

He looked John in the eye, wondering if this had been secretly bothering him.

“You’re not your sister,” he said quietly.

“Yeah, well, alcoholism is genetic,” John replied. “Perhaps I do need a break.”

His hand fell on John’s shoulder and squeezed it, comforting him. They both realised Mycroft and Greg were still looking on, and John cleared his throat.

“So, Greg, I trust it you two have talked everything through,” he teased, “given yourself time…discussed debt and wills?”

Sherlock raised his eyebrows and turned back to the DI, who wore a sloppy grin.

“Yeah, we’ve had two and a half years of time,” he replied, gazing into Mycroft’s eyes, “trust me, we’ve talked through everything. We’ve actually been discussing this for awhile, but I couldn't wait anymore.”

Everything hadn’t really hit Sherlock until everyone else was gone and his brother and his partner sat on the sofa, hands laced together. His brother had a partner, for life. Someone who would be there for him, someone to grow old with…someone who would become his next of kin once the
papers were signed.

Greg was family now.

“Will there be a ceremony?” John asked.

The couple looked at each other and laughed, a bit awkwardly, like they hadn’t really thought about it.

“I suppose everyone could come watch us sign our names on the papers,” Greg said.

“Come on!” John encouraged. “You two need some kind of ceremony or, at the least, a party!”

“Weddings are overrated, John,” Sherlock chimed in. “Two people spend their life savings on a gathering at a church and share a kiss in front of a bunch of people they don’t really like. Although I do see the appeal of the gift-giving part of it.”

Rolling his eyes, his boyfriend shot:

“That’s not what weddings are about.”

“No, they’re about showing off how beautiful and brilliant your new husband is,” Greg said. Mycroft’s face turned a faint shade of red as a kiss was planted to his cheek. “But I hate imagining what I could have done with all the money I wasted on my first one…or with all the time I wasted.”

For a moment Greg simply stared at his lover, like he couldn’t quite believe he was his. Sherlock fully believed at that moment that part of Greg expected Mycroft to turn him down.

“Are either of you going to change names?” John asked.

Clearly it was another topic the two hadn’t discussed.

“Mycroft Lestrade just sounds wrong,” Greg admitted, “but Gregory Holmes…”

“Sounds perfect,” Mycroft finished under his breath, as if to himself; then at a normal volume, “I would never expect you to change your name.”

“No, it’s brilliant!” Greg exclaimed. “DI Holmes. I love it!”

Sherlock rolled his eyes.

“Now your crime scenes will be even more disorganized,” he mumbled.

Nevertheless, he stood up and held out a hand to his friend.

“I can’t think of anyone else I’d rather have as a brother-in-law,” Sherlock said, “congratulations.”

Instead of accepting his handshake Greg embraced him. It felt surreal to stand there, hugging him and remembering how Greg had basically always treated him like a brother.

And now he was.

Chapter End Notes
So this chapter...*this* chapter! First of all I have to give major kudos to my beta DeathFrisbee221 who talked me into this and helped me come up with the idea. I was planning on doing this later in the story and then she told me her idea, and I thought it was brilliant! I think it's a development you all will really enjoy, but just in case you think it's a bit too much or whatever no worries, it's not going to completely take over the story or anything. I just couldn't bear to end this story without this happening...not that the story is ending anytime soon!

Also- keep in mind this story is still a bit in the past, right around end of September 2011.

Thanks for all the lovely reviews and kudos! I hope you all enjoyed this chapter!!
The First Garrideb

Chapter Notes

This chapter is dedicated to my amazing beta, Deathfrisbee221 to thank her for all her help, advice, and suggestions! I asked her to pick a story to use as the next case and one of her suggestions was The Three Garridebs. I'm new to this story so I followed it pretty closely for the case part, but I love where it goes. If you haven't read it you definitely should!

Also, this is (I think) the first chapter of the story that starts in Sherlock's point of view and ends with John's. I'm not a huge fan of that format, but I couldn't help but to be a tease!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sherlock stared at his pale reflection in the hospital window as rain trickled down outside. It was midnight, and even though the A&E was emptying out and a few hours of time had passed since their ambulance ride to Barts, his heart still pounded just as fast as it did when first heard the gunshot. Each time he was able to get himself to calm down someone’s mobile would go off, or a door would slam shut, or even a chair would just scrape across the floor and there his heart would go, racing again. If he looked closely enough he thought he could see it pounding against his chest. The adrenaline rush hadn’t died off yet, and he had to drag himself into an empty corridor out of fear that he might lash out at the nurses again and really cause a scene.

“Sherlock?” His body jumped at the sound of Greg’s voice behind him. He turned around, and for a moment it looked like his friend might throw his arms around him. Instead Greg only stood, mouth agape, like he wasn’t sure where to begin. At last he asked quietly: “How’s John?”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“The same,” he sighed, raising his fist to rub at his tired eyes. “They say it really wasn’t that bad, that it could have been a lot worse. But there was just so much blood…”

As he trailed off he sank down to the floor and collapsed his head into his hands. Greg stood above him, and a wave of déjàvu hit him, reminding him of all the times the DCI had found him in some drugs house or scolded him after a relapse.

“Look, I know it’s been a rough night,” Greg admitted, “but as a copper and a concerned friend I have to ask…what the bloody hell were you two doing breaking into someone’s house armed?!”

Sherlock looked up to him, his breath shallow and his eyes worn with exhaustion. He was afraid to admit that it might have been one of the stupidest cases they had ever taken on. He was afraid to admit that the gun was John’s idea, and he had gone along with it like always…never thinking of the consequences.

At last he let out a long breath and announced quietly:

“It’s a long story.”
As John’s eyes fluttered open that morning his lips instantly formed into a smile. Since returning from Paris life had pretty much been...perfect. Mycroft and Greg were engaged, and they had just solved an extraordinary case for MI-6 that left them so drained they spent the next couple of days in bed. A moment later Sherlock’s eyes fluttered opened, and John reached out to run his hand through his lover’s messy hair.

“You should have taken the knighthood,” John murmured.

“Sir Sherlock Holmes?” His boyfriend teased. “Laura and Mycroft would never let me hear the end of it.”

“Mycroft would be jealous,” John replied.

“Mycroft has turned down quite a few knighthood offers himself.”

With a laugh, he leaned forward to kiss Sherlock first on the lips before turning his attention to his chest. Sherlock smiled as a trail of kissing was planted down his stomach.

“Are we getting out of bed today?” John asked.

“Mmm,” Sherlock mused, “I think Mrs Hudson is getting tired of bringing us tea and biscuits in bed.”

“She was the one who pushed us together in the first place.”

His hand travelled down beneath the covers and hovered just above Sherlock’s cock, but his lover seemed too distracted to notice as he reached for his phone.

“Seriously?” John demanded. “I’m about to give you a brilliant blowjob, and you’re texting?”

“Actually, emailing,” Sherlock replied. Sighing, John sat back up in bed. “Does the name ‘Garridebs’ ring a bell?”

John searched his mind, trying to think back to their recent clients or Greg’s suspects. He could honestly admit he’d never heard the name in his life. In fact, it sounded a bit made up.

“Well if you can find a Garrideb, there’s money in it,” Sherlock said, and continued without explaining: “Here, Google it.”

Obeying, he took the phone and typed in the name. Only two searches popped up, both on social media sites.

“Garrideb, N,” John read, “London. There’s only one other listing: John Garrideb, Moorville, Kansas. He’s a lawyer. That’s strange, only two people with that name in completely different parts of the world. No family listings, no ancestry. Of course, not everything is online but still.”

“John Garrideb is our new client,” Sherlock explained. “He said he’ll be here in the morning. He has a rather interesting case...I think you should hear it from him.”

John’s eyes widened as he glanced over at the time.
“Sherlock, it’s nearly eleven!” He exclaimed, jumping out of bed. He began grabbing clothes and threw some at Sherlock as well.

With a groan of protest, Sherlock finally rolled out of bed. When they entered the living room their client was already waiting for them. A tray of tea and biscuits sat beside him. He watched as Sherlock’s eyes flashed over the client’s long coat, shoes, and finally his face. Though the young man was a bit short and chubby his eyes were intense, more intense than John had ever seen. His eyes were alert, like Sherlock’s, and bright with interest as he observed the detective standing in front of him.

“I hope we didn’t get keep you waiting,” John offered.

“Of course not,” the American said, “I’m John Garrideb, thanks for meeting with me.”

“I’m Sherlock Holmes,” his boyfriend greeting, extending a hand. “This is my partner, Dr John Watson. I haven’t filled him in on the…adventure, you’re on.”

“I’m a lawyer in a very small Kansas town,” Garrideb began. He paused before adding: “Not that there are actually many large towns in Kansas. I own a small law firm in Moorville. A couple of weeks ago I received this letter in the post office box for my business.”

“Two weeks?” Sherlock challenged. “You’ve been in London much longer.”

The lawyer froze for a moment. His eyes flashed away, signaling Sherlock was right.

“How did you know?” Garrideb asked.

His entire demeanor changed as he sank into the sofa and let his head collapse into his hands. John and Sherlock exchanged glances: they knew that look. It was the look of a client who was entirely in over his head.

“Your clothes are all British,” Sherlock explained, “as are your shoes. So either you’ve been here longer than you say, or you had to make an unexpected extension to your trip.”

“I didn’t know I was so obvious,” Garrideb admitted. “You are as observant as they say, Mr Holmes…though you do seem a bit shorter in person.”

John snickered as Sherlock rolled his eyes. His partner was getting impatient, and when he got impatient cases suddenly stopped seeing so interesting. At this point, John wasn’t sure which he should hope for: that they weren’t wasting Garrideb’s time by pretending to be interested, or that Garrideb wasn’t wasting their time.

“If you’re really looking for my help, you’ll find my observations useful,” Sherlock promised. His eyes flashed toward their client, and John decided he had been wrong. Sherlock could definitely give Garrideb a run for his money in the contest of ‘most intense eyes’. “If you don’t mind me saying, I’m surprised Nathan Garrideb didn’t come with you. Not that I mind speaking to someone from Moorville. I once solved a case for Dr Lysander Starr, former mayor.”

Garrideb’s eyes lit up with surprise.

“I’m impressed that you’ve even heard of Moorville, let alone know someone from there,” he replied, “but I really wish Nathan hadn’t involved a detective. This is a simple matter that I had hoped to keep between me and him.”

“Simple?” Sherlock shot. “Since when is ten million dollars ever simple?”
Garrideb let out a few slow breaths, as though deep down he understood Sherlock’s point. He definitely had a lawyer’s temper, but he had a terrible poker face.


“Why don’t you let Mr Garrideb explain?”

Sherlock flexed his long musician’s hands on the armrest of the chair as he settled back and smiled.

“I don’t want the police to get involved in this,” Garrideb pleaded. “I can understand why Nathan might want to take certain precautions, but as soon as he told me he hired a detective I had to come see you to make sure everything was…cool.”

“Wait, so this…Nathan bloke is our client?” John asked.

His boyfriend rolled his eyes again.

“They’re the same person to me,” he confessed.

“There are only two Garridebs in the entire world and you can’t keep them straight?” John teased.

“Three,” the lawyer spoke up, holding up the piece of paper. “Three. That’s the whole point of this. We’ve got to find the third Garrideb. Nathan was born and raised in London, and I have a long family history that traces back to England, so I suspect the third is in the country. But Mr Holmes, this is something I’ve been fighting to keep secret. No offence, doctor, but do you have to be here?”

Sherlock’s hands tightened around the ends of the armrest, and John was beginning to wonder if he should step between the two.

“No offence, Counsellor,” Sherlock snapped, “but John and I are partners in every sense of the word. We shared everything, so rather he hears it from you right now or in bed with me tonight, we keep no secrets.”

He grinned, and even though the comment clearly made him uncomfortable he began:

“If you know anything about Kansas, Mr Holmes, than you have probably heard of Alexander Hamilton Garrideb. He was a wheat farmer in Illinois before he began buying real estate in Kansas. His land is worth tens of millions of dollars, but he had no one to leave it to when he died. The opportunity the person who inherited the land would have would be astronomical. He came to visit my office one day and asked me if I could help him find other Garridebs. Being in such a small town, the cases I work sometimes tend to be trivial, but this one takes the cake. I thought he was joking…until he died a year later.

In his will, Mr Garrideb stated that he wanted to divide his land into thirds, and each third would go to a Garrideb, which I thought was odd since he and I were the only Garridebs in all of the United States. But sure enough, it was in his will. There had to be three Garridebs before anyone could lay a hand on that farmland. It was fairly easily to find Nathan- I’m sure you’ve Google our name yourself and found both of us. It’s this third one we’ve had so much trouble finding. Clearly Nathan is freaking out, but everything will be okay. Everything will be amazing. But honestly, Mr Holmes, we’re getting nowhere with finding this third Garrideb. To make matters worse, the wills specifically states all three Garridebs have to be male. Unfortunately, Alexander was very set in his traditions.”
Ah, there it was: the case. Usually their clients weren’t so quick about cutting to the chase, but it was obvious the lawyer was sick of doing the legwork.

And honestly, the last thing John felt like doing after a case in Paris and working with MI-6 was chasing down one person for the sake of two other’s fortunes.

“That’s like finding a needle in a haystack!” John complained. “You want us to search the world for a single Garrideb?”

“Not the world,” the lawyer corrected, “just England. I’m almost positive the third has to be in England.”

Unless he’s moved, changed his name, or dead, John thought.

Sherlock flexed his fingers again, considering it.

“What’s in it for us?” Sherlock asked.

He was surprised- and relieved. Usually Sherlock wasn’t so abrupt when it came to terms of payment, but if they were actually going to go on this wild goose chase he wanted something out of it. The lawyer glanced between the two of them before sighing.

“You’ll get a cut of the money,” he offered.

John raised an eyebrow. A cut of ten million? For the first time he realised no one had clarified if this was ten million each or altogether. Either way his mind was spinning…with their latest string of high profile and rich clients their cash flow this year was way up from last year. Even a cut of one of the ten million portions…he couldn’t even begin to imagine what they’d do with that.

“Okay,” Sherlock replied.

He said it without blinking, without even looking at John. Without discussing it.

There had to be something he was missing here.

“Thanks!” Garrideb jumped up and shook Sherlock’s hand. The consultant offered him a grim smile. “I left my practise for this, Mr Holmes. Everything is riding on this opportunity.”

“We will talk to Garrideb,” Sherlock promised.

The lawyer nodded before offering them a final thanks and leaving the flat. John immediately rounded on Sherlock.

“What’s going on?” He demanded. “We always discuss what cases we’re going to take! And since when do you know someone in Kansas?”

Sherlock only grinned as he leaped out of the chair and grabbed his violin. He began tuning it as he explained:

“Garrideb is lying to us. Everything he said is a lie. Classic lawyer speak…though I wouldn’t be surprised if he wasn’t even a lawyer.”

Frowning, John tried to take a step back and see the case from Sherlock’s point of view. Where he saw money and opportunity, he knew Sherlock saw suspicion. Anything that was too good to be true was too good to be true for his boyfriend.
“I don’t know anyone in Kansas, John,” Sherlock said. “His coat, his shoes...they had been worn at least a year. He is clearly American, you can see it in his face, but it accent was a bit...off. Originally America, but he’s definitely been in England longer than he let on. He’s clearly up to something, and either this other Garrideb is in on it...”

John’s eyes widened as he finally realised what Sherlock was thinking, and he finished:

“Or he’s being scammed.”

His boyfriend threw him a worrying look and nodded in agreement.

“We should talk to Nathan,” Sherlock said, “and find the third Garrideb before they get caught in the scam too, if that is what this is.”

“Funny,” John mused, “usually the bad guys don’t come to us begging for us to not get involved.”

“You think Garrideb is the bad guy then?” Sherlock asked through a mouthful of biscuits.

He reached down to grab his boyfriend’s hands and force him to his feet. Sherlock grinned, showing off a few crumbs that were still stuck in his teeth; he looked absolutely ridiculous.

“Your instincts are usually right,” John admitted before stealing a kiss from him. “As hard as that is to believe sometimes.”

His eyes flashed to his lover’s, and just for the comment Sherlock reached down and was just about to grab a handful of his arse when Mrs Hudson let out a sudden cry from nearby:

“Oh, you two are at it again!” They broke apart immediately. How did they never hear her sneaking into the room? “These walls aren’t very thick, you know.”

“Jesus, Sherlock!” John snapped, slapping his boyfriend in the shoulder.

“Why are you mad at me?” Sherlock whined.

John waited until Mrs Hudson had disappeared out of sight again before leaning into Sherlock’s ear and murmuring:

“Because last night you were the loud one.”

He teased Sherlock by brushing his lips ever so gently against his ear before he abruptly broke away and grabbed his coat.

“Come on,” John announced, “let’s go meet our actual client.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! I really love reading all your thoughts about the story :D Thanks for all the love!
The Other Sherlock Holmes

John squinted at the sunlight and sank deeper into the backseat in protest. He and Sherlock both broke out the sunglasses as they stepped out for the first time since their MI-6 case. His hand found Sherlock’s, and he smiled at the feeling of his partner’s fingers closing around his own.

“It’ll be a good case,” Sherlock announced, as though he needed reassurance. Their eyes drifted out the window as the cab pulled up to Garrideb’s flat on Little Ryder Street. “Someone is about to become very, very rich.”

The cab came to a stop, and Sherlock squeezed his hand.

Garrideb’s building was one of the older flat units in central London. The architecture of the front side of the building was early Georgian style with a beautiful brick foundation and bay windows outlining the first floor that Garrideb lived on. Though the corridor inside was dim, they could read the Garrideb nameplate outside their client’s flat.

“I think it’s his real name,” Sherlock commented as his finger slid across the plate. “This plate is old, while all the others in the hall are new. The floorplans in this building are quite small, so he probably lives alone. Here goes nothing.”

His boyfriend knocked on the door, and the two exchanged glances when they heard silence. Sherlock knocked again, and a disgruntled voice called that he was on his way. John was embarrassed when he froze up at the sight of Garrideb. He was…old. Older than he thought he’d be, at least. The man was well into his sixties and tall—almost taller than Sherlock. He was thin and pale, with a face devoid of any recent sunlight. His body was frail, and as he walked he had to hold on to walls and furniture. The doctor in him wanted to immediately inquire about his health, but Sherlock threw him a look warning him to not bring it up yet.

“Sorry for the mess.” It was the first thing Garrideb said to them as he led them into his flat.

Sherlock’s mouth fell agape as their eyes met what could best be described as a museum. There were tables of trinkets and collectibles from the past few decades, along with cases filled with antique medical instruments, coins, and…skulls.

“He’s the only person I’ve ever met beside you with a skull in their flat,” John teased as he stood beside Sherlock, gazing at the skulls.

They were each labeled with ‘Neanderthal’, ‘Heidelberg’, and ‘Cro-Magnon’. The kitchen was cluttered with microscopes, and Sherlock’s eyes lit up at the experiments he seemed to immediately recognised. John found himself more interested in some of the decorations rather than the
experiments. He couldn’t help but to pick up a beautiful Japanese vase, but it was snatched up at once by Garrideb.

“Please, Doctor Watson, mind the 300 pound vase,” Garrideb said. “I bought that from Tokyo a few weeks ago; I’d hate to see it broken so soon.”

“Sorry,” John replied, stepping away from the expensive decorations. He decided every inch of the flat must be either antique or expensive and made himself a ‘no touching’ rule, but he smiled when he saw how happy Sherlock was amongst the experiments. “I think Sherlock is right at home here. You two should get together sometime.”

“I don’t get out,” Garrideb admitted with a grim smile, “not at all, actually. I haven’t left my flat in…jesus, I had to go to the hospital about five years ago, but that was it.”

John’s eyes went wide. As much as he loved Sherlock, he was pretty sure he’d go insane if he was stuck inside their flat for five years straight.

“You never go out?” Sherlock asked, his eyes flashing toward John in astonishment.

Shrugging, Garrideb explained:

“I’m not one of those people with a fear of going outside. I’m just too wrapped up in my work to care about going to the movies or pubs. I lost my wife years ago, and honestly since then I’ve found it difficult to reconnect with people.”

Sounds a bit familiar, John thought, thinking of how Sherlock was when they first met.

“So tell me then, Nathan,” Sherlock said, “are you really interested in some land in Kansas?”

His boyfriend began picking up some of the slides and studying them as he questioned their client. While Garrideb looked slightly put-off by a stranger going through their things, he seemed to trust Sherlock more than him with the valuables. It was almost like Garrideb is who Sherlock would have become had they not been introduced that day at Barts.

“I might be a private person, Mr Holmes, but even I wouldn’t pass up an opportunity like this one!” Garrideb replied. “Of course I have no interest in moving to Kansas, but John agreed to buy me out. Can you imagine how much I could expand my collection? My experiments?”

“You could open a whole bloody museum,” John replied. Sherlock accidently knocked an empty beaker over, and he added: “Or a lab.”

His partner knocked over another piece of equipment and took a step back from the makeshift lab.

“These must be very valuable artifacts,” Sherlock commented, “your research alone is incredible.”

“None of it is worth much in terms of real money,” Nathan admitted, “and no one takes it seriously. Even the lawyer…he seems to think I’m suspicious of him. I only called you because I thought it would be helpful to have someone besides a Garrideb looking at this offer. The whole thing is quite bizarre, after all. But John just thinks I’m offending him by getting a detective involved.”

John raised a hand, motioning that he was about to place it on Nathan’s shoulder to comfort him, but he remembered how sensitive Sherlock was when they first met. People who hid inside, who didn’t like being a part of civilization, naturally wouldn’t care for being touched by strangers.
“It was the right thing to do,” John offered instead.

At that moment a mobile buzzed, and he watched as Nathan took his phone out of his pocket.

“It’s John!” A smile spread across Nathan’s face. “He says he found the third Garrideb- and in an advert, of all places! Look.”

Nathan beamed as he passed the mobile over to John. The elder man’s eyes began watering, and he had the feeling Nathan never had that many reasons to smile. It was enlightening to witness, but at the same time a knot formed in his stomach as he remembered Sherlock’s theory about a possible scam.

John’s eyes narrowed, and he grew even more suspicious as he read the first Garrideb’s text:

Howard Garrideb
Constructor of Agricultural Machinery
Binders, reapers, steam and hand plows, drills, harrows, farmers’ carts, buckboards, and all other appliances. Estimates for Artesian Wells.
Apply Grosvenor Buildings, Aston.

“He lives in Birmingham,” Nathan announced, just as John read the piece of information in Garrideb’s text. “Imagine that. Another Brit and an agricultural specialist. What are the odds?”

His own eyes met Sherlock’s, and he knew his boyfriend was thinking the same thing he was thinking:

Yes, what were the odds?

Surely so astronomical that this was clearly a scam.

“He says he wants you to go with him to Birmingham tomorrow,” John said. Suddenly the excitement in Nathan’s face faded, and John added quietly: “Are you going to be okay with that?”

The elder man’s body trembled, and he grabbed onto a nearby side table for support. Closing his eyes, he nodded.

“Yes,” Nathan sighed, “like I said, I wouldn’t miss this opportunity for the world.”

Sherlock glanced over at him again, looking every bit as worried as he felt. He didn’t have the heart to see this poor man be let down over a scam. Something like this would crush a man like Nathan- a man who already found it so hard to trust.

“I’ll go to Birmingham first thing with him then,” Nathan said. “If it means spending the rest of my life advancing my experiments and building my collections, I’ll suffer this one day.”

His partner cleared his throat as he stepped back through to the living room.

“Well it looks like John and I don’t have much work to do here after all,” Sherlock announced.
“Just please, for god’s sake Mr Garrideb, don’t give the other Garrideb any money. Don’t give him any personal information. And never let him leave your sight in Birmingham.”

Nathan blinked but nodded.

“Okay…”

“And,” Sherlock added with a smile, “I would love to take a closer look at some of your experiments. It looks like you have found one extra type of tobacco ash, and I’m dying to know how you discovered it.”

Tobacco ash. John swore those were the two words he hated the most. Rolling his eyes, John smirked:

“Is that what that is?”

Sherlock just stared at him.

“Of course. Do you not remember it spreading across our countertop for months?”

“Oh, I remember.”

His eyes twinkled, and Sherlock placed his hands behind his back and let his eyes dart around the room, like he usually did whenever someone got under his skin.

“I’m a big fan of your website, Mr Holmes,” Nathan said. “I would be honoured if you looked at some of my experiments. My landlady will be by in the morning. She’s rather insistent on making sure the place gets a good dusting at least once a month. She’ll let you in.”

A grin crossed his face, and he wondered if Sherlock was making the same connections as he was.

“He’s you!” John exclaimed as they headed down the street. He managed to talk Sherlock into some curry for lunch, seeing as they skipped breakfast.

“What do you mean he’s me?” Sherlock demanded.

He held the door open for John, ushering him inside. They chose a table in the corner and Sherlock immediately reached for the menu, obviously to ignore him.

“He’s you, in thirty years!” John explained. “Well, you if me and you haven’t met.”

“You mean, me if you and I hadn’t shagged against a wall one night and fell in love,” Sherlock smirked.

Rolling his eyes, John went on:

“He’s lonely. Maybe he lost his wife, maybe love isn’t his area, but he’s obviously absorbed himself in his work to make up for it. His experiments and collections make him feel important.”

“As they should!” Sherlock argued. “They’re brilliant! Give the man some credit. Like you said, perhaps he lost his wife. Perhaps he never married. But he is not me!”

A small smile crossed John’s face.
“He’s totally you,” he teased.

The waitress took his order, and ten minutes later John was savoring his first bite of food of the day. It didn’t take him long to notice Sherlock was only picking at his meal, and he had to say something before his boyfriend starved himself.

“Everything okay?” He asked.

Sherlock nodded.

“Yeah,” his never replied, uncharacteristically quietly. He reached into his pocket and John frowned, wondering what was going on. When he pulled out a long jewellery box John’s heart began to pound.

“What are you doing?” John murmured, his eyes dashing around the room. Luckily the restaurant was dark and empty enough that no one was watching.

“When I told Laura about our pre-proposal, she suggested a promise ring,” Sherlock explained, “she thought it suited a romantic like yourself. Of course, if I gave you a ring-”

“Everyone would think we are engaged,” John finished.

His lover nodded again and opened the box to reveal a long golden chain.

“That’s why I got you this instead,” Sherlock said with a grin. “I’ve never really given you a proper gift. I saw you looking at necklaces at that shop in Paris. I didn’t really think you were one of those guys who liked jewellery …but I saw this and thought it was perfect.”

And it was. John’s mouth fell open as he accepted the chain. The gold seemed subtle, not overly bright like some of the jewellery he had bought girlfriends in the past. Honestly no one had ever bought him jewellery before- he wasn’t sure what to think.

“Sherlock, I,” he whispered, so overwhelmed by both the gift and the meaning behind it he just wasn’t sure what to say. “Wow…it’s beautiful! Wow.”

All he could do was grin as he stood up to give Sherlock a tight hug. His lover blushed a bit at being embraced in public, but John didn’t mind as he beamed and tried on the jewellery.

“Perfect!” He announced, looking down. Reaching out, he took Sherlock’s hand in his. They stayed like that for a quiet moment, sharing smiles, before returning to their food.

“You’re right,” Sherlock suddenly announced, “about Garrideb, that is. I think he is lonely. And I…I was lonely. I don’t know what I would have done without you, John Watson.”

John grinned, a blush forming on his own cheeks at the compliment.

"And I don't know what I would have done without you, Sherlock Holmes," John replied.

He leaned in and kissed Sherlock right on the lips, right there in the restaurant. When they pulled away Sherlock's face was redder than John had ever seen it, and he laughed as he snapped a picture of himself wearing the necklace.
Sorry for the wait, had company in town and life (and exhaustion!) got in the way for a bit. Things will really start to pick up next chapter! Thank you for all of your nice comments and for tuning into the story!
Thanks as always to my beta Deathfrisbee221! I hope you all enjoy this chapter and the one that follows...a lot is going to start happening and very quickly!

Sherlock spent the rest of the afternoon pouring through cold cases- anything that had a connection between the American Midwest and London. By that night John had to force his boyfriend to sit down and eat a decent meal, but the detective still insisted on going through cases on his laptop. John was grateful for a distraction when his mobile rang, but his heart skipped a beat when he saw it was his agent calling.

When she told him why she was calling the entire world seemed to stop.

“John, did you hear anything I just said?” His agent asked.

The doctor-turned writer was too busy watching Sherlock pace the living room floor to pay attention. Sherlock was on the brink of breaking their case wide open, his sister was in rehab, he was ‘pre-engaged’ and through all of this, was he really hearing this correctly?

“Yes?” His agent laughed. “Are you alright? You haven’t fainted, have you? I have had clients faint before, you know.”

Blinking, John decided he shouldn’t torture the woman.

“Yes,” he replied, feeling breathless. His chest felt tight as his eyes fixated on his lover, who was completely oblivious at how much their life was about to change. “Yes, I...wow. That’s, that’s quite the offer.”

“This publisher is very interested in you,” his agent said; he could actually hear the smile on her face.

Suddenly his legs were feeling bit weak, and he had to sit down. He plopped down right there in the centre of the room on the floor. A wave of dizziness hit him, and he closed his eyes as he continued talking:

“I just...I honestly didn’t know what to expect. I don’t know what to say.”

“Just say yes!”

Says the woman who will make a 15% commission off of me.

He felt like this wasn’t the right moment to make this kind of decision. The right thing to do was to get off the phone, think things through, talk to Sherlock, and probably get a lawyer. But his greedy side of him, the side who used to make more in a week working as a doctor than he and Sherlock made on cases sometimes in a month, was seeing pound signs. Words like self-employment, author, advance, royalties, were all foreign to him until this year. It wasn’t a future he ever thought was possible for him- or one he ever wanted.
But how could he turn this down?

As Sherlock once pointed out, it was pretty much just like the blog except getting paid for it.

“And this…this is the standard advance?” John said. “I thought first time authors didn’t do so well?”

He was kicking himself for not doing more research. After all, he was talking about his financial future and protecting his work, but he was afraid to admit he didn’t know anything about how book publishing worked.

“Well, now of course you do have to consider how long it will take you to write the book,” his agent pointed out. “The advance will basically be your salary through that time. Plus, you have to consider rather or not the book will sell well- which of course it will- but you always have to consider every possibility. I have unfortunately seen authors go through their advance earnings in a year of writing the book, and then the book bombs and they’re left with nothing. But I assure you I take good care of my authors, John, and I have very high hopes for you. The blog has done so well. You’re practically a celebrity already! That will get you good exposure, which is something a lot of new writers don’t have. I don’t think you have anything to worry about, but it is good to question everything. I’ll help you through this however I can, that’s what I’m here for.”

*You mean that’s what I’m paying you for.*

“Right,” John said. He let out a long breath, closed eyes again, and drew in another deep breath before finally saying: “Okay. It all sounds good to me. Actually, it sounds bloody fantastic to me. If you want to work up the contract, I’ll look over it and agree to it. Three cases for the first book, yeah? Then Baskerville as a stand-alone novel. I can do that.”

“Wonderful!” His agent exclaimed, giving him no room to change his mind. “I’ll go ahead and set up meetings with the editors and publishing house. You might want to meet with them too, actually. In fact, do you want to come with me tomorrow? Who knows, once they see how charming you are maybe they’ll up their offer!”

*Doubtful. In fact- what if I don’t impress them? What if they meet me and think I’m a joke?*

Nevertheless he found himself replying ‘yes’.

“Fabulous!” A sound of someone swallowing followed, and given the time of night and his agent’s enthusiasm he wondered if she was drinking. “Are you free tomorrow?”

He glanced over at Sherlock, wondering how angry he’d be if this interfered with the case. Then again, he wasn’t sure if he was in any position to say no.

“Yes, yes, I am,” he said, “in the afternoon, though. We’re wrapping up a case and have a final lead to check out in the morning. Sherlock’s pacing about the flat and driving himself mad over it now, actually, but you probably don’t care about that.”

“Sherlock’s my star, John!” She pointed out.

His heart skipped a beat as he realised for the first time how famous Sherlock was going to become off of this. Up until now he had selfishly been thinking they would become famous just off the book itself, just from him being the author and associating Sherlock with his cases. But if these books took off as well as his agent thought, Sherlock could become a superstar. A smile peered from the corner of his lips at the thought of Sherlock waltzing down a red carpet, wearing a tux to the premiere of a film based off his own work. Yet even if that thought made him excited he
wasn’t sure if it was the life Sherlock wanted. He remembered how uncomfortable his boyfriend was when their cases first made them popular. How would he handle this?

“You know…” John said, taking a step back. “I really need to talk this over with Sherlock before I jump into anything. Right now I say the offer stands, but let me talk with him tonight and we’ll talk to the publishers tomorrow. Sound good?”

“Sounds wonderful. Thank you so much, John.”

They said their goodbyes and hung up. Before he had time to process what just happen Sherlock was standing over him.

“You’re sitting on the floor,” Sherlock announced, his eyes narrowing in on him, suspicious.

“Get down here,” John said, pulling on his hand until Sherlock fell beside him.

Without explaining himself John captured Sherlock’s lips in a fierce kiss. His hands cupped Sherlock’s face as he snogged him until they were breathless. When they finally broke apart Sherlock blinked, and John explained:

“I sold the bloody book.”

Sherlock just stared at him.

“What?” He demanded.

“I sold the book!” John exclaimed, throwing his arms around his lover. “The agent found an editor who loved the draft, and the publisher immediately made an offer. They love it! They love you, they love the idea. They’re excited. They’re excited Sherlock, they’re excited about us.”

He hugged Sherlock so tight he didn’t notice he was struggling to breathe. At last Sherlock pulled himself away with a gasp, only to pin John to the floor and kiss him hard. John sighed happily as he deepened the kiss and ran his fingers up and down his lover’s arms.

“I could take you right here,” Sherlock murmured into his ear.

His eyes glistened with anticipation, heart raced with adrenaline, and his skin prickled with just the tiniest bit of anxiety. John realised it wasn’t just the agent and publishers he had to impress- it was Sherlock to. Was he going to be able to do him justice? He was in charge of telling the story of his life- a story Sherlock usually held close to heart.

“What?” Sherlock asked, gazing at him.

“The book can be as personal or as…not personal as you want,” John told him quietly. “You’ve had a hard life, Sherlock, and everything’s about to become so public…I just want to protect you.”

The comment earned him another kiss, and instead of answering Sherlock deepened the kiss, exploring his mouth and pressing their bodies closer together. Soon he could feel Sherlock’s cock hard in his trousers, rocking against him. He moaned and was about to reach for his boyfriend’s zip when a shrill from nearby.

“Oh, you two are at it again!” Mrs Hudson cried. John sighed as he lay on his back and watched their landlady stormed across the living room. “Don’t you two ever take a break? Relationships aren’t all about sex, you know. Do you never just sit down and have a nice cuppa or watch telly?”
He threw a glance at Sherlock and smirked.

“I try, but Sherlock’s not really the sitting and watching telly type.”

Mrs Hudson rolled her eyes as she did a quick dusting of the bookshelves.

“Mrs Hudson, do you mind?” Sherlock snapped. “It’s bad enough you’re ruining my dust, but must you ruin it in the middle of the night while I’m trying to shag my boyfriend?”

John slapped his hand over, hitting him in the stomach for snapping at her.

“I couldn’t sleep,” Mrs Hudson sighed. “I thought some dusting would help me relax.”

“Does your furniture not collect dust?” Sherlock sighed as he sat up.

Sitting up beside him, John nipped a quick kiss to Sherlock’s shoulder as the two lounged against the sofa.

“No, it doesn’t,” Mrs Hudson replied. John grinned; he loved that she could be just as feisty as Sherlock. “And you two are not going do anything on those floors- I just washed them!”

Defeated, the two of them got to their feet- because, really, who would still be in the mood after their landlady walked in on them? Instead John decided to tell Mrs Hudson the good news.

“Well,” he announced, suddenly feeling nervous. Sure he had talked about the book some to his friends, but he had the feeling none of them took him very seriously. “While you’re up here, I might as well let you know that I…sold the book.”

Mrs Hudson blinked.

“The book, dear?” She asked.


It took Mrs Hudson a minute, but when she realised what he was talking about her eyes lit up. She rushed toward him, engulfing him in a hug.

“Oh John!” She exclaimed, tears already leaking from her eyes. “Oh John, I’m so proud of you!”

“Thank you,” he said, squeezing her before letting her go.

She let out a sob through her smile as she stepped away, only to turn on Sherlock.

“You two!” She simply cried as she hugged Sherlock. “And to think, when you two first looked at this place you were both so lost. Look what you’ve done with yourselves now! You two are about to be famous.”

John leaned up on the tips of his toes to give Sherlock a kiss, and Mrs Hudson absolutely beamed.

“I’m so happy for you two,” Mrs Hudson went on. “I’m going to make us all a nice breakfast in the morning to celebrate.”

Sherlock cleared his throat.

“Actually, John and I are on a case.”
Mrs Hudson’s nose turned up slightly in disapproval, but she obviously didn’t have the heart to be angry with them.

“Oh well, supper sometime then,” she offered. “I just can’t believe you two are about to authors.”

“I’m going to be an author,” John corrected.

But she didn’t notice as she disappeared back down the stairs, seeming to no longer be worried about falling asleep. Chuckling, John kissed Sherlock again before wrapping his arms around his waist. Sherlock nuzzled his neck, his hands inching around to the front of John’s trousers. But once he had almost reached his cock, they both stopped.

“I can’t do this,” Sherlock announced, “I keep expecting her to-”

They both looked over to the living room door at the same time.

“Yeah,” John agreed, nodding feverishly. “Let’s just get some sleep.”

The two shared one final kiss before disappearing into their bedroom. While John hoped they could talk more about the book deal, it didn’t take long before Sherlock launched into a discussion about the case.

“I’ve been doing some research about John Garrideb,” Sherlock said. “I wasn’t too surprised to find there isn’t much history on him available. In fact, there’s not too much available on the entire Garrideb family line. I had to turn to the history of Nathan’s flat building to find any useful information, and I think I’ve finally made a break in this case. As you know I’ve been trying to find any cold cases open that share a link between the midwest and London, and Greg just emailed me a lead.”

“That’s fantastic!” John said as he began getting undressed. He reached for his pyjamas while Sherlock simply took off his trousers and plopped down on the bed wearing just his purple shirt. “What did you find out?”

“John Garrideb is a murderer.”

His own mouth fell open just as Sherlock’s eyes fell closed. He didn’t see how the consultant could lay there, so laid back and casual while making such an outlandish statement about a client.

“I’m…not following,” John confessed.

Sherlock let out a long sigh rolled over to face John’s side of the bed. Climbing into bed, John faced him and they were just inches apart as his lover explained the case.

“Killer Evans,” Sherlock explained. John opened his mouth, but before he could ask the detective grabbed his laptop and pulled up a file Greg had emailed him. The file was a ‘most wanted’ photo-a photo of a man who, behind the beard and wired-rimmed glasses, was clearly John Garrideb. “Killer Evans is one of the top people currently on the most wanted lists in both America and the UK. His real name is James Winter, native of Chicago. He murdered three people in America, went to prison, escaped prison, came to London, and murdered a man named Prescott over a card game at a nightclub before going missing for the last five years.”

“Jesus,” John replied, “that’s insane! What does this have to do with Nathan?”

Sherlock’s eyes twinkled in the way they always did when he was solving a case.
“Well before Nathan lived in his flat, a man named Waldron lived there— until he disappeared.”

He watched as his boyfriend pulled out a picture of this Waldron bloke. It was a missing person’s ad from five years ago. Next he brought up another email from Greg, which held a photo of… the same man.

“Greg’s message says this is Prescott,” John stammered. Sherlock flipped between both windows, showing him that the two men were obviously the same person. “So… Prescott is Waldron?”

Sherlock nodded.

“And he lived in Nathan’s flat. I’m not sure why yet, but there’s some link between Prescott’s flat and Killer Evans.”

John ran a hand through Sherlock’s hair and offered him a small smile. In truth he was only half paying attention to the case wrap-up; he was too busy gazing into Sherlock’s eyes and thinking about how amazing he was. He was so lucky to call Sherlock his. It was enough just to date him, just to live with him…but to be talking about marriage and writing books about their lives? It was like he was living a dream, and he was afraid any moment he might wake up.

“That’s absolutely brilliant.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock agreed, “of course, it helps that I have Greg’s most recent most wanted list and Killer Evans happened to be at the top of the list. I’m honestly a little disappointed in myself that I didn’t recognise him sooner.”

“You didn’t know what you were looking for yet,” John offered. “So this… Killer Evans, he’s armed and dangerous, I presume?”

Sherlock nodded and reached his hand up to cup John’s face. His heart leapt and nervousness rushed through him for a single moment. As much as he thrived on danger, the closer he and Sherlock became the more the idea of being in the line of fire made him worry. He still loved the danger, but the thought of anything happening to Sherlock made him sick. While he used to smile and mend Sherlock’s wounds with ease—and had even laughed at a couple of the stories behind them—but now every black eye, every cut, made him sick.

At the same time, he looked into Sherlock’s pleading eyes and knew he couldn’t say no.

“I’ll bring my gun then.”

He planted a long, slow, kiss to Sherlock’s lips, and though just minutes ago he had declared he wasn’t in the mood a familiar heat overcame him. John rolled on top of Sherlock and pulled off the top button of his purple shirt and let his tongue slip between his lover’s lips. Sherlock moaned, and John’s own body trembled with anticipation.

“Did you lock the door on the way in?” Sherlock murmured.

John nodded and placed a kiss to Sherlock’s chest. His partner reached up, running a hand over his head as he let his lips fall over each nipple. His hands roamed Sherlock’s chest as he kissed his way down to his waistline.

“She’s still listening,” Sherlock said as he leaned his head back, clearing asking John to give some attention to his neck before proceeding.

First he reached over to his mobile on the bedside table and turned on the music he had been
listening to earlier. Sherlock groaned.

“I can’t fuck you while listening to this…noise!” He hissed as a classic rock playlist began.

He chuckled as Led Zeppelin played quietly in the background.

“I’ve had sex to much, much worse,” he teased. “I once dated an opera singer.”

Cold hands ran down his bare back until they reached the waistline of his pyjama pants.

“An opera singer?” Sherlock breathed into his ear. John nibbled at the other side of his neck, and he grinned when Sherlock’s eyes rolled to the back of his head. “God John.”

“What do you want?” John asked as he began moving down Sherlock’s body.

“John, come here.”

His heart skipped a beat as he obeyed his lover, climbing back up to his body. Their eyes met as Sherlock drew in a sharp breath. His hands tugged John’s pyjamas just below his hips and pulled out his cock. John ran his hands over Sherlock’s pants before taking him out as well, and their heads fell together.

“Just this,” Sherlock whispered into his ear. “Just…move with me.”

He ran his hands up and down Sherlock’s shaft and shuttered as his own cock received the same attention. Closing his eyes, John listened to the music and breathed against Sherlock’s neck.

“Sherlock,” he shuttered.

Reaching for the lube, Sherlock simply shuddered in response. Their bodies rocked together as they took turns preparing each other, and he had to admit doing it this way was incredibly intimate.

“Oh god,” Sherlock whispered, interrupting his thoughts.

Yeah, definitely didn’t do it this way enough.

His free hand tucked underneath Sherlock’s body and pressed against his back. They began rutting against each other faster; his thumb brushed to and fro across the head and Sherlock’s fingers reached his balls and-

“F-fuck,” John whispered as he came, all too soon.

“John,” Sherlock murmured, burying his head in John’s neck.

A second burst of come erupted between them as their breathing turned shaky. The music reached a crescendo right then and, as if on cue, they shared a final kiss. Sherlock reached over for something to clean them up with, and John found himself chuckling as he rolled back over to his side of the bed.

“Was that quiet enough for you?” Sherlock teased.

John shivered as a flannel brushed across his still-sensitive cock.

“It was perfect.”
Twenty-four hours later

His eyes blinked rapidly and a blinding light met him as he came to. The very first thing he became aware of was the oxygen mask on his face and the hospital lights above him. John blinked, and as his eyes adjusted he realised he was in a hospital bed inside a room that was actually quite dim. He tried to move, but everything below his waist felt numb— which immediately sent him into panic mode. His eyes quickly found his vital monitors and the oxygen detector on his finger.

Though he was weak, he managed to reach over to the remote with the big red ‘help’ button in the centre, and as soon as he pressed it a nurse came running it. For a single moment he thought it was Sherlock rushing through the door, but instead it was just a tall, dark haired, male nurse who just happened to look like his boyfriend through is blurry eyes.

“Stay calm, John,” the nurse called to him. Why did everything sound so echo-y? “You just got out of surgery about an hour ago. Your body’s still in a bit of shock, so give your system time to adjust. We had some trouble with your oxygen levels earlier, but they appear to be better now. I can take the mask off, if you’d like…just breathe nice slow, deep breaths for me.”

John nodded, but as soon as the mask was slipped off his face his panic doubled. His breathing became erratic, and his hands gripped the nurse’s forearms a little too hard.

“It’s okay, John,” the nurse assured him, “you’re in hospital. You’re doing fine.”

“I can’t feel my legs!” John gasped through his out of control breathing.

But suddenly he stopped. As his body adjusted to being awake he realised he could move his left leg just fine— he could even feel his skin as he brushed his leg against the sheets.

It was his right leg that had gone completely numb and stiff.

“Are you in any pain?” The nurse asked.

John closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath. Did the nurse not just hear him? Did he not know what that meant? But he knew it was useless to argue. He shook his head, admitting that as scared and confused as he was, he wasn’t in pain.

The nurse reached over and filled up a cup of water for him. John drank it down in one gulp, and though it did little to help his sore throat his voice did sound a bit less rough as he demanded:

“Where’s Sherlock?”

A faint smile crossed the nurse’s lips.

“He’s been out in the hall all day,” he replied, “visiting hours will be over soon, but I sent another nurse for him as soon as you rang for help.”

John settled down into the bed and let out a long sigh of relief. At least Sherlock was okay then and not in a hospital room himself.

At that moment the door cracked open again, and John watched as the shadow of the door stretched across the room and a long, skinny, figure stepped inside. The door closed quietly, and from the shadows emerged his lover.

“John!” Sherlock cried before he raced toward him.
A pair of scrawny arms wrapped around him before John could say anything, and he wasted no
time in burying his head in Sherlock’s chest. His body felt warm and welcoming, but he still had to
close his eyes to fight back the tears that were threatening to fall. His body was far too
overwhelmed to take in everything that was happening, and he was even more afraid when
Sherlock pulled back and he saw the tear trickling from his eye.

“What happened?” John demanded. “The last thing I remember is us being in bed.”

Sherlock’s eyes darted from his right leg back up to his face, and his boyfriend himself looked
terrified.

“Please, Sherlock,” John pleaded. “What’s going on?”

His partner exchanged glances with his nurse, who looked just as hesitant to confess what
happened to him. At last Sherlock’s hands fell behind his back, and their eyes met as he explained
quietly:

“You were shot.”

Chapter End Notes

Please don't be too mad at me, please! I promise this isn't as bad as it sounds.

Okay, it IS bad.

But I think you will like how it turns out!!

I adore all of your comments and kudos! Thank you so much- new readers and veteran
readers alike!
“How do I look?” John asked as he looked up and met Sherlock’s eyes in the bathroom mirror.

“How do I look?”

His partner stood tall behind him, dressed in nice slacks, a new pink collared shirt and blazer. Even if Sherlock would never admit it, John knew he liked to dress to impress when he was heading out to solve a case. John, on the other hand, had a different reason for worrying about his looks. He had a quick briefing with his agent before heading out to meet the publishers for the very first time, and he didn’t have a clue how to dress for it. What did authors look like anyway? Do they wear regular clothes or are they always dressed like they’re about to walk down the red carpet?

To play it safe, John went with a dark royal blazer he found stashed away in his closet and a light blue shirt. After messing around with his hair for a half-hour he managed to make it look a little more sleek and less shabby (Mrs Hudson had been commenting for weeks he was in need of a good trim).

“You look…” Sherlock said, scanning him up and down. He took John by the forearms and made him spin around, giving him a once-over before announcing: “Absolutely ridiculous.”

“Turn around.”

His mouth fell open and shut a few times as he tried to respond to that.

“Well…sorry I’m not all six feet tall, gorgeous hair, and sharp features!” John shot. “I’m short, old, and…puffy.”

Sherlock let out a snort as he ran a hand through his hair— which, John had to admit, was a probably full of a bit too much product.

“Is this my hair product?” Sherlock demanded. This time he could only glare. He’d hope his boyfriend would be a bit more helpful, considering he looked like a bloody fashion model from dusk to dawn. “You are not puffy, John. You are just…well, maybe not as toned as your army days.”

“Forget the product!” John exclaimed, throwing his hands up in the air. He spun around and glared at himself in the mirror a moment before pulling off his yellow tie. “Of course you think I look ridiculous, I do look ridiculous! I’ve never had to worry about impressing anyone with my looks. When I was practising medicine it was all scrubs and…blood, everywhere. Then there were the army greens. And now… I’m an old man.”
“You’re not!” Sherlock protested. He snuck up behind him and stole a kiss to the nape of his neck. Wrapping his arms around his waist, he murmured into his ear. “So maybe you’re a smidge closer to fifty than me…”

His boyfriend broke out into a grin as John spun and around and slapped him in the shoulder.

“How?” John pleaded.

An hour later the two stepped out of their cab, finding themselves once again at Nathan’s flat. John glanced at himself in the mirror before handing the cabbie their fee. After pulling nearly every suit and tie combo he owned out of his closet (and leaving them spread across the floor and bed of his old room), Sherlock finally found a maroon shirt and dark charcoal trouser combo he claimed made him look ‘smart’. The hair product was washed out of his hair, and in the end John realised he had a much better shot of impressing book publishers by looking like himself than he did trying to look like a movie star.

They exchanged glances before knocking on Nathan’s door. Sure enough, a kind landlady invited them in.

“I was just popping in to do a bit of dusting!” She explained. John fought to hide his smirk—surely Sherlock saw how much this curly haired, floral-pattern top lady was like Mrs Hudson. “Nathan despises any sort of cleaning. Well, I don’t want to get in your way so I’ll just be leaving. Lovely to meet you both!”

She was out of the flat in a flash, and as soon as the door closed John burst out laughing.

“Okay, you had to notice that,” he teased, pointing back toward the door.

But Sherlock only furrowed his eyebrows, clueless.

Ignoring him, the detective waltzed over to the kitchen and pulled the kitchen rug from the floor. Now that John thought about it, he had never really seen a large floral rug like that in the kitchen. He supposed he’d assumed during their first visit that it might be covering up some kind of structural damage, but of course Sherlock would know better.

Instead of damage there was a latch. His partner looked up to him, silently warning him to be prepared for danger, before he tugged at the hatch door. Sherlock grabbed a small torch from his pocket and shined it down; his eyes went wide as soon as the dark space beneath the flat was illuminated.

“There’s a printing press down here!” Sherlock exclaimed. John ran to his side and knelt on the floor next to him. His own eyes bulged when he saw a printing press and the stacks of counterfeit currency piled around it.

“Jesus,” he whispered. “Do you think Nathan knows it’s here?”

Sherlock shook his head and turned to meet his eyes.

“No,” he replied, “but the other Garrideb does.”

“You mean Killer Evans.”

The detective nodded and gently lowered the door back down.

“I’m calling Greg,” Sherlock announced. “Killer Evans managed to lure Nathan out of his flat for
the first time since he moved in with this ridiculous scheme.”

“So I’m guessing Prescott wasn’t murdered over a card game,” John said.

“You’re quite right, Doctor Watson.”

They both turned at the sound of the fake-Garrideb’s voice.

And there he was, in the flesh. John recognised the criminal now from the police sketch Sherlock found. He was wearing the same suit that he wore to their flat, and now that he looked closely the outfit looked well-worn. There was a scar John hadn’t noticed before on the man’s lower jaw, and he noticed the bulge in the back of his trouser pocket in just enough time to draw his own weapon.

“Lower the gun, Dr Watson,” the killer demanded coolly. “I don’t intend to hurt anyone. I just want what’s mine.”

“And I just want to put you in jail,” John announced.

The minute he did he wished he hadn’t.

Killer Evans worked faster, with more precision than he could ever dream of. The gun was aimed at him and his leg turned to stone before John could even register what was happening.

The echoing scream of Sherlock shouting his name followed the loud thud of his body crashing into the ground. There was a crack and a feeling of coldness in the back of his head. His gun tumbled out of his hands, leaving both he and Sherlock vulnerable to their suspect.

“Sher-“ he whispered, trying to warn his partner.

But a hand snatched the gun from beside him, and John was holding onto consciousness just enough to realise what Sherlock intended to do.

“Sher-!” He attempted softly through his gasps for breath. Sherlock trained the gun at their suspect, and even through his blurry vision he could see how his hands were shaking. It took every bit of energy he had left to him to cry out to him. “No!”

Hearing his cry seemed to make Sherlock snap out of it. His partner took two swift steps toward the criminal and, ignoring the gun pointed at his own head, pistol-whipped the other man before slapping the gun against his face for good measure. John’s vision danced again, and Sherlock appeared by his side. The gun tumbled to the floor once again. Sherlock tore off his blazer and pressed it hard against his leg, but the blood was spilling too quickly. Suddenly the room felt entirely too cold, and limb by limb his body was going numb.

“Can’t feel my leg,” John gasped. “Sherlock, I-"

Sherlock’s eyes were wild with anxiety, and John panicked when he remembered that his boyfriend wasn’t a doctor.

“What do I need to do?” He demanded.

John tried to lift his head up to get a look at the wound. His leg was spurting out blood, and the sight was enough to make him nauseous. A thousand medical terms ran through his head, and while he was thinking airway, breathing, circulation, disability, disformity, exposure, he suddenly found himself unable to communicate. He could hear Sherlock yelling his name, and he could see him taking out his mobile but he was no longer able to register what was going on.
Reality began fading away as a sea of memories passed through him. His mind was trying to wrap itself around what was happening, but what was real and what were usually his nightmares had become one.

*He was twenty-eight and in medical school, learning how to dress wounds:*

“Tightly, Watson,” he remembered the doctor barking at him. “You have to press down tightly.”

*He was thirty-one, and he had just lost his first patient in the A&E. He was under review by the hospital board with five different people demanding to know what went wrong, and he was sick to his stomach because he knew it was he didn’t administer the antibiotics quickly enough.*

*He was thirty-five and landing in Afghanistan for the first time.*

*He was thirty-eight and lying in the desert sand with a bullet in his shoulder. One of his comrades was hunched over at him, yelling at him, trying to help.*

“John,” Sherlock’s voice called softly. “John, the ambulance is…”

But the world faded to black before Sherlock could finish.

The next night he wouldn’t remember any of that. John blinked as he gazed up at Sherlock, desperately trying to recall the events he supposedly experienced the day before. It was very surreal to be sitting in a hospital room with yet another bullet wound. He listened to the doctors and understood what they told him, but it didn’t feel like he was happening to him. Once visiting hours ended Sherlock was ushered out; Molly took him back home and John got some much-needed sleep thanks to morphine.

When he woke late the next morning he was happy to see that Sherlock was by his side again. A smile crossed his face and Sherlock broke out into a grin as well as he rushed toward the bed to embrace him. John closed his eyes, letting out a deep breath as his lover held him tightly.

“How are you feeling?” Sherlock asked him quietly.

“All things considering, not too bad,” John admitted, “but that’s mainly the morphine.”

Sherlock rested his head on John’s shoulder and let his hand fall to his back. John took in another deep breath, enjoying just having his boyfriend by his side again.

“I missed you last night,” Sherlock whispered.

“I missed you too.” He replied as Sherlock gave him one final squeeze. When they broke apart they shared a kiss, and John couldn’t help but to notice how tired Sherlock looked. “Did you sleep at all last night?”

The detective stayed quiet, telling him everything he needed to know. John gave him a kiss on the forehead and caressed his cheek with his hand.

“I couldn’t sleep without you,” Sherlock confessed. “Molly let me crash at her place, but I was too worried. What do the doctors say?”

John shrugged as he took a look around his hospital room. It was tiny and nowhere near his definition of comfortable, but at least he was in a private room. As soon as Sherlock left he would
be due for a vital signs check and the dreaded hospital food breakfast. Then he would be wheeled around for more tests, possibly more surgery from the conversation he had with his doctor the night before. And then…

Then the physical therapy would begin.

Not to mention the…other kind of therapy.

“Sherlock,” John whispered. He searched Sherlock’s eyes, trying to find the courage to confess how he was feeling. “I’m not okay. I’m afraid. I really, truly scared.”

Before he could finish Sherlock engulfed him in another hug.

“I’m scared too,” Sherlock admitted softly. “John, when you were shot…my entire world stopped. I should have never asked you to bring your gun. I should have never let you be in harm’s way!”

“Never let me be in harm’s way?” John asked with a small smile. “Sherlock, that’s my job.”

“No it’s not,” Sherlock whispered. They pulled away again, and Sherlock withdrew something from his pocket. John’s smile grew when he saw it was the necklace Sherlock gave him, but when his boyfriend’s hand opened to reveal the necklace now had a ring on it his heart skipped a beat. He could hear his heart monitor speed up as his heart beat faster and faster. “Your job, John Watson, is to be mine forever. I would lock you up in a bloody cell if it meant making sure you were never hurt again.”

John was so overwhelmed by everything that tears began forming in his eyes. He managed to crack a small smile as he replied softly:

“Sherlock, if you want to marry me you really should just come out and say it.”

His boyfriend’s mouth fell open, but before he could say anything hospital room door flew open and a nurse walked in.

“You’re upsetting my patient, Mr Holmes!” She snapped as she checked the heart monitor and blood pressure machines. “You should know better, Dr Watson. Honestly, doctors make the worst patients.”

“I’ll try not to be offended by that,” John teased.

But even as the nurse raced around, trying to get him back under control, his eyes never left Sherlock’s. He nodded as Sherlock pocketed the necklace to keep it safe and offered him a small smile.

“I’ll let Mycroft and Greg know you’re okay,” Sherlock said. “They’ve been asking about you. Oh, and the police want a statement, of course.”

He glanced over to the nurse, and John realised what he was concerned about. He had his gun at the crime scene, and if Killer Evans was conscious enough to tell the police what happened, Greg wouldn’t be happy he was running around with a loaded weapon.

“But Greg told them it could wait until you’re a bit less…you know, morphine-y,” Sherlock finished with a wink.

“Tell them I said thanks,” John offered, “and Sherlock…don’t leave me, okay?”
Their eyes met, and he could see how touched Sherlock was that he wanted him there by his side. He knew how unreasonable it was to ask someone to stay in a hospital all day—especially when he would probably spend most of the day resting—but just having Sherlock in the same room with him was already making him feel better. And really, Sherlock was the only person he had left that was even willing to be there for him. With Harry in rehab and his parents practically out of his life, Sherlock was his only family.

And the thought of going through this alone, of being alone for a single second, was even more terrifying than facing the bullet.

“I won’t leave you,” Sherlock promised.

He offered John a final smile before pulling out his mobile and stepping into the wall. The sight of the phone reminded him of one of the few memories he had left of the past day—his conversation with his agent. His heart skipped a beat again when he remembered he was supposed to meet with the publisher today.

“Umm…Karen,” he said, seeing the nurse’s badge, “do you know if my mobile was found at the crime scene?”

She made a face, but her eyes led him to a clear bag on a nearby chair that held his phone and wallet. He assumed his clothes must have been too bloody to save—or perhaps they were taken in as evidence.

“You should really be resting, Dr Watson,” she said. “Letting Mr Holmes in here should have been my one favour of the day, but I’m sure your family is worried about you.”

The nurse gave him a sympathetic smile as she pulled his mobile out of the bag and handed it to him.

“One call,” she instructed, “and then you’re to sleep, understood?”

He nodded.

“Cheers,” he offered.

John waited until she left the room before browsing through his phone contacts, looking for his agent’s number.

But what the nurse said was beginning to get to him. How horrible of a son was he to be held up in a hospital room after being shot and not contact his own family? Did his mother really despite him so much that she wouldn’t care if he were hurt? Would his father not come down to the hospital immediately if he knew he had taken another bullet? His finger hesitated over his mother’s number. Closing his eyes, John drew in a deep breath and hit ‘call’.

It took two rings before his mother picked up, answering with an uncertain:

“John? Are you alright?”

Of course. His mother would know he wouldn’t call her unless it was an emergency. Even before she disowned him they barely talked.

“Mum…” John began. Suddenly his voice seemed too strained to talk, and he reached over for some water before continuing: “Mum, I just thought you should know that I’m in hospital.”
A long pause followed.

No gasp of surprise.

No tears.

Just…silence for a full sixty seconds.

“Oh,” his mother finally breathed. “Oh, I thought it was an emergency or something about your father.”

John closed his eyes again, trying to stay calm.

“I was shot,” he replied dryly.

There was another long pause, but this time when she spoke his mother sounded upset, like she was trying to hold back tears.

“Shot?” She asked, her voice uncharacteristically small. “What were you doing getting shot at?”

“I was on a case,” he admitted, “the suspect pulled a gun on me and shot me in the leg.”

“What the bloody hell were you doing around armed suspects?” His mother spat. “If that…Holmes cared about you at all you would not be running around getting shot at! Honestly John, sometimes I think you have a death wish!”

He bit his lip, trying to not lash out at her.

“Sherlock’s fine, by the way,” he spat, “and the wound really wasn’t as bad as it could have been. I just thought you should know.”

He hung up before she could say another word. Tears filled his eyes and he threw his arm over his face, embarrassed she had upset him so much. John gave himself a moment to freak out before opening his eyes and sending a text to Sherlock.

Need you. Please.

The hospital door opened a moment later, and Sherlock scooped his weak body into another embrace. His lover let him stay there, in his arms, for longer than he could keep count as he simply cried. He never asked questions, never accused him of not being strong enough.

He was just there.

“God I shouldn’t be this weak,” John groaned. “I’ve been through this before. I’m a doctor, and I know that I’ll be okay. But I just…I just don’t want to go through this again.”

Sherlock planted a gentle kiss to his neck, and the warmth of his body calmed him down a little.

“You’re stronger than you know, John,” Sherlock said quietly.

“I’m weaker than you think,” John murmured.

Pulling back, Sherlock reached into his pocket for the necklace again. He snapped it around John’s neck, and the doctor smiled at the sight of the ring resting against his skin.

“You, love, are not weak,” Sherlock announced. “You have every right to be scared right now, but
you will get through this. We will get through this.”

John let out a shaky breath and met Sherlock’s eyes. He knew how lucky he was to be here, with someone like Sherlock at his side. Those memories of being on a cot, surrounded by dozens of other wounded soldiers was all too real. He could remember how lonely it felt at night, lying there and knowing he had nothing to look forward to but being shipped home to recover on his own. There were times when he found himself wondering what he had to live for: he wouldn’t be able to practise medicine, he wouldn’t be back in the army, he had no job and not even any kind of home to go back to. No one would be waiting for him.

But now…what didn’t he have to look forward to? Here Sherlock was, practically proposing to him. They had a future together, they had a home.

“You had no idea how lost I was when we met,” John whispered. “We’ve been through a lot, yeah?”

Sherlock nodded, his lips turned up in a smile.

“Yeah, we have.”

He remembered seeing Sherlock for the first time at St Barts and let out a laugh.

“Do you have any idea how mad I thought you were when we first met?” John teased. “I didn’t have a clue why Mike would think I’d want to be flatmates with someone who was so totally opposite from me. But I could see…I could see there was something there, beneath all that craziness. Somehow I knew that if I didn’t give you a chance I’d be missing out on something really, really special. You, Sherlock, are the kindest, most supportive, strongest, mad, brilliant person I’ve ever met. And it was worth it to go through all that to see it. It was worth it to take that bullet, just to meet you.”

John stole a kiss before continuing:

“I’ve dreamed all my life about getting married and settling down with someone. When I realised how I felt about you I worried that kind of life wasn’t something you wanted. And I…I admit that I was worried- no, scared- about that kind of commitment to a relationship with another man. I know that makes me sound shallow and cowardly-”

“No,” Sherlock insisted, “no, it makes you human.”

The comment made him feel a little better. While he felt horrible confessing all of this, it was something he’d been keeping to himself for too long. But now that Sherlock was being so bloody romantic, now that they were actually discussing having a future together, he was beginning to realise something:

Everything had worked out perfectly.

“Everything is perfect,” John whispered, echoing his thoughts. “All of this was worth it, every bit of it, to get to know you. I couldn’t have asked for a better life.”

He scooped Sherlock’s hand in his and met his eyes, feeling a bit dazed as the morphine began to take its full effect.

“There’s been a lot of marriage talk around here,” John went on, “and it bloody terrifies me. But at the same time, Sherlock…look around. There’s not even anyone else here. You’re my family. I’ve never been so deeply, utterly, head over heels in love before. It feels right, this is all just so right.”
When we met I would have never pinned you for the marrying type, but now I look at you and…”

He was surprised when Sherlock snorted.

“John, I think they might have given you a bit too much morphine,” Sherlock teased.

“No, I mean it—”

Sherlock cut him off by leaning forward and stealing a kiss. It was long and slow, and John never wanted to stop. His hands held onto Sherlock’s arms, keeping him close. When he felt his lover tug away, his body was already aching for Sherlock’s warmth again.

“There’s no denying what we have,” John finished quietly. “You have such a big heart, Sherlock, and I’m glad we’ve gone through all this, just so I could see it. Just so I can call you mine.”

It had to have been the cheesiest speech he had ever given, but in his drugged, exhausted, and terrified state it all made complete sense.

“I can’t lose you,” Sherlock whispered.

John reached out for Sherlock’s hand, and instantly that familiar warmth ran through him again as he replied:

“You aren’t going to.”

When they embraced again, John’s eyes fell to the x-rays that were still hanging against the wall. Sherlock couldn’t read them, but to him they were daunting, like two gravestones hanging over his bed. Although the bullet took a clean path, the image showed how it traveled through his leg, narrowly missing his femoral artery. He knew it wasn’t fair to hide how serious his situation was to Sherlock. He knew it wasn’t fair to not tell Sherlock that the doctors were trying to figure out how much the nearby sciatic nerve was affected, possibly causing the numbness he continued to feel after the antistatic ran out.

The truth was, John couldn’t tell him because he couldn’t bear to think about it.

He couldn’t bear to think of how closely the bullet came to killing him.

So he hugged Sherlock tightly, closed his eyes, and breathed in deep, hoping he could prove to be half as strong as his partner thought he was.

Chapter End Notes

I actually have the next chapter written already, so I'm hoping to update again either before Labor Day weekend or after I get back Monday night. Let me tell you, if you thought last chapter had a big cliffhanger, there's an even better one in the next. No really, it's better! It's a nice cliffhanger! (there's such a thing, I promise!)

Thanks SO much for reading for all the lovely comments! Each of your comments makes me smile :) If you leave kudos, thanks for taking the time! If you haven't shared your thoughts on the story yet, I'd love to hear them!
There was a boom, and the world shattered.

Someone was shouting John’s name, and there was blood…blood on the floor, blood on his hands. Killer Evan’s was on the floor beneath him. A gun was in his own hands.

And then…

It wasn’t Killer Evans, but Kirchhoff in front of him.

The detective jerked awake with a scream. He was breathless and cold. A blanket was tugged around his shoulders, though he didn’t remember having one on him. Sitting up slowly, he realised he wasn’t at Baker Street but in the living room of his brother’s house. The room was dark, save for a single lamp that was on nearby. He looked up to find Mycroft reading and sipping on a cup of tea. One glance at the clock on over the fireplace told Sherlock it was far too late for anyone to be up reading, but then again this was Mycroft. He’d always been a night owl, even before he began meddling in international affairs.

“You’re babysitting me?” Sherlock snorted. “Seriously?”

Mycroft’s lips turned up in a smirk.

“Gregory and I like to call it ‘Sherlock-sitting’.”

“Original.”

Sherlock ran his hands threw his hair and reached for a glass of water that had been placed by the sofa.

“I really don’t want to intrude on your happy family,” Sherlock mumbled. “I would be perfectly fine at Baker Street.”

Ignoring his comment, Mycroft sat aside the book and studied him carefully.

“How long have your night terrors been back?” He asked.

Great. All he needed was the third-degree about his health at two in the morning.

“I thought I had them under control,” he admitted, but you know the triggers…stress, trauma, blah-blah-blah.”

“Trauma,” Mycroft pointed out. “You’ve been through quite a bit of that lately.”

“I’m going upstairs,” Sherlock said with a grunt.
He tightened the blanket around his shoulders and stood up, preparing to storm up the stairs, but a hand stopped him.

“I’m not awake at two AM because I think you can’t look after yourself,” Mycroft confessed quietly. “I’m awake because my brother was involved in a shooting. The gun could have just as easily have been turned on you.”

Sherlock’s breath hitched; the thought had crossed his mind only once, when he very first told Greg what happened. Killer Evans could have easily turned the gun on him instead of John, or if Sherlock hadn’t attacked him quick enough he could have been shot too. As he stared into his brother’s eyes he could see his sympathy was sincere, and he was surprised that he felt reassured that Mycroft cared.

“I’m okay,” Sherlock told him. “It’s all part of the job, right?”

A sad smile crossed Mycroft’s face.

“The job you invented, you mean?” Mycroft said. “If I recall, its purpose was to keep you occupied during withdrawal.”

Crossing his arms, Sherlock stood tall as he shot:

“Are you suggesting I quit?”

“I’m suggesting you think about your future,” Mycroft replied. “Love is a unique thing, Sherlock. We spend our entire lives searching for it, and it can disappear from us in an instant.”

He had to admit he understood what Mycroft was saying, and even worse, he knew he was right. But it wasn’t something he could think about right now, not with John in the hospital and his life in limbo.

“Goodnight, Mycroft,” he sighed as he turned and descended up the stairs.

Though Greg made up a guest room for him earlier, he trudged all the way up to his childhood bedroom. The light bulb was burnt out so he found his way through the sea of boxes with his mobile. As he sank into his old quilt he breathed in deeply. With his eyes peeled on the bookshelf across from the bed, he could just imagine his mother waltzing through the room, mumbling about how he never cleaned. He laughed at the thought and pulled one of the pillows into his arms. It was nothing like holding John, but he needed something to cling to. A chill ran through him, reminding him of how poor the heating used to be in the room. He closed his eyes and pictured his mother tucking him in, planting a kiss on his head and promising to see him in the morning.

How had he taken all those bedtimes for granted? Night after night he fell asleep with no doubt she would be there in the morning to take care of him. Now he did the same with John, kissing him goodnight and falling to sleep thinking about what they needed to do the next day.

What if, one day, John just wasn’t there?

What if that day had been today?

A tear slipped from his eye, and Sherlock let out a shaky breath. Although he wasn’t used to Mycroft being so sentimental and kind, he was used to Mycroft thinking that he knew what was best for him.

And this time, perhaps he did.
Sherlock buried his head in the pillow and let out a stifled sob. He wasn’t sure how people did it, this emotion thing, day in and day out. It was exhausting. It was terrifying.

It was consuming him more and more each day.

He loved John, and if he wanted to have him by his side forever he knew what he had to do.

The next day John felt well enough to sit up in bed and have a meal. The meds seemed to be working wonders on him. John bragged about how he could flex the toes in both of his feet—painfully, of course. He even talked Sherlock into playing some ridiculous vocabulary game on their mobiles, and John asked for his laptop so they could watch movies on Netflix.

“My agent’s coming by today.” John announced halfway through a travel documentary about China (it was the only thing Sherlock thought he could stomach). “She’s bringing the publisher. I felt horrible about missing the meeting but…you know…I had a pretty good excuse. You should stay and meet them.”

He felt uncomfortable at the thought. The book was John’s thing—he was definitely happy for John, and proud of him, but he wasn’t ready to focus on it yet. Not after what they just went through.

“You okay?” John asked, reaching over to run a hand through Sherlock’s hair. “You know I agreed to watch this for you, and I don’t think you’ve paid attention to a bloody minute of it.”

Taking a deep breath, Sherlock decided it was either now or never.

“John, we need to talk,” he announced. His lover froze, paused the movie, and turned to stare at him.

“Conversations that start out like that are never good,” John said quietly.

Sherlock took his hand and squeezed it, hoping to reassure him that everything was alright.

“It’s nothing like that,” he promised; John still didn’t look convinced that this was going anywhere good. “John…you’re fired.”

He held his breath, waiting for the yelling, the protesting, possibly the punch to the face.

But John just blinked.

“Since when am I working for you?” John demanded. “What the fuck do you mean I’m fired?”

He swallowed nervously, his hand turning sweaty against John’s palm.

“I think you should stop working cases with me,” Sherlock admitted, “it’s too dangerous.”

John snorted, and Sherlock worried he wouldn’t be able to convince him to take this seriously.

“Danger is my thing, remember?” John pointed out. “Danger is what I signed up for. I got shot, Sherlock. We always knew there was a risk of something like that happening. You’ve been hurt before to, or need I remind you of your head wound? I can take care of myself.”

“I know,” Sherlock said quietly, “but if I lost you…if you died—”
Shaking his head, John snapped:

“Don’t even say that!”

“But it could happen!” Sherlock exclaimed. “It… it could have happened this week. I’ve opened up my heart for you, John. I’ve exposed myself more than I ever have before. I… I love you, and the thought of you being gone, even for one day let alone a lifetime, is too much for me to bear. I’ve got to keep you safe.”

“This is ridiculous,” John said. He snapped the laptop close and stuffed it in a bag of his things Sherlock brought for him. “It’s either you and me or nothing.”

Their eyes met, and Sherlock drew in a deep breath to calm himself down. After all, they had been through this before, right? From John’s near-drowning incident, to his own head injury, to Kirchhoff, they’d been through it all. Even Laura had gotten herself in danger.

“Besides,” John said, raising a hand to caress Sherlock’s cheek. “You know you would be bored without me on a case.”

A smile crossed Sherlock’s face, and he knew John was right.

“I’m just giving you an out,” he offered. “You’re brilliant on cases, John, but if it’s getting to be too much—”

“It’s not getting to be too much.”

Sherlock placed a hand on John’s leg, without thinking about it, and immediately retracted when his partner winced in pain.

“Sorry!” Sherlock blurted out. “I wasn’t thinking.”

“No,” John replied, “it’s good…”

Without explaining what he meant, John leaned forward and began placing his hands on his injured leg, as though testing it out. Sherlock’s eyebrows furrowed as he tried to figure out why he would be doing that, but then he remembered a medic doing the same to him when he fell on his arm during a case. The medic had been testing for numbness.

“John, has your leg still been numb?” Sherlock asked quietly.

John sighed, and Sherlock had his answer.

“Why didn’t you say anything?” Sherlock demanded.

“I didn’t want to scare you,” John admitted. “It’s not a big deal.”

“… limbs going numb are always a big deal!”

His boyfriend squeezed his leg again, grimacing at the pain.

“The numbness comes and goes,” John explains. “There’s pain, pins and needles, and then… nothing, until it starts all over again. My doctor thinks it could be sciatic nerve pain. At first I thought the numbness was just the antistatic, or side-effects from the antibiotics, but then it persisted. Only now, it’s not just numbness, there’s pain too. Actually, there’s been quite a bit more pain in the past few hours than numbness. If only I could just get out of this bloody bed moving around would help.”
Sherlock sat back in his seat and let his arms fall across his chest. He knew John would only hide something like this from him if it was bad, and if it was something bad it meant John would probably be living with this for a while.

“Will it go away?” Sherlock asked.

John shrugged.

“It just depends. Surgery didn’t show any major nerve or muscle damage, so at least it’s nothing like that. I went through something similar, with my shoulder called neuropathy. Eventually it subsided with physical therapy and lots and lots of steroids. I’m just not looking forward to going through that again."

The frustration showed on his face, and Sherlock moved his hand up to John’s arm and gave him a comforting squeeze.

“But it could be worse, right?” John asked, rhetorically, as though he had been trying to convince himself of that.

He still had a feeling John wasn’t telling him the full scope of his diagnosis, but if the injury was that bad he almost didn’t want to know.

“I’m just happy to have you here with me,” Sherlock said. He raised John’s hand to his lips and kissed it. “Do you need anything else from the flat?”

“Maybe a pair of pyjamas?” John suggested. “And I’ll need a change of clothes, for when I’m discharged.”

Sherlock’s heart leapt at the word ‘discharge’. He hadn’t expected them to be talking about John coming home for a while, but the idea of having his boyfriend back instantly lifted his spirits.

“When will that be?” He asked eagerly.

John shrugged.

“Hopefully in a few days,” he replied, “they’re just trying to make sure I don’t get an infection from the surgery and that the antibiotics suit me well. After that, I’m all yours. Well, all yours on bedrest.”

He glanced down at John’s legs. The doctor was rubbing his hands up in down them gently, as though trying to find feeling in them again. A new horror crossed his mind: what if John had trouble walking? What if he couldn’t walk?

“What about…” Sherlock began, struggling to find the courage to ask him about it. “What about… walking?”

The struggle between trying to seem reassuring and hiding his own fear was more than obvious on John’s face.

“I shouldn’t have any trouble, in the long run,” John said, “but for now I’ll definitely need crutches. And maybe…god I hate to say it…maybe a wheelchair- but that’s just while I get my strength back up, I swear. I’ve seen injuries like this before countless times. More often than not the patient begins to recover within months.”
“Months?!”

“Yes, months,” John replied, “months, as opposed to being dead.”

“I know that!” Sherlock snapped. He frantically ran his hands through his hair, trying not to completely freak out. “I just want you to be okay.”

“I will be,” John promised with a soft smile. “It will be fine Sherlock, really. There will be lots of physical therapy, and I probably will actually need a cane this time.”

“Now I feel bad for giving you the upstairs bedroom.”

They shared a grin, and Sherlock tried to convince himself that John knew what he was talking about. It was just hard to do when part of him knew that his lover would hide any major pain from him.

“I’ll be by your side, 100%,” Sherlock promised. It didn’t look like that made John feel much better, and he knew he was picturing him trying to figure out how to change bandages and administer medicine. “We’ll hire a nurse if we need to.”

“Mycroft and Greg stopped by,” John told him, “they offered to let us stay with them.”

Sherlock’s eyes widened in surprise. Perhaps Mycroft was thinking of the guest bedroom on the first floor of his house, which would be perfect for John if he was having trouble walking. Perhaps he was thinking that if John had to rely on Sherlock to cook and clean for the next few months he was in trouble. It was a nice gesture, but Sherlock knew he wouldn’t be able to share the same space with his brother for too long. He didn’t want to intrude on their lives; he wanted privacy. He wanted to prove he could take care of John himself.

“Don’t give me that look, I told him no,” John laughed. “We’ll be fine. I’ve been through this before. Are you sure you don’t want to stay and meet the agent?”

How could John even think about deals and contracts right now? His own mind was so full over worry, so overwhelmed with uncertainty and the fear that this was going to be much harder than John made it seem. He shook his head, admitting that he wasn’t up for it.

“That’s okay,” John said, “it’s been a long couple of days. Go home and get some rest.”

It was only three in the afternoon, but Sherlock nodded. His body was heavy with exhaustion, and he knew there was only so much longer that he could ignore the need for sleep.

“I’ll be back as soon as I can,” Sherlock promised.

“I’ll be waiting,” John whispered.

Sherlock embraced his boyfriend and squeezed him extra tightly when he heard John let out a shaky breath.

“Your brother’s sending over an entertainment lawyer to look over the contract,” John confessed. “So don’t worry, I won’t sign away our lives.”

The detective let out a low chuckle. He wished the book deal was the biggest worry on his mind, but he just couldn’t bring himself to think about anything but John and how they were going to get through this. He knew John well enough to know that he was using the book as a means of distracting himself from his injuries, but it didn’t work that way for Sherlock.
“I’ll trust you not to,” Sherlock said. “Though please, whatever you do, don’t give them film or
telly rights.”

They pulled apart and John laughed. It was good to hear genuine laughter coming from him, so
Sherlock explained:

“I will not sit in a producer’s chair watching someone blundering through scenes about me and you
drinking tea. Although, it would be amusing to find someone to play Anderson; I don’t think
there’s an actor out there dull enough for the part.”

John snorted.

“Mycroft’s requesting that I exaggerate his character, so that no one will recognise him,” he
admitted. “So I’m making him fat, and I’m possibly giving him a mustache. And if anyone asks,
he’s officially a government accountant.”

“Oh, he’ll love that!” Sherlock grinned. “I assure you’re leaving out the part where he has a secret
affair with the copper we solve cases with?”

His boyfriend was grinning from ear to ear now, and he had to admit he was pleased that he was
able to lift John’s spirits before his big meeting.

“Nah, the readers will hardly notice him,” John said. His eyes twinkled. “Except for Irene’s case,
of course.”

Sherlock’s heart twitched at the memory of The Woman- the only other person since Luke he’d
shared a kiss with. He knew his feelings for her at the time were fueled by the adrenaline and
intrigue of the case, but he couldn’t help but to wonder where she was now…and what she would
think of her story becoming a book.

“I’m guessing we won’t be expecting Mycroft to join us at any radio interviews, then?” Sherlock
tezed.

“I’m lucky he even let me have the blog, let alone a bloody book series.”

Sherlock leaned forward to give John a quick kiss, and as they said their goodbyes he could admit
he felt a little better about the state his partner was in.

By the time he reached Baker Street he was worn out. He felt like his emotions had been wrung
dry, and for once he was ready to collapse into bed. His stomach growled, reminding him he hadn’t
eaten yet. Perhaps some supper was in order.

The flat felt eerily quiet without John. As he pushed open the door he could hear the echo of his
every step. He almost didn’t have the heart to face entering their living room, knowing he’d have
all that space to himself for the next couple of days. It had been ages since he’d lived completely
alone, and even then that wasn’t for too long. He wasn’t exactly sure what he was supposed to do,
but he knew that the first thing he needed was a long bath and a biscuit or two.

But when he stepped into the room, it didn’t take him long to realise he wasn’t alone. There was a
small, slim figure of a woman sitting on his sofa, gazing out the window. Her mobile was in her
hands, bouncing steadily against her knee as though she were anxiously awaiting a call. A single
suitcase sat beside her with the handles down, as though she thought she would be staying awhile.
Sherlock’s heart began racing and he blinked, thinking the sight was too good to be true.

He opened his eyes again, and a bright smile crossed his face when he realised he wasn’t seeing
things. She finally stirred as she noticed someone else had entered the room and she turned to
them, their matching blue-green eyes meeting. It was a full moment before he found his voice
again and managed to call out to her, wondering what was going on.

“Laura?”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the wonderful reviews and kudos! Can't believe I'm over 800 reviews!!

So...what did you think???? :D
A bright smile crossed Laura’s face as she stood up and faced her older brother. Sherlock could only stand in shock, his mouth agape as he lingered in the doorway.

“Hang on…” Laura suddenly announced as she whipped out her mobile. She snapped a picture and began texting. “You look way more shocked than Jason thought you’d be. That definitely beats Mycroft’s reaction.”

She laughed and rushed over to him and didn’t hesitate to throw his arms around him. Hugging him tightly, she buried her head in his shoulders and let out a sigh.

“It is so good to see you,” she whispered. “I’m so sorry about John.”

It finally hit him that she probably came all this way for John. The thought overwhelmed him so much that he had to blink away tears; he was not going to lose it while being held in his sister’s arms.

“You didn’t have to fly here just for us,” he mumbled.

“Of course I did. You’re family.”

Taking a step back, Laura rubbed her hands against his forearms to comfort him.

“Plus Dan has two weeks off for a school break and we were going to surprise you anyway,” she admitted.

He let out a small laugh at the poor timing, but now that that was out of the way he wasn’t quite sure what to say.

“How is John?” Laura asked. She was studying him like she knew he wasn’t quite in the right state of mind.

Sherlock retreated into the kitchen, letting Laura watch him while he began making tea. He almost felt like he was having an out of body experience, like he wasn’t really standing there making tea and that his sister wasn’t really there. John wasn’t really in the hospital. It felt very dreamlike… very nightmare-like.

But Laura stepped beside him, placing her hand gently around his rest for a moment before letting him continue on with the tea.

No, this was worse than a nightmare.

It was real, and it wasn’t going to go away.
“Stable,” Sherlock finally mumbled. He cleared his throat. “He was sent straight to emergency surgery because they were afraid of nerve damage, but the wound went through clean. It just got close enough to cause some…ripple effects. He’s had some numbness.”

“Poor John,” Laura breathed, biting her lip. “I can’t believe he has to go through this again.”

“I can’t believe I’m making him go through this again.”

“Don’t,” Laura warned. “Don’t you dare blame yourself for this.”

He slammed the kettle down a little too hard on the counter and gripped his hands against the edge of the sink.

“I shouldn’t have put him in harm’s way,” Sherlock snapped. “He shouldn’t even be around guns, not after…I shouldn’t ever have asked him to bring his gun along on cases. It was so stupid of me, so thoughtless.”

“Sherlock!” Laura exclaimed.

She placed her hands on his shoulders and forced him to turn toward her. He felt helpless as he gazed into her eyes. Secretly he hoped she had some secret answer to all this, that she had appeared as if by magic to fix everything.

But he knew she was only human, and all she was doing was simply being there for him. His eyes roamed her face and she offered him a small smile. That’s when he noticed…

“You’re taller than me!”

Laura let out a laugh and crossed her arms.

“Only by maybe a half an inch!” She shot. He raised his hand, comparing their heights, and she rolled her eyes. “Okay, maybe an inch.”

His mouth fell open in disgusts.

“Mycroft’s 6’1” too,” he protested. “You two are taller than me! How am I the shortest person in this family?”

With a laugh, Laura snatched up the kettle and poured them both a cup of tea.

“If it makes you feel any better, technically Dan is the shortest,” she teased, “and you can’t forget John.”

“Are you making fun of an injured person?” He challenged. They shared another laugh, and for a split second he felt like everything could be okay again.

But more than anything, he wished John were here with him now, making fun of the fact that he was, apparently, short. His hands tucked into his pockets, his right one finding the chain he was still holding from John. He brought it out to show Laura.

“I got him this,” Sherlock admitted.

“Wow!” Laura smiled, taking the necklace in her hands. “This is really nice! I didn’t know you were so charming.”

He smirked.
“I have my moments. It was the closest thing I could think of to a promise ring.”

“That’s so sweet,” Laura replied, handing the necklace back to him. “Sherlock, I know we haven’t known each other for very long, but when I first met you I honestly thought you and John had one of the closest friendships I’ve ever witnessed. And now…I’m really amazed at how far you’ve come.”

He thought back to how he was right before he met John: shy, alone, untrusting. Bored. He only thought about the day-to-day, never his future. He was never happy, never satisfied, unless it was about a case.

“John’s changed me in ways I never knew possible,” he admitted quietly. “You wouldn’t have wanted to know the man I was before I met him. And honestly…I’m not sure I would have had the courage to meet you.”

Their eyes met, and Laura’s lips curled into a firm, understanding smile. Suddenly a mobile buzzed, and Laura slipped her phone out of her pocket.

“Hey,” she answered in a soft, sweet voice that told him it was probably Jason. She laughed and threw a hand over her mouth to stifle her giggles. After listening a moment she finally spoke up: “Okay, tell Mycroft not to panic. They were the washable markers, right?”

A grin spread across Sherlock’s face as he pictured his brother panicking over something Dan destroyed with markers. She was still laughing as she hung up the phone and had to take a moment to catch her breath.

“Dan took his markers to one of those nice built-in desks Mycroft has,” she said. She burst out laughing again. “Jason said Mycroft’s face was like nothing you could imagine.”

Sherlock laughed. He knew too well how obsessed his brother was with cleanliness. When he lived with him he used to receive half-hour long lectures about wearing his shoes on the carpet. Deep down, he knew it was because Mycroft was obsessed with keeping their mother’s house just the way she left it.

And yet…it was still funny every time something happened.

“Greg managed to get the stain out,” Laura explained. “Poor Dan must have been terrified. He tried to hide it by placing a laptop over it…which worked until Mycroft went looking for the laptop.”

“Well at least his work is being of some good use,” Sherlock teased.

Laura rolled her eyes.

“I wanted to stay here, but maybe I should go make sure my child doesn’t become the death of your childhood home,” she said. She hesitated and raised her eyes to meet his. “I know Mycroft and Greg offered John the opportunity for you two to stay with him. It’s not just because they’re worried about you. I think it will be easier for John, to be in the house.”

Sherlock sighed.

“Right,” he mumbled, “the bloody downstairs bedroom.”

Shaking her head, Laura replied:

“No, the people. You’re wonderful to him, Sherlock, and I know you’ll do everything in your
power to help him through his recovery. But it will take more than you could ever know to help him—not just physically, but mentally. Not to mention, you’ll want someone to lean on through this! I brought my bag ready to stay here with you and help you however you need, but I really wish you’d consider staying with your family.”

The tea was ready. He’d nearly forgotten about it until Laura handed him a cup, but he was too distracted to drink. He had wanted to take full responsibility of John’s recovery because he was responsible for his injury. Now they had family flying in from abroad and his brother offering for them to move in.

“Stop blaming yourself,” Laura said quietly behind him. He nodded, making a promise he wasn’t sure he could keep. She rest a hand on his shoulder before clearing her throat and changing the subject. “I’m sure you haven’t bothered to stop eating. Can I make you something?”

She wandered over to the fridge, and she opened it just before he remembered—

“Oh my god!” She exclaimed. He looked away, innocent, went she pulled a jar out from the top shelf. “Is this an eyeball? Do you actually have an eyeball in your fridge? I thought everyone was just making up those stories!”

A small grin peered from Sherlock’s lips as he snatched the glass with the eyeball away from her.

“That could be my break in a major cold case,” Sherlock said as he carefully stored the glass in the fridge.

“How…you know what, I don’t want to know.”

He closed the fridge behind him and turned around to meet his sister’s eyes. He had waited so long to be able to see her again that he wasn’t quite sure what to do now that she was here.

“What were you planning to do before I nearly gave you a heart attack?” Laura asked.

Sherlock shrugged.

“Take a bath,” he admitted. “John needed a few things from the flat so I was going to take him some things.”

“How about this,” Laura announced as she began picking up some dishes they had left on the table and counters. His mouth fell open to protest, but it looked like she was almost acting absent-mindedly, like it was the mother in her who automatically thought to pick up after others. “You go take your bath, I’ll gather John’s things, and we’ll go to the hospital together. Then, if you want, I can stay here with you, or I can go back to Mycroft’s…or you can come stay with us.”

Letting out a breath, Sherlock nodded. That sounded fair enough.

He left her to do the washing up (who was he to argue if she wanted to do it?) and walked through the living room and into the doorway of his and John’s bedroom.

He froze.

Everything was exactly as they left it. Sheets in disarray after sex. Glasses and plates from a couple of meals they had in bed. He had been back to the flat after John woke up to grab his laptop and to change clothes, but he made a point to be as quick about it as possible. It reminded him of when he was a child, when he wanted to be left alone as little as possible in his room to hide from the ghosts.
He could almost hear John’s voice now, whispering to him as they lay together. He shuddered, wondering how he would have managed if he had to return to the flat alone, forever. Closing his eyes, Sherlock knew what his decision was.

He fished around his closet for the suitcases they took to Paris and began packing bags for him and John. He mentally tried to keep count of all the pairs of socks, boxers, and shirts he was packing but he found he really didn’t care. He couldn’t bear the thought of spending any more time in the flat without John.

Laura was still washing dishes when he appeared in the doorway, breathless, with a suitcase on either side of him.

“On second thought, I’ll just wash up at Mycroft’s.”

It was funny how relieved he felt just stepping through the hospital doors that evening. Laura was still with him; Jason and Dan would visit in the morning. He grinned at his sister as he knocked on John’s door before pushing it open just enough to stick his head through. He was a bit surprised to see his lover napping. Except for when they were busy with cases John was never exhausted enough during the day to sleep. His boyfriend looked so peaceful with the sunset beaming through the blinds and illuminating his blonde hair that Sherlock almost felt guilty for waking him, but he couldn’t help but to creep into the room with a big smile on his face.

“John?” He called softly. When his partner didn’t budge, he knelt down to place a kiss to his forehead. John’s eyes blinked open at the touch, and Sherlock smiled at him as he tried to figure out what was going on. “Sorry to wake you, love, but you have a visitor, if you’re up for it.”

John reached for a cup of water and nodded. He replied with a hoarse voice:

“Yeah, of course.”

Laura must have heard him because she slowly opened the door, giving herself a bit dramatic of a reveal as she stepped into the room. The sight of her had John beaming ear-to-ear, and he let out the most genuine laugh Sherlock had heard from him since before the case.

“No way!” John exclaimed. “What are you doing here?”

Eyes watering, Laura threw herself at John and embraced him tightly.

“Mycroft called us,” Laura explained. Sherlock looked at her in surprise. When Mycroft promised him he would take care of letting everyone know of John’s condition, he hadn’t considered how hard it must have been to tell Laura. She had obviously become just as drawn to John as she was to him and Mycroft, and his heart was heavy at the thought of her caring as much about his boyfriend as he did.

“I was so worried when I heard,” she admitted.

“It’s so good to see you,” John whispered before they let each other go. He took her hands in his and squeezed them. “But you really didn’t have to fly all the way here just for me!”

He turned to Sherlock with a bemused grin on his face.

“Well, she was also going to come anyway,” Sherlock said.
Laura rolled her eyes.

“Dan has a break from school for the next couple of weeks,” she explained, “so yes, we were going to surprise you guys. We just couldn’t believe it when Mycroft told us what happened. John…oh god.”

Suddenly she lost it as she raised her hand to her eyes to stop tears from flowing. Sherlock wrapped an arm around her and she shook her head, embarrassed.

“It’s okay,” John promised her. “I’m fine, I’m perfectly fine.”

She drew in a few deep breaths, trying to calm herself down.

“Sherlock said something about numbness? Sciatic…something or another?”

John glared at him, and Sherlock shrugged. He didn’t realise John meant to keep that a secret, but he didn’t want his lover to get in the habit of hiding his pain from everyone.

“It’s really no big deal,” John said, clearly lying. “The important thing was there was no nerve damage, no muscle damage, and no arteries were hit. I was really incredibly lucky. I’m only still here for the antibiotics, but my doctor said if I remain stable overnight he might discharge me tomorrow afternoon.”

Sherlock’s eyes lit up.

“Really?” He asked, sounding a bit desperate.

John grinned at him.

“Really. Now come here, you.”

Feeling a bit sheepish, Sherlock allowed John to pull him down for a kiss. John’s lips were dry and cracked, but the kiss was still comforting.

“Is that why Mycroft wanted us to stay over?” John suddenly asked. “Because everyone’s going to be there?”

He looked to Sherlock, and he could see in John’s eyes that the idea was appealing to him.

“Yes,” Laura replied. “I know Sherlock wants you to himself, but if it’s okay with you, I think I can convince him that you two could use the company- and the help.”

His hand fell into his boyfriend’s palm, and their arms swung in air for a quiet moment.

“You don’t need to burden yourself with me,” John told him.

“You’re never a burden,” Sherlock insisted.

“It’s going to take a lot of work, you know?” John said. He bit his lip, obviously uncomfortable with having to talk about all the help he’d need. “Bandages will need changing, then there’s all the pain meds, and they’ll want me to watch my blood pressure.”

“Have you been able to walk any?” Laura asked.

John let out a sigh, like he was tired of thinking about walking.
“I’ll have to do quite a bit of physical therapy before I get to that point,” he mumbled. “My leg’s not broken or anything, it’s just weak and the numbness doesn’t help. My doctor’s insisting I stay in a wheelchair until I get my energy back.”

Wheelchair.

The word stung at his chest and his body froze up. He felt John squeeze his hand, but he couldn’t pull himself together.

“That’ll be like a week, tops,” John promised. “I’ll start out with crutches maybe after that, then a cane for awhile. I hate thinking about it too, but I’ve seen so much worse when it comes to gunshot wounds. I really am lucky.”

John was throwing these words like ‘awhile’ around like that didn’t really mean months, possibly years. How long did John use a cane after his first gunshot wound, which had nothing to do with his legs?

“My point is,” John finished quietly, “we’ll want the help. I know you feel like you have to take full responsibility, but you don’t. Staying with your family might be the best option for us—especially now that everyone’s in town. You don’t want to miss out on that.”

“No,” Sherlock admitted as a small smile crept across his face at the thought of his nephew. “No, I don’t. I can stay with you tonight though, if you’d like.”

As excited as he was to see his family, he secretly hoped John would say yes. The thought of leaving him again made him feel sick. He hated thinking of John being alone in the hospital room, especially since he knew first-hand how boring and miserable hospitals were. Not to mention the thought of John lying there in pain, in fear of what was to come, made him feel even worse.

“You need some rest,” John said. It wasn’t a ‘no’, signaling to him that John secretly wanted him to be there. “I’ll be knocked out on pain meds all night. You won’t be missing anything.”

John turned to Laura.

“Look after him, yeah?” He pleaded.

Laura nodded and looped her arm around Sherlock’s.

“Of course,” she promised. She looked around the room, like she wasn’t quite sure what to do next. “So are you up for us staying awhile? If you’re tired…”

“No!” John said, practically shouting. “No, sleep was good but I’ll be awake until they get a final vital sign check, and I’m bored out of my mind. Plus…I need to tell you two about the book deal.”

Sherlock’s eyebrows shot up. With Laura’s surprise arrival he had nearly forgot about John’ meeting with the agent and publishers.

“How did it go?” Sherlock asked.

His boyfriend pointed at a binder that had been sitting on the edge of a nearby sink, and Sherlock picked it up. When John opened to the first page he realised the book was a length contract.

“Yeah, I had to sign nearly every page of that,” John said with a laugh, “but, I’m officially an author. I suppose the bright side to being off my feet will be having plenty of time to write.”
Sherlock wanted to point out that John was supposed to be resting, not stressing out about a book, but he knew he used writing as an escape. If having the blog helped him so much after the war, he couldn’t imagine how useful writing an entire bloody book would be.

“T’m super excited for you,” Laura said. “God, you two are so talented. It makes me look pathetic. All I ever managed was a few months of piano lessons before I quit.”

“Yeah, but you’re a mum,” Sherlock pointed out. “Can you picture me and John as parents?”

John snorted.

“Oh god, we wouldn’t last a week,” he mused.

“Still,” Laura sighed. “It’s been great to stay at home and raise Dan, but now that he’s in school I’ve kind of been thinking about going back to work.”

They hadn’t talked much about her work history, but he knew Laura did a couple of office gigs before taking on her new job as stay at home mum when Dan came along.

“I don’t want to just go back to the office, though,” she said. “I mean, I have a brother who’s a consulting detective, another who practically is the British government, and a soon-to-be brother in law who’s a DCI. With John being an army doctor and Jason being a lawyer, I feel like I’ve missed out on becoming something. I need to make a name for myself.”

“You’ve done plenty!” Sherlock protested.

“Being a mum is a job in itself,” John chimed in. “Plus you manage the house and the bills.”

With a laugh, Laura teased:

“You sound like my mother-in-law. Really though, I think I’m ready. I’ve just got to decide what I want to do. I never got to go to grad school like I wanted to after Dan came along. I had always wanted to go into business management so who knows…maybe I’ll look into that.”

“Business management?” Sherlock spat, his face scrunched up in disgust. Laura folded her hands over her chest in defense, but he went on before she could protest: “No, you’re much better than business management.”

“There’s nothing wrong with business management!” John argued. “There’s a lot of responsibility that goes into running a business.”

Laura sighed, and Sherlock felt guilty when he saw that she looked genuinely disappointed that she didn’t have his support. John glared at him, and he knew he had said something seriously wrong.

“I just mean…you should think big,” Sherlock offered. “You could do just about anything.”

His sister just shrugged, clearly not as excited to talk about her future as she was a few minutes ago.

“It’s probably a stupid idea,” she said. “Grad school costs are insane, and it would take too much time away from Dan. Plus, Jason’s up for a promotion soon, and he’s feeling pretty good about it.”

“That’s fantastic!” John exclaimed.

Laura shook her head, as though trying to shake herself out of her dreams of her future. Sherlock could have kicked himself for ever saying anything.
“I’m not doubting you,” Sherlock promised.

“It’s okay,” Laura offered, though she didn’t sound like she meant it. She threw John a smile. “All that matters is you’re both alright, all things considering. I guess when things like this happen you just realise that you shouldn’t take life for granted, not one day of it.”

Turning to John, Sherlock met his eyes as he realised the full-force of Laura’s words. During their time together they had too many close calls and had been given too many second chances at life. He’d come too close to losing John more times than he could count, and just thinking of all those memories made his eyes fall close and his throat turn raw.

“No truer words have been said,” John said quietly.

For a moment they avoided each others' eyes, like the comment was the subject was too delicate to speak about. Sherlock was so overwhelmed from the emotion of the past couple of days that his body was beginning to feel numb.

“Well, we probably should let you rest, John,” Laura announced quietly. The were a pang of sadness in his chest at the thought of leaving him, but Sherlock knew she was right. “It’s so good to see you, I just wish…I wish it didn’t have to be like this.”

“I know,” John whispered as they shared an embrace. He had tears in his eyes when they pulled apart, and Sherlock swallowed nervously, fighting to hold it together himself. John was finally falling apart. He pointed at Sherlock and forced out a laugh. “He needs to be in bed by ten.”

“Ten?” Sherlock protested. “I haven’t had a ten o’clock curfew since I was eighteen!”

And even then, I didn’t follow it.

“He needs his sleep,” John argued. “He also needs three meals a day, and don’t just put him in front of the telly if he gets cranky, you have to keep him active.”

“Cute,” Sherlock shot, rolling his eyes.

“I’ll make sure he’s looked after,” Laura promised, “as long as you look after yourself and call us if you need anything at all.”

“I will,” John said, placing his hands over hers one last time.

A sad smile crossed Laura’s face as she stepped back and turned to Sherlock.

“Mycroft was going to send a car around, so I’ll let the driver know we’re ready.”

He nodded and stayed quiet as she left the room, leaving them alone.

“Seriously though,” John spoke up, “get some rest. You will do neither of us good if you’re exhausted.”

He knew John wouldn’t accept any arguments so he simply leaned down and hugged him tightly.

“I love you,” he whispered. “I’ll be back in the morning.”

John squeezed him tightly and let out the smallest of sniffs, like he was desperately trying to hold back tears. Then suddenly he let out a sob, and it was like the dam broke. He pulled away and brushed away the tears as Sherlock held his shoulders and gazed at him, desperately trying to figure out what was going on inside his head.
“I don’t know how much longer I can hold it together,” John murmured. “Sherlock I…I’m trying to be strong, I really, really am. But I…my leg hurts, it really bloody hurts, and when it’s not hurting it’s just numb and that’s even more terrifying. I just…I’m really angry that this happened to me, but I don’t blame you.”

He placed a hand on his cheek, and Sherlock was surprised to find his own eyes were glistening with tears.

“I’m so sorry,” John whispered, “I wanted to get through this without just breaking down like this, but I know you really care and I don’t have the heart to lie to you. I know I can trust you, Sherlock, and I’m sorry I just…I had to say it.”

“It’s okay,” Sherlock breathed, pulling him close again. He looked over John’s shoulder at the monitor’s keeping track of his every breath. “It’s okay, I’m glad you told me. You don’t have to pretend for me.”

When they broke apart, John’s lips slid into the smallest of smiles, and the contrast of that against his tears was beautiful.

“The pain is better when you’re here,” he admitted. “We’ll be together again, tomorrow. I’m getting out of here if it’s the last thing I do.”

“Come here,” Sherlock said. He moved around so that he was shoulder to shoulder with him and grabbed his boyfriend’s mobile. He extended his arm to take a photo; John smiled on cue, realising what he was doing. “There. Now you’ll have me here by your side tonight, and perhaps in the future we should invest in some real photos of ourselves.”

“Great,” John laughed, “that’s all we need: a huge, goofy, photo of us hanging over the telly.”

“I think that sounds like a brilliant idea.”

They shared against, and the longing in John’s eyes was obvious as they parted. He wasn’t alone; Sherlock already missed him too.

“Get some rest,” Sherlock said, brushing a hand against his face, “I’ll be back in the morning.”

“I’ll be looking forward to it,” John said quietly.

It pained him to have to leave him like that, but as soon as he shut the door behind him he noticed John’s doctor approaching and remembered that he was still under extensive medical care. As much as he hated to admit it, Sherlock knew he had to step back and let the doctors take care of John.

Laura was waiting for him nearby, and she looped his arm through his as soon as he was next to her.

“Come on,” she said softly, acknowledging that she knew how hard it was for him to leave John. “The rest of your family is waiting for you.”

As they walked out the door Sherlock tried to look forward to getting to see his nephew and being in the comfort of his childhood home. He knew it would be healthier for him, to be around them all as opposed to hiding in Baker Street by himself.

And yet, he also knew how hard it would be, because like John he was pretending everything was okay when deep down he felt like breaking down himself.
If you still think Laura has an ulterior motive to coming back to London, you're thinking along the right track! But it's a good storyline, I promise! Thanks for reading, and I'm really enjoying all your thoughts about the story! What do you think about Laura's return?
John’s hands shook as he worked the top buttons of his shirt. It was his third attempt to dress himself, which was harder than he thought it would be. He was surprised by how much effort it took just to sit up, change his shirt, and take his trousers off. With a sigh John glanced down at his pants and the trousers that were left on the bed. He’d hope to be changed and ready to flee the hospital the moment Sherlock arrived to pick him up.

He wasn’t sure how he thought he’d manage doing this on his own, and knowing how hard it was trying to dress himself just this once made him dread the weeks to come.

“John?”

His heart almost stopped when heard a voice he never expected to hear again in person. Slowly, he turned from where he sat on the edge of the bed to meet his mother’s eyes for the first time in months. The first thing he thought was that she looked tired. She lacked the confidence she normally showed. There were wrinkles on her face he hadn’t noticed before, grey hair sticking out of her blonde strands, and her shoulders drooped, like she could barely hold herself up. Clutching her purse, she took a cautious step into the room, like she wasn’t sure she was invited.

And quite honestly, he wasn’t sure if he wanted her to come in.

“Mum…what are you doing here?” He asked.

She simply hovered in the doorway, lips slightly parted, like she wasn’t sure herself why she was there. A long moment passed between them, and he opened his mouth to tell her maybe it would be better if she left when she replied:

“Your father was…your father was really worried when he heard you were in hospital. When he found out it was because you were shot again, he…well, he didn’t take it very well. He’s been quite upset, and it just…it just made me think…”

Her voice was so uncharacteristically weak, and her body seemed fragile as she shook ever so slightly that normally he would rush to her to make sure she was alright. But after being disowned, after being slapped, after being told off for daring to bother her with the news that he was injured, he wasn’t about to make the effort to go over to her. He could only stay still there, wondering if he was imagining all this. She clearly felt guilty, and she was clearly trying to make herself feel better about not caring about her son.

He knew what she was going to say before she said it. Even Dr Moore once warned him that she might try to come back and guilt-trip him. John was just surprised it had taken her this long.

“I’ve been an awful mother,” she finally confessed.

“Yeah,” John replied dryly with a nod of his head.

Though her eyes narrowed slightly in disapproval of his agreement, she went on, voice trembling:

“John I’ve…I’ve never been completely honest with neither you nor Harry,” she went on. “It’s not that I’m disappointed in you two. Yes I…I had certain expectations for you both, but it’s not just
your sexuality that’s made me so upset.”

Closing his eyes, John thought about what his father told him about the war. He knew how difficult that time was for his family- he knew they were in a constant state of not knowing where he was, how he was, or even if he was still alive. Since then he felt horrible knowing what they went through, but he had always thought they understood why he wanted to join the army.

Apparently, none of them understood, and it felt like they were blaming him for what happened.

“IT was the war,” John whispered. His mother didn’t even have to respond for him to know he was right. “None of you wanted me to go.”

His mother drew in a sharp breath before snapping:

“Of course we didn’t! Why would we want our son to go off and get shot at? Why would your sister want to risk losing her brother?”

On instinct, he made a move to jump to his feet but instead had to resort to balling his hands into fists to show his frustration.

“Because it’s what I wanted to do!” He exclaimed. “Because it’s what I had to do! Being a soldier is just what men in our family do. It’s who we are! It’s in my blood to fight and protect. I had a duty, a duty to this country, to protect and to fight and to heal. Do you have any idea how many lives I saved? Do you have any idea how many mothers were able to see their sons again because of me? Joining the army was one of the very best decisions I’ve ever made, and I will never regret it.”

She looked like she could have slapped him again. She clung tightly to her purse, trying to calm herself down.

“John?” He turned at the sudden sound of Sherlock’s voice, and he breathed a sigh of relief when he saw his partner standing in the doorway. When Sherlock saw John’s mother was in the room with him he frowned. “Is everything okay?”

His mother’s eyes watered, and she turned away from them both and tried to shove her way out the door.

Suddenly, John remembered how alone he felt in Afghanistan after being shot and how much he wanted his family. He thought about how alone he felt while dealing with Harry and how good it felt to speak to his father again. As pissed as he was at his mother, he knew he was the only hope his family had of ever being pieced back together.

And god, if Sherlock’s family could be pieced back together, his own family could.

“Mum!” He called before she could leave. He bit his lip, not exactly sure of what to say. “Mum I… I never wanted to disappoint you. I never intended on it, I never intentionally…”

“John you don’t have to explain yourself to her,” Sherlock snapped.

He was glaring at her with the intensity he reserved for the most disgusting of criminals.

“Sherlock, please,” he said quietly. He drew in another deep breath as he looked at his mother, meeting her eyes. “I’m not ashamed of who I am, I’m not ashamed of whom I love, and I’m not ashamed of being a soldier or…or of any of the decisions I’ve made in my life. I won’t apologise for not living up to these expectations of yours. Although I’m…I’m really, really pissed at the way
you’ve treated me and Harry, if you truly want things to work out between all of us I’d be willing to talk to you again. But Mum, I won’t sit here and listen to you insult my boyfriend, or Harry, or the way we choose to live our lives. If this is you, asking to be a part of our lives again, then you’ll have to be a part of our entire lives.”

Flashing her eyes toward the floor, his mother let out a shaky before she simply swirled around and stormed out the door.

The tears came before he realised it, and his head fell into his hands just as Sherlock appeared by his side. He buried his face into Sherlock’s shoulder and let out a muffled sob.

“I’m sorry,” he whispered. “I’m sorry, I’m such a mess.”

“You don’t have to apologise.”

His boyfriend squeezed him, and John held onto him even tighter, afraid to let him go.

“It’s all too much, all of this. I can’t believe she…I just didn’t know what to do. I don’t know what to say to her to make her…”

To make her proud of me.

He couldn’t bring himself to say it, not even to Sherlock.

“It’s too much for you to take on right now,” Sherlock muttered.

“Everything is just so bloody impossible,” John sighed as he finally lifted his head from Sherlock’s shoulder.

A long, pale, finger pried his chin up, forcing him to look into Sherlock’s eyes.

“John,” his lover breathed, “you’ve just seen your life flash before your eyes. You’re being forced to relive nightmares you thought you’d put behind you. You’ve been in hospital, on more meds than I can even name, and on top of all that to have her come in here and have the audacity to guilt-trip you…”

He closed his eyes and turned his head, as though trying not to scream.

“It’s not right John, it’s not,” Sherlock said quietly. “Even if you have been thinking of making amends, even if you truly want your family back together, she can’t take advantage of the situation you’re in.”

Suddenly flickers of pride flashed in Sherlock’s eyes, and the smallest of smiles peered from the corners of his lips, reminding John very much of the way he’d seen Mycroft look at his brother many a times.

“And John…you’re doing so well. You really are. Don’t feel bad about being emotional, never feel bad about that. Your emotions, the way you care, the way you love people, unconditionally, no matter what they’ve done to you…the second chances you give them and the dedication you have to helping them…they’re the reasons I fell in love with you.”

Sherlock’s lips were on his before he saw the kiss coming. The very force of it took his breath away, and he John’s hands fell on his shoulders to help him keep from falling backward. His tongue brushed across the bottom of Sherlock’s dry, cracked, lips, and a familiar heat rushed through his body. He pulled away before it could become too much.
His boyfriend only smiled and looked down; at some point, their hands had found each others’. He squeezed John’s palm, and then frowned-

“John, you’re not wearing any trousers.”

John let out a dry laugh.

“That’s because I couldn’t even get them on,” he sighed, balling the trousers up in his hands and forcefully throwing them into his own lap in defeat.

The trousers were lifted from his lap as Sherlock slipped off the bed and crouched beside him.

“I’m officially an old man,” John teased.

In return Sherlock squeezed his good leg and planted a kiss to it. He shuddered, but Sherlock simply slipped the trousers onto his legs. He lifted up his hips, letting Sherlock slide the trousers up them. Sherlock’s hands brushed up the edges of his jumper, giving him just enough room to plant a kiss to his abdomen.

Afterwards he jumped up and cleared his throat.

“So, erm…” Sherlock announced, his eyes flashing around the room.

He realised what Sherlock was looking for, and he pointed to the wheelchair waiting for him beside the door. It had been staring at him all morning, egging him on, and he had been working for hours to build up the courage to sit in it. Sherlock’s face fell as his eyes followed John’s finger to the chair, and he watched as the consultant’s chest lifted and fell heavily as he too tried to work up his own courage. Drawing in a deep breath, he grabbed the handles and wheeled the chair around to the side of the bed. He helped John slide into it quietly; neither one of them wanted to mention how heartbroken they were to have to do this.

As he was rolled out of his room and into the waiting room John forced another smile on his face. It was surreal, being back out in the chaos of the world after being secluded in his room, and it was strange to think of how many patients he’d sent home just like this. Back then, before the war, he didn’t think much of it: he’d help to heal them, and he knew they would eventually be okay. He had tried not to be affected by the looks of frustration and self-pity on their faces because he knew, in the end, this is what they needed and they would get better.

Now he knew all too well the fear those most have been, and he wished he had a doctor- or someone- who could tell him how he was supposed to think and feel. All he could do was cling to Sherlock’s support and encouragement, but he knew him well enough to know that his boyfriend was just as lost as he was.

“I thought Dan and Jason were meeting us?” John asked.

Sherlock leaned in toward him as they broke through the hospital doors. John breathed in fresh air for the first time in days, and he felt a chill go up his spine. It was cooler outside than he remembered it being, and the world seemed so much louder. He felt vulnerable. He remembered what it was like to come back from the war and suddenly be in civilisation again. Every car horn, every footstep, anything that was out of the ordinary made him jump. Everything made him feel uncomfortable and unsafe.

Was it going to be the same now?

“I thought it’d be a little less overwhelming if it were just the two of us,” Sherlock admitted.
There was a sudden loud bang, like a car backfiring, and John squeezed his eyes shut.

Good call, he thought.

When he opened his eyes he felt sweat trickle down his face; his body felt hot, despite the cold that just shook him.

“Here’s Mycroft’s car,” Sherlock said.

Leaning forward, he kissed John’s cheek as a black van pulled up to them. He already hated this, this being chauffeured around. He hated having to rely on everyone else. Hadn’t he just gotten over that, with his shoulder wound?

“Since when does your brother’s fleet include a van?” John mumbled.

A slight blush illuminated his boyfriend’s cheeks, and he had a horrible feeling Mycroft included one just for him.

They arrived at the Holmes estate a little over a half hour later, and John’s eyes trailed up to Sherlock’s childhood home.

Childhood mansion is more like it, he thought as his eyes roamed the ivy-covered exterior. The trees surrounding the house were beginning to change colours, and a couple of football goals sat out front.

“I can’t decide if these are here because of Dan or because of Greg,” John said.

Above him, Sherlock grinned.

“I imagine because of both.”

Sure enough they found Greg, Dan, and a disgruntled Mycroft watching a match in the lounge. His wheelchair stopped moving as Sherlock froze, and John realised why. Up until this moment he couldn’t remember the lounge including a television.

“You installed a telly,” Sherlock announced. His nose scrunched up in disproval. “This wasn’t here last night.”

“It was a long battle, but I finally won,” Greg replied with a grin. “We had it delivered this morning.”

The furniture was completely rearranged. Last time John was over the sofas faced each other from across the room, with elegant cherry side tables beside each. The centerpiece of the room was the fireplace, with its pictures of Ms Holmes and younger versions of Sherlock and Mycroft. Now that fireplace had an HD television above it, and the sofas were rearranged to face it. He almost smiled at what the former generations of Holmes would have thought about the arrangement.

The look on Mycroft’s face as he pulled his laptop closer to him and propped his feet up on an ottoman gave him a very clear picture of what they would have said.

“Goal!” Dan suddenly cried. He was nestled against Greg, wearing a football jersey and clutching a bottle of juice like it might as well have been a lager. John couldn’t help but to laugh; he couldn’t imagine how disappointed Mycroft was that Dan was more interested in sports than hearing about the foreign ministers he was meeting with that week.
“Yeah, goal!” Greg said, giving Dan a big hug. “We only need two more to win.”

“Yeah!” Dan exclaimed.

“How are you doing?” Greg asked as he stood to greet Sherlock and John.

With a shrug, John simply nodded.

“Good as expected, I suppose,” he sighed. He yawned, and Sherlock placed a hand on his shoulder. He couldn’t help but to admit: “I’m pretty exhausted, actually.”

Mycroft got to his feet to stand proudly beside his partner. The elder Holmes’ eyes fell to the younger Holmes, and John could see how relieved he was to have Sherlock staying with him before he said it.

“I’m glad you decided to stay with us,” Mycroft confessed. “If there’s anything you need, anything at all, let us know. This will always be your home, Sherlock, and yours as well, John.”

“Thanks, Mycroft,” Sherlock replied softly.

Mycroft gave them a firm smile, and John’s own eyes fell back on the child sitting on the sofa.

“It’s good to see you, Dan,” John offered.

The kid jerked around, and a sloppy grin crossed his face as Dan reached underneath a book sitting on the coffee table and revealed a handmade get-well card. On the front cover was a stick-figure version of him and Sherlock, surrounded by hearts and what could have possibly been childlike versions of stethoscopes and thermometers. Across the top read the words ‘fill bettter soon!’

“This is for you!” Dan announced proudly.

John smiled as he accepted the get-well card. Beside him Sherlock’s eyes narrowed, and he knew he was holding back a comment about the grammar skills of the four-year old. He was quite relieved when Sherlock didn’t say anything.

“Thank you!” John said, giving Dan a hug. “I feel better already.”

A short pair of arms wrapped around his neck and squeezed him tightly. Dan’s arms remained around his neck as he stepped back and announced:

“Mycroft’s making hamburgers for dinner tonight!” At the announcement, John looked to Mycroft, who again looked disturbed that all of this was actually his reality.

“Is he?” Sherlock smirked, eyebrows raised.

“Yes,” Mycroft sighed as he sat his laptop aside and got to his feet. “This is what my life has succumbed to: burgers and chips. Meanwhile there will be soup for lunch if you would like some.”

Sherlock chuckled behind him as his brother crossed over to them and planted a comforting hand on John’s shoulder.

“It’s good to see you out of hospital, John,” Mycroft said.

“Thanks,” John replied.

The elder Holmes winked at him as he made his way out of the lounge and toward the kitchen.
“We’ve been babysitting,” Greg explained as he stood up, now-empty lager in hand. “Laura and Jason went into the city; they’ll be back for dinner. Seriously, we’d love for you guys to join us. How often are you going to see Mycroft cooking burgers?”

John laughed; the thought of Mycroft cooking to appease a four-year old was adorable.

“Listen, I’m really, really glad to see that you two are alright. All things considered...when I got the call, when I went to the crime scene- I realised how lucky you both were,” Greg said. “I also wanted to let you know that Killer Evans has been taken into custody. I will need a statement, from both of you, but I know you two have had a hell of a week so just…whenever you’re ready, I’m ready, yeah? I just want you to know that I’ll make it my personal mission to make sure this bastard gets locked up for life.”

“Thanks, Greg,” John muttered anyway.

Greg offered him a half-smile as he wondered after his fiancé, leaving Dan with them.

“Want to watch the game?” Dan asked eagerly.

John exchanged glances with Sherlock; secretly, he wanted nothing more than to take a nap. But who was he to say no to Sherlock spending time with his family.

“Yes,” John said, “Sherlock, help me to the sofa.”

As Sherlock helped him lift himself from the wheelchair to the sofa. He landed on the cushions with a grunt, and Dan didn’t hesitate to crawl up between them. Sherlock looked over to John, clearly lost; football wasn’t exactly something he bothered storing in his mind palace.

“Has Greg been teaching you to play?” John asked. “We saw the goals out front.”

“Yeah!” Dan cried. “I want to play next summer!”

Even Sherlock had to grin at that, and John laughed at the thought of him suffering through a match for the sake of watching his nephew.

“Yeah?” John asked. “I played a little bit of football back in the day. Well, rugby was really my thing, but I was quite the footballer when I was about your age.”

It was true- he could still see his dad cheering him on as his five-year old self chasing after the ball as quickly as his little feet could carry him.

“Really?” Sherlock said. “You never told me that.”

Reaching around Dan, he placed a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder.

“There is still much to learn about me,” he teased, giving his boyfriend a wink.

Dan looked up at his uncle, his eyes wide with curiosity. John had to admit that being here, with people surrounding him, and having things to talk about besides bullets and hospitals was beginning to help to keep his spirits up. His leg had hurt less in the ten minutes since walking in the door than it had in all his days at the hospital.

“Did you play sports Uncle Sirlock?” Dan asked.

John burst out laughing at the very idea of Sherlock trying to play football. Sherlock’s face scrunched up, as though he were trying to picture the same thing.
“No,” Sherlock replied dryly, “though Mummy did try to get Mycroft to play cricket when he was ten.”

“Mycroft playing cricket? Now that you have never told me!” John said, laughing. “What happened?”

The younger Holmes flexed his fingers and tapped his hands together. There was a twinkle in his eye, lined by the fire that was usually in him when he was plotting something.

“Got hit in the knee,” he smirked. “He burst into tears in front of the entire stadium. His knee turned all sorts of shades of black and blue. I thought it was fascinating, but Mycroft was so embarrassed he hid in his room for a week. He refused to go to school and everything. That was the last foray any Holmes has had into sports.”

“Poor bloke,” John grinned. “No wonder he cringes whenever Greg and I talk cricket.”

His boyfriend reached over his nephew to place his own hand on John’s shoulder. They shared a look and a smile, letting each other know that for now, they were okay.

The buzz of his mobile erupted in his pocket, and John was surprised to find it was a call from his father when he checked it. He drew in a deep breath and threw a glance over to Sherlock; he wasn’t sure he could handle anymore family drama right now.

“Hey Dad,” he answered, letting out a long breath.

“John,” his father replied. He stopped, and John had a feeling that everything he had planned to say to his son suddenly escaped him. “John, I know your mother went to see you today. I just wanted to say that I’m sorry, I tried to stop her.”

“It’s okay,” he lied, “it’s…it’s an emotional time for everyone right now.”

There was a long pause, and John wasn’t sure what to do. He wanted his father to know he was okay, but beyond that he didn’t feel like he owed his family much of anything. Sherlock was right—his mother had tried to take advantage of the state he was in, and he wouldn’t put it past the rest of his family to do the same.

“How are you doing?” His father finally asked.

“Okay,” he lied again. “I’m with Sherlock’s family. They’re taking care of me.”

“Good,” came the reply on the other end. “I can’t believe this happened to you again I…I John I…”

There were only a few times in his life he could remember his dad being speechless. Usually he was a man of so few words that he rarely said anything at all, but when his father did speak he always knew exactly what he wanted to say and never hesitated to say it. Part of him was moved by the idea of his father being so worried about him.

Maybe I’m not giving him enough credit. Maybe I’m being unfair to him.

But then again this man lived with his mother and went along with all of her shit beliefs because he was too afraid to stand up to her.

“One of my kids is in rehab and the other keeps getting shot at,” his father finally croaked. He let out a sob, and John’s heart tore and two. His eyes dashed to Sherlock in panic, and he was grateful when his boyfriend whispered to Dan to go help out Mycroft in the kitchen so they could be left
alone. Sherlock moved to leave and give John his space, but he grabbed his partner’s hand. He couldn’t be alone now. “I’m sorry that you have never had the supportive parents that you deserve. I do love you, both of you. I don’t... I don’t see how things could ever be normal, son, but... I would like to see you. I want to see you with my eyes and know you’re okay.”

He stared at Sherlock, wondering how Mycroft would feel about either of his unstable parents visiting his home.

“Maybe when I’m back at Baker Street,” he offered. “Dad... you shouldn’t feel guilty. All the choices Harry and I make are ours.”

“I know, but it doesn’t help that you have shit parents who aren’t there for you.”

True.

John had to let out a few deep breaths to keep himself together. He couldn’t do this, not here, not when he was so surrounded by people who would constantly be watching him.

“I visited Harry yesterday,” his father admitted. His own eyes lit up with interest. He had been yearning to talk to his sister every since being in the hospital. Being on bedrest and physical therapy meant he would be able to see her for awhile, and he was dying to know how she was. “She’s doing really well. She...she looked good. There was this color in her face, this energy about her that I haven’t seen in her in a long time. She was really upset to hear about you, John. She sends her love.”

“Tell her I love her too,” John said quietly. It hit him for the first time that being on bedrest and struggling to walk would mean he wouldn’t be able to see Harry for awhile. Like his father said about him, he wanted to see with his own eyes that Harry was getting better. He wanted to be able to tell her that everything was going to be okay. She tended to get discouraged when bad things like this happened, and he didn’t want her to be punishing herself because of what happened to him. “Tell her I’m really proud of her.”

“Yeah,” his father agreed. “I’m really proud of her too. I’m proud of both of you. I love you, John.”

Closing his eyes, John let out another shaky breath. His chest felt too tight, and it felt like a waterfall of tears were ready to burst from behind his eyelids.

“I love you too, Dad,” he whispered.

With that his father hung up, and John fell forward into Sherlock’s arms.

“How did you do it?” John mumbled as he buried his head against Sherlock’s shoulder once again. “How did you piece your family back together?”

He felt his lover swallow and his body hesitate before he admitted quietly:

“I just had to let it be. I had to stop fighting everything... and everyone. I had to realise the only way I was going to ever get better was to accept the help of the only family I had left. And Mycroft, he had to accept me.”

“I don’t feel like I’m fighting them.”

His voice was raw, and he felt even more exhausted than he had after leaving the hospital. He needed sleep; he needed an escape. He wanted to be lying in bed with Sherlock again in Baker Street, without a care in the world. Sherlock squeezed him tightly, and John felt like he could have
spent the rest of his life in the warmth of his partner’s arms.

“You’re not fighting them,” Sherlock whispered as he placed a hand against the back of John’s neck. “They’re fighting you. They don’t realise what a brilliant, kind person you are. They don’t realise that they should feel like the luckiest parents in the world to have you as a son.”

A small snort escaped John, and he found himself letting a small smile escape his lips.

“It’s funny, isn’t it, to think back to how happy everything was when we were kids?” John realised. “Back when we didn’t realise how what disappointing shits our parents were- well, for you your father, I mean. I just keep thinking about that, and it just keeps me thinking that there’s hope. But I’m so tired of being the only one who cares. So I ignore them, I give them what they want, and now I’m the bad guy? What the fuck kind of sense does that make?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“I don’t know,” he confessed quietly, “but what matters right here, right now, is that you do have a family that cares about you.”

“I know,” John whispered as he pulled Sherlock closer to him. “I know.”

Chapter End Notes

Laura is hiding something, and you'll find out what next chapter! Sorry this chapter was so emotional, but I felt like it had to be done. At one point or another, John was going to have to face his family through this.

Thank you all for leaving such kind feedback and kudos! You know I always love to hear your thoughts...so what do you think?
The smell of sausage filled the air as Sherlock’s feet shuffled across the cool hardwood toward the kitchen. It was only four AM, and he didn’t expect anyone else to be awake. He himself had been awake since midnight, and after hours of laying in the dark and listening to John breathing he finally had to get up and find something to occupy himself with. Although he’d eaten dinner the night before, his stomach was still growling, reminding him of how he ignored his body during John’s hospital stay. Tea and toast sounded perfect right now, and he thought a walk in the crisp morning air might help to clear his mind. But apparently he wasn’t the only one who got hungry at this hour of the morning. He was surprised to find Mycroft was also wide awake, already dressed in his three-piece suit and cooking breakfast.

“Sausage and toast okay?” Mycroft asked, without turning around.

Sherlock rubbed his eyes and tried to shake himself back to consciousness.

“Yeah, sure,” he mumbled.

With a sigh of defeat he threw his legs over one of the barstools at Mycroft’s kitchen island.

“Gregory and I have begun a routine of making sure we eat breakfast together,” Mycroft began explaining, “It’s one of the few times of day when we get to have a quiet moment together. It’s also one of the least likely times when one of us we’ll be interrupted. So we’ve started waking up earlier to eat breakfast, go for runs…or to just sit and talk. Unfortunately, Gregory was called in at two in the morning on a case.”

Frowning, Sherlock reminded himself to snap at Greg later for not bringing him along. Although he wasn’t sure how his body would adjust to the physicality of being around violence, he knew a case always worked wonders for his mind. It would make him feel useful and helpful.

“That leaves me dining alone,” Mycroft finally finished as he turned around and offered Sherlock two of the sausages he just finished. His brother took a sip of coffee, and at the sight his own body yearned for caffeine.

“Pour me a cup, will you?” Sherlock asked, waving a hand toward the coffee maker.

Instead his brother poured him a glass of water and slid it over to him.

“Coffee won’t help you sleep,” Mycroft scolded.

He glared at his older brother as he reluctantly accepted the water.

“And yet sausage will?” Sherlock shot. “Besides, who said anything about going back to sleep?”

Mycroft gazed at his own mug, his eyes distant like they would get whenever he was reminiscing.

Two slices of toast popped out of the toaster, and his brother shook himself out of his thoughts and grabbed a jar of strawberry jam. He reminded Sherlock so much of his mother as he rushed about the kitchen, mentally preparing himself for his day. Their mum also was an early-riser. She liked watching the sunrise and reading a chapter or two of a book before working. When he and Mycroft
dragged themselves out of bed she would make them breakfast and talk to them about the morning news or what they were learning in school. She liked keeping them there in the kitchen for as long as she could, and he could understand Mycroft’s point that time of the day being so critical to his relationship. He and John were lucky- they were almost constantly able to be together, even when they were working. Greg and Mycroft worked long, exhausting, hours involving traveling and overnight shifts.

The funny thing was he always thought Greg and Mycroft kept their professional lives private. They seemed to trust each other enough to not always have to know exactly where the other person was, and if they had to go nearly a day without talking to each other they could deal with that.

But now, it was obvious to him how much Mycroft hated Greg not being there for their morning traditions. He was obviously worried about his fiancé’s well-being, and Sherlock actually felt bad for him. It was- dare he think it- touching that he worried about Greg heading out to solve dangerous crimes at all hours of the night.

“I hope John is getting a good night’s rest, at least?” Mycroft said as he buttered his own toast and turned to Sherlock. He leaned against the island and reached for a newspaper, as though determined to not let it show how concerned he really was.

“Yeah, John’s the one with muscle relaxers,” he mumbled.

Mycroft grimaced, not amused, and Sherlock immediately regretted the remark. It wasn’t that he envied John in any way…his body just yearned for sleep. He was past trying to avoid sleep to save himself the nightmares and had moved onto being desperate to get some rest. His body was drained, numb, and he wasn’t sure how much more he could take.

“I’m not sure how I’m going to get us through this,” Sherlock admitted, so quietly he wasn’t sure he said it out loud until Mycroft sat down his paper and looked up at him. His eyes were tense, reminding him their talks while he was going through withdrawal. They were eyes that said ‘you can say whatever you want, and I’m still going to believe in you’. “Sometimes I wonder what it would be like to have a normal life, to be like Laura and Jason and just have a kid and a normal job and to live every day knowing there was a damn good chance you’ll make it back home alive. I wonder how I can put him through this. I feel like I’ve been selfish.”

“‘You haven’t been,” Mycroft announced, his voice calm and collected. “You know, Sherlock, when I first met John-”

“When you kidnapped him, you mean?” Sherlock smirked.

“Yes,” Mycroft replied dryly. “Yes, then. I told him that life with Sherlock Holmes was like walking through a battlefield. He knew exactly what he was signing up for and he wanted it, more than anything. And when men like John, like Gregory find out what is they want they don’t give up on it. Ever.”

A small smile slipped across Sherlock’s own face. He imagined Greg and Mycroft had had more than one conversation about the risks of their jobs and their personal safety. If there’s anyone who could understand what he was going through, it was his brother.

“You’re doing just fine, Sherlock,” Mycroft said as he finished off his coffee. “Now you’re not leaving this table until you finish those sausages. I’m afraid I have to leave for work, but do trust me when I say I will know if you don’t eat three square meals today.”

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock took a bite out of the sausage and grabbed his briefcase from the table
and a bottle of water from the fridge. Sherlock almost let him get passed before he grabbed his hand, forcing him to face him. For a split second he considered pulling Mycroft into a hug- and his brother certainly looked like he expected that to happen- but he decided he was probably scaring his brother enough without bringing hugging into it.

“Thanks,” he murmured awkwardly instead.

Mycroft offered him a curt nod before spinning around and almost bumping into Laura. His brother frowned as he looked their sister up and down, taking in her pyjamas, tangled hair, and bags under her eyes. She clearly hadn’t had any sleep either.

“You guys can’t sleep either?” Laura asked as she slid into a seat next to Sherlock.

“No, Mycroft’s body goes into convulsions if he sleeps past four,” he teased.

His brother let out a sigh of annoyance as Laura threw a playful punch to Sherlock’s arm.

“Breakfast, Laura?” Mycroft said, ignoring the him.

“No,” she muttered, “I’ve never been able to eat much in the mornings. Plus I don’t have much of an appetite right now anyway.”

She rested her head in her hand and sighed, obviously wanting one of them to ask her what was wrong. He and Mycroft exchanged glances, and his brother asked:

“What’s on your mind?”

In true big brother fashion, he began making her toast as well, despite her lack of interest in eating and his previous determination to leave for work. Running her hand through her hair, Laura chewed on her bottom lip and considered what she wanted to say. For a split second Sherlock worried there was something serious she hadn’t told them, some horrible reason she and the family had really dropped everything and travelled to England.

“When Jason and I went into town we didn’t really go shopping,” she confessed. She stretched her arms out over the island and played with her wedding band. It was something to do with Jason then. Pregnancy, perhaps? His heart leapt with excitement at the thought, but then he remembered the wine she had at dinner. In fact, she had two glasses while she normally stuck with one. She was celebrating, then…or she was nervous. Divorce then? No…he forced the thought out of his mind. Suddenly Laura smiled, and he let out a breath he didn’t realise he had been holding. “Look at your faces! It’s nothing serious. It’s actually…it’s good. It’s really, really good news. Like seriously, you two are about to start jumping up and down.”

Sherlock smirked at the thought of his brother jumping up and down and his three piece suit.

“I’ve never seen Mycroft jump up and down in my entire life,” Sherlock protested.

Standing up straight, Mycroft straightened his tie, as though to prove his point.

“I can attest to that,” Mycroft offered.

Laura rolled her eyes. Her lips turned into a sly grin, an almost devilish smirk. She looked from Sherlock to Mycroft, studying each of them carefully before taking a deep breath.

“We only pretended that we needed to do some shopping to have an excuse to go into the city,” she went on. “You see, Jason sort of had this…job interview.”
He and his brother immediately turned to each other, their eyes wide. The disbelief on Mycroft’s face, the pounding of his own heart, the way the room seemed to spin around them and how all the blood was rushing to his head, made the moment seem very dream-like. She let out a laugh before continuing:

“His law firm is expanding its London office, and they asked Jason to come interview for a position as a partner.”

“A partner?” Mycroft repeated, impressed.

Laura nodded feverishly. Her eyes were beginning to get misty, her cheeks blushed, and she combed her hands through her hair impulsively. She was obviously still in disbelief herself.

“I know!” She cried. “He literally almost passed out when they told him. We just…we couldn’t believe it! He was their first choice, so they offered to fly us to London-”

“Wait,” Sherlock interrupted, crossing his arms. “It’s not really Dan’s two-week break from school is it?”

“Of course it’s not!” Mycroft snapped. “Didn’t you check the school’s website? They don’t have a fall break.”

The comment earned them another eye-roll from Laura.

“Why am I not surprised?” Laura asked. “I was honestly impressed you didn’t have hidden cameras up, figuring out what was going on as soon as it happened.”

Sherlock turned to his brother with a grinning peering out of the corner of his lips.

“Yeah!” He chimed in. “Big, powerful, Mycroft Holmes didn’t even know his sister was sneaking across the bloody ocean to visit him. I’m beginning to wonder if we should be concerned about our personal security. We can’t have you start slipping.”

“Oh, shut up,” Mycroft shot before rounding on Laura. “Did he get the bloody job or not?”

Once again she looked between the two of them, her face deadpan, before her lips formed into another bright grin.

“He got the job!” She exclaimed.

Sherlock leapt out of his chair and pulled her into a hug before he even realised what he was doing. All he felt was relief. His sister was moving to London! He would finally get a real chance to know her, to hang out with her. To see her more than once a twice a year and be a real uncle to his nephew. He squeezed her tightly as Mycroft stood behind them, beaming.

“That’s the best news ever,” he murmured.

“I know!” Laura whispered. “This past week has been such a whirlwind. I thought about telling everyone over dinner but we just really weren’t sure what to think.”

As they broke apart Laura wiped a couple of tears from her eyes.

“It’s been so hard to not tell you,” she confessed, “but we didn’t want to say anything until we were sure. Jason didn’t get a call from his boss with the answer until nine last night. We stayed up all night, just talking. Both of us have only ever lived in New York. Dan goes to school, we have
friends…well, Dan has friends. I guess we’re just nervous about giving up our life, our home… everything we’ve ever known. But we know it’s the right decision. It’s such a great career move for Jason, and the chance to live in London, in the same city as my brothers is too good to pass up.”

“What about Jason’s family?” Mycroft asked as he stepped forward. He placed a hand on Laura’s arm. While he was acting like he was concerned for her, and while he seemed to be hoping she had considered every possibility, Sherlock could tell his brother was just as excited as he was.

“Well, he’s an only child so he just has his mom and dad,” she explained. “They’re retired now and have moved to Florida, so we hardly see them anyway. We just got off the phone with them. They said we would be insane not to take this offer. Plus, I think they’re just happy for an excuse to visit England.”

She let out a nervous laugh and brushed her hands through her hair again. Her eyes dashed around the room, as though she were truly taking in where she was for the first time. It was like it was really sinking in that this was about to become home. Letting out another laugh, Laura held her hands to her face and shook her head.

“This is just so surreal!” She said. “I’m moving to another country! I’ve dreamed of living abroad for as long as I can remember. Of course, we still have to go through all the paperwork and visas and-”

“You won’t have to worry about any of that,” Mycroft said, shaking his head.

Laura took a step toward him, crossing his arms. She stood tall at exactly the same height as Mycroft and stared so intently at him that his brother actually blinked, startled.

“We’re doing this ourselves,” Laura insisted.

The elder Holmes took her by the arms and flashed a sly grin, the way that he did whenever he knew he was going to get his way.

“We’ll see about that,” Mycroft replied.

He turned away, withdrew his mobile, and began texting away. Sherlock had a feeling that Laura and her family would have visas by noon.

“Does Dan know?” Sherlock asked.

“Not yet, I didn’t want him getting all hyped up before bed. I don’t really think he’ll realise exactly what this kind of move will mean, but I know he’ll be so excited to get to live in the same city as his uncles. He talks about you constantly, and then- when he found out about the engagement, Mycroft, he went on and on to everyone about how his ‘new uncle’ was a cop.”

“Adorable,” Sherlock muttered.

“He brags about you too,” Laura grinned. “He’ll be so excited to get to grow up in London.”

“He’ll be going from the suburbs to the city,” Mycroft commented. “That’s quite the move for a young child in any city, let alone in another country.”

Laura hesitated, and Sherlock was being to see the trepidation she was battling.

“He’ll be fine,” Sherlock promised.
“There’s so much to figure out.” Laura crossed her arms over her chest as she took a step back from them. For a split second Sherlock was worried that she was second guessing herself. “I’ve really only seen the city when I’m with you two. I don’t know how to get around, I don’t know anything about the schools or neighbourhoods. We’ll have to deal with our banks, sell our home, find a new place to live.”

Slowly, Laura sank back down into her barstool. Her face paled a bit, and Sherlock glanced up to Mycroft. They both seemed to know they would have to step in here and save her confidence.

“I’ll teach you everything you need to know about getting around,” Sherlock reassured her.

“What if we can’t sell the house?” Laura asked, her voice rising in panic. “What if Dan hates his new school? What if we can’t find a place here?”

Her head collapsed into her hands in defeat.

“Laura,” Mycroft said, placing his hand gently on her shoulder. “You will always have a place to stay here. Whatever you need, however any of us can help, all you have to do is ask.”

Laura offered him a forced smile, and Sherlock could understand how she felt. Both Mycroft and Greg always threw around “just ask”, when neither of them seemed to know how hard it is to just ask someone for help.

“We have to house hunt from across the pond,” Laura sighed. “I might have to recruit you two to go check out places for us.”

A grin spread across Sherlock’s face at the thought of having permission to search through people’s homes, deduce their lives, figured out their secrets-

“I think I can manage that,” Mycroft offered abruptly. Sherlock threw him a glare but his brother ignored him.

“I’ve got to figure out new doctors, new babysitters-”

“I can babysit,” Sherlock chimed in, beating Mycroft too it. His sister offered him a grateful smile, and Laura finally looked like she was getting her confidence back. “And I’m sure John can recommend loads of good pediatricians.”

“You need to take this one step at a time,” Mycroft suggested.

Nodding feverishly, Laura let her fingertips rest beneath her chin, just like he and Mycroft had a habit of doing.

“This is why I was wondering about going back to school,” she admitted to Sherlock. “The chance to study abroad, live abroad, possibly get a job here- I can’t pass that up.”

“Oh course not,” replied Mycroft. His tone gave Sherlock the feeling that his brother had heard about his not-so-encouraging talk with their sister about getting a job, and he scowled at the idea of his siblings talking about him behind his back. “London is a terrific city to pursue a career in business.”

Sherlock had to resist the temptation to roll his eyes.

“Yeah, well, right now I have to worry about what my son’s going to think,” Laura sighed. “Honestly, I could never do this without you two.”
The gratitude in her eyes as she looked from one brother to the other reminded him that she really hadn’t had anyone who was there for her up until she met Jason. He had to admit that it felt nice to be the person someone else was leaning on for a change. To think that Laura trust him just as much as Mycroft, just as much as her own family even, made him realise even more just how far he’d come.

“What about me?”

They turned to find Jason leaning against the doorframe, hands stuffed in the pockets of his dressing gown. He yawned; there were shadows over his eyes and his voice was raw.

“I’d say a congratulations is in order,” Mycroft said, extending his hand to Jason, who beamed as he shook it.

“Thanks,” Jason replied. “It’s been an overwhelming week. Thanks for being there for us. I feel guilty about lying to you.”

“It was something worth lying about.” The eldest Holmes sibling glanced at his watch and grabbed his briefcase. “I’m afraid I really must go, though.”

“What, secret five AM meetings with the Prime Minister?” Laura teased.

Mycroft raised his eyebrows, and their sister froze. A grinned slipped across Sherlock’s face; he enjoyed seeing Laura trying to figure out what exactly it was that Mycroft did at work.

“Do you mind if I tell Gregory the good news?” Mycroft asked.

“Go for it,” Laura said, handing Mycroft the bottle of water he had left on the counter.

Mycroft nodded to Sherlock before disappearing back toward the foyer.

“Well,” Jason said as he slipped his arm around his wife’s waist. “What do you think, Sherlock?”

“What do I think?” He asked, his eyes flashing between the two. “I think it’s brilliant!”

A wave of relief flashed over Jason’s face, though there was still some nerves visible in his eyes. It was amusing to see a highly successful lawyer, who was now going to be partner in an international firm, was shaken by the idea of having to talk to his four year old kid.

“The true test will be seeing what Dan thinks,” Jason said as he snatched one of the sausages from Laura’s plate and popped it into his mouth. He reached next for an apple that sat in a fruit bowl on the kitchen island and stared at it a moment before admitting: “These London lawyers, they’re the real deal. I moved to Syracuse to get away from people like them in New York. I told myself that I wouldn’t let myself get talked back into their game, but here I am.”

“It’s not just about the job, honey,” Laura reminded him. “It’s going to be a good decision, for all of us. Besides, people like them need people like you to keep themselves grounded. Big firms need people who care about more than just the money.”

“Yeah,” Jason sighed. Obviously he was still trying to convince himself he’d made the right decision, and Laura was trying to convince him of it even though she wasn’t too sure herself.

Marriage, Sherlock thought, it makes no sense.

And yet, he knew he’d be the same if it were John in Jason’s shoes.
At the thought of John, Sherlock was suddenly bouncing with excitement.

“Can I tell John?” He pleaded.

“Sure,” Laura said before pulling him into another hug. “Thanks, for everything.”

He squeezed her gently before stepping away.

“You two are going to be brilliant,” he promised them. “You’ll love it here.”

“Thanks,” Jason replied before biting into the apple.

There was a spring in his step he hadn’t felt in days as he rushed down the corridor to the room he and John were staying with. He quietly opened the door in case John was still asleep, and he was surprised when he actually found his lover fully awake and staring up at the ceiling.

“John, love,” Sherlock said as he leaned over the bed and kissed his boyfriend on the cheek. “I’ve got news.”

He slipped underneath the covers, and the two shifted so that they faced each other. John grimaced at the movement, and Sherlock worried he was awake because of being in pain.

“So do I,” John offered, his voice groggy. “Sherlock, I’ve been thinking…I think I should see Dr Agar again.”

Although he didn’t see that coming, it didn’t exactly surprise him. John was going to need help to get through this, rather they wanted to admit that or not. He nodded and reached up to brush his hand through John’s hair.

“Oh course,” he said softly. “Whatever you need. Dr Agar is brilliant, and you know I fully trust him to help you in whatever way you need. If you want to go back into therapy you know I’ll be right by your side.”

“That’s just it,” John said quietly with a sad smile on his face. “I think this is something I need to deal with on my own, Sherlock. I never fully got over my PTSD from the war, and now with all this…I need to work through it, properly, with a professional so I can figure out what’s going on in here.”

He tapped on the side of his head before grasping Sherlock’s hands. His own stomach turned to knots at the thought of John wanting to go through this without him, but the only thing that mattered to him was John getting the help he needed.

“I love you,” John murmured as their foreheads fell together gently, “and I want you by my side through every bit of this- just outside his office. I just think I need to fully grasp what I’m going through before I ask you to take on too much.”

“I can never take on too much when it comes to you,” Sherlock whispered, “but I’m not going to be offended if you want to talk to a therapist without me.”

It was John’s turn now to run his hands through Sherlock’s hair. The sensation made shivers jump down his spine, and Sherlock shifted closer to him.

“You can talk to me about anything,” Sherlock promised, “but you’re right, I’m not a professional. You’re doing the right thing.”
A small, grateful, smile crossed John’s face.

“Thanks,” he said, breathing out a sigh of relief. He bit his lip and hesitated before confessing: “He’s there if you need to talk to him too, you know. You’ve also been through a trauma, Sherlock.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Sherlock said. He leaned forward so that his lips brushed John’s forward and he murmured against his skin: “But for now, you’re my doctor of choice.”

His lips kissed John’s forehead first before turning next to his mouth. He breathed in and out slowly, taking in John’s scent and the dry, raw, taste of his mouth.

Suddenly, before things could get too heated, John pulled away and studied him.

“What was your news?” John demanded.

Sherlock grinned; he had almost completely forgotten the news he had to tell John, and being able to remember it all over again was fantastic.

“Laura’s moving to London!”

John’s eyes went wide with delight, and Sherlock laughed.

“That’s amazing news!” John said, stealing a kiss to Sherlock’s lips before stopping again: “Wait, she and Jason aren’t getting a divorce, are they?”

“Of course not,” Sherlock replied, too embarrassed to admit he had wondered the same. “They’re actually moving because of him. He got a promotion: his firm’s making him partner at one of their London branches.”

“Wow!” John exclaimed, shaking his head with his mouth hanging open in awe. “That’s brilliant. You’re going to have a sister, nephew, and a another brother-in-law in London.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock sighed happily. “I can’t believe it. All these years, and I’ll actually have family to visit and just...”

“Hang out with?” John teased. “I can see you two now, gossiping about Mycroft over tea.”

“They’re already gossiping about me,” Sherlock said with a scowl. He didn’t explain when John stared at him in confusion, and suddenly he felt bad to brag about his family when John’s family life was in such turmoil.

“I’m happy they’ll be here,” John announced, as though reading his mind. “You guys are the closest thing to family I have at the moment.”

What was he supposed to say to that? He didn’t want John to give up on his hopes of piecing his family back together, but he hated seeing his boyfriend being belittled by the scum that were his parents.

“We’ll make you a Holmes yet,” Sherlock teased before kissing his lover again.

In the back of his mind he realised he was once again subconsciously toying with the idea of a civil partnership, but he let those thoughts slide as John’s tongue slipped through his lips and down his throat. Letting out a quiet moan, Sherlock allowed himself to be taken over by one of the only intimate moments they’d given themselves over the past few days.
Chapter End Notes

So....!!!! Reactions? For those that didn't guess!
On Life and Death

Chapter Notes

As the chapter title suggests, there is some talk about death in this chapter. I don't meant to upset anyone or offend anyone with it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I hope this room will work,” Mycroft announced as he wheeled John into a sunroom on the eastern side of the estate.

John’s mouth fell agape as he took in the potted plants hanging from the ceiling, the daybed pushed against the wall, and a bookshelf stocked with books on gardening. There was an antique table and chair set for tea, though it looked like no one had sat there for decades.

“This was one of my mother’s favourite rooms,” the eldest Holmes sibling explained, “she added it on as soon as she inherited the house from her father’s side of the family. She loved to sit out and watch the sunrise in the morning and the moonlight in the evening. It was her sanctuary- Sherlock and I never dared to enter when she wasn’t around.”

He never knew Mycroft to be so sentimental until he began to learn more about the Holmes’ childhood home. Most of the hundreds of books stored in the house had never been moved from the shelves, not even for a bit of dusting (Mrs Hudson would have gone mental at the sight of it). There were entire rooms that were pure replicas of the black-and-white photographs that showcased how the house looked decades earlier. Greg had once confessed to John that even when things needed fixing, like the floors or windows, Mycroft put it off fixing them until the last possible moment. Indeed, even John felt a little guilty as they entered the sunroom, like it was a sacred area that shouldn’t be breached.

“Is it okay for me to be in here?” He asked, though it made him feel a bit childish.

Mycroft situated the wheelchair so that it was beside the daybed, and although John just assumed he’d have a conversation with Moore while sitting in the awful chair Sherlock’s brother clearly had other ideas. He let Mycroft place one arm underneath his shoulder and another around his waist to help him out of the chair and onto the bed.

“My mother was completely at peace whenever she was in this room,” Mycroft explained. He drew in a deep breath as his eyes flashed around; a mixture of pain, sorrow, and nostalgia crossed his face. “She would come here to seek solace. Sherlock feels closest to our mother when he’s in the kitchen- I can see it in his eyes that his most vivid memories of her are in that room. As for me, I feel closest to her in this room. But it’s not just her memory that makes me feel, well, at ease here-”

“It’s her spirit,” John finished for him. “That’s…that’s really beautiful, Mycroft.”

A sheepish smile crossed Mycroft’s face for a brief second.

“Good luck to you, John,” he offered.

Nodding, John replied:
“Thanks. Thanks for everything.”

Without a word Mycroft disappeared, and John sighed as his eyes turned to the countryside that lay before him. Arms crossed over his chest, he breathed in the crisp morning air and allowed his eyes to close. He tried to think of little Mycroft and Sherlock, finding their mother reading in this very spot and begging her to make them a snack. He smirked, and his heart leaped when a voice interrupted his thoughts:

“I do hope I wasn’t too late, Dr Watson. It seems I’ve already bored you to sleep.”

John’s eyes flashed open as he sat up, embarrassed to find Dr Agar staring down at him.

“Please, relax as much as you would like,” Agar offered as he pulled up John’s wheelchair instead of one of the other chairs. He leaned back in the chair, letting its wheels rise just slightly off the ground as a child would do. “I was very sorry to hear you got shot again. How are you, medically speaking?”

Shrugging, John began his usual spiel he had come to memorise for whenever someone asked:

“No major arteries, nerves, or muscles were hit so I supposed I’m very lucky. No infection so far from the surgery. I’m still on some oral antibiotics and pain medicine. It was a clean enough shot…really it all just comes down to being very, very, lucky.”

He let out a deep breath, and he could tell from Agar’s stone eyes that he wasn’t really looking for those kinds of specifics.

“My doctor suspects sciatic pain,” he admitted. “It will take some time to build up strength in my leg again, hence the chair.”

John glared at the chair Agar sat in, as though all of this were its’ fault. His hands curled into fists, and he had to take a deep breath to keep himself from getting angry. That’s why he failed at therapy the first time- he was too angry to accept that he needed help. He wasn’t going to get anywhere by being angry. He wasn’t going to get anywhere by feeling sorry for himself.

“I’m glad that you phoned me,” Agar began. “John, I’d like to continue to build on what we achieved earlier in the summer in our joint sessions with Sherlock, but I think it’s most important right now to focus on you. I think you and Sherlock are brilliant together, but I think it was a good call you made to see me on your own. You know you can be completely honest with me, John.”

Nodding, John cleared his throat and tried to remember everything he mentally prepared to say in their session.

But as soon as he opened his mouth to speak his mind went blank.

His heart began racing as he his hands began shaking ever so slightly, and just like that his tremor from after the war returned.

“John?” Dr Agar asked gently.

“I think…I’m beginning to think that maybe…maybe I didn’t get over my PTSD as well as I thought I did after Afghanistan. I think that maybe once I met Sherlock, once I started this brilliant friendship and relationship with him I thought that meant I was moving on. But perhaps…perhaps I was only physically moving on. Perhaps I was just replacing those horrible memories with good ones. I just don’t want to do that again.”
Agar nodded as he began jotting down notes. John’s stomach turned to knots as nerves began to get the best of him. His therapist had this look on his face, like he wasn’t sure what to think. What if even Agar couldn’t help him? What if he was a lost cost and he would go on the rest of his life like this, battling depression and constant self-doubt?

“I’ve helped gunshot wound victims before,” Agar confessed as he finished up his notes. “I must admit, you’re my first patient who has ever been shot twice. I’d like to tell you, up front, John, that it’s perfectly normal to begin reliving the past. All those memories of the war might tend to creep up on you on a bad day, let alone after you have been shot again. You might feel like you’re facing a setback, or like you’re incapable of being normal again, but that’s just not true. This is going to be a long process, but you will be able to heal again.”

“I know,” John mumbled quietly as he closed his eyes, pushing away that voice inside his head that was beginning to tell you him you can’t do this. “I just need to find a way to make this easier for me, and for Sherlock.”

A fountain pin was jabbed toward him as Agar’s eyes lit up with interest.

“A-ha!” Agar announced. “I think Sherlock is the key to a lot of what you’re going through.”

Frowning, John demanded:

“How?”

With an innocent shrug, Agar explained himself.

“Be honest with me, John: do you feel as though you’re inconveniencing Sherlock by having to put him through this? Do you feel guilty for relying on him to get you through this post-traumatic stress disorder?”

John opened his mouth and then let it close again.

“I just…I,” he tried to remember that there was no right or wrong answer. He tried to remember that in order for Dr Agar to help him he had to be completely honest. “He’s gone through so much on his own. He doesn’t need this too. I don’t need it. I feel like I’m just this time bomb no…I feel like…I feel like I have a bloody curse. I feel like maybe…like maybe I cheated death in Afghanistan and now I…”

He bit his lip, hard, and tears swelled up in his eyes. An incredible weakness began to take care over him, and his mind became foggy. He suddenly wasn’t sure what this was about. He didn’t even know where this ‘cheating death’ idea came from, but now it made perfect sense. It was like the concept was buried in the back of his mind, deep in that awful dark room where his nightmares stemmed from, and now that the idea was out he couldn’t shake it. He was all too aware of the sounds of his choked sobs as he desperately tried to calm himself down. He was aware of Agar’s hand, placed gently against his arm to comfort him.

After drawing in a deep breath, John was able to admit:

“My mum thinks I ran off to Afghanistan because I had some sort of death wish. She blames me for getting myself shot, you know, both times. Maybe she’s right. Maybe I should just be careful what I wish for.”

“But what about coppers like Greg Lestrade?” Agar challenged. “Is it just okay if they’re shot too, because they know what they’re up against when they sign up to be in the police force?”
With another shaky breath, John shook his head.

“No. No, I suppose that was a stupid thing to say.”

Agar gave him a soft smile as he leaned forward in the chair, hands folded in his lap.

“Your life has value, John,” the therapist told him. “Don’t ever let anyone tell you otherwise.”

Those words rang in the back of his head as Agar left him lying in the bed. He had a new prescription for anxiety meds stuffed in his pockets, but he was far too tired to decide if he actually wanted to use them. Closing his eyes, he breathed in and out slowly and tried to focus on nothing but the sound of the wind racing through the leaves of the forest facing him.

He woke up to darkness and rainfall. A pair of soft lips graced his, and John let out a moan as he peeled his eyelids open. Sherlock stood above him, grinning a lopsided, childish, grin. Wordlessly, John pulled him down so that he could sit next to him in the bed.

“How long was I asleep?” John asked.

Sherlock shrugged as he studied John’s eyes and placed a hand on his cheek.

“I don’t know,” he replied softly. “When did your session with Agar end?”

“Three.”

“Then three hours.”

With a groan John sat up and rubbed his eyes. While there were many times in his life when he had ached for the chance to nap all afternoon, he was done with sleeping. He’d slept far more than he thought any human needed to sleep in the past couple of days…and yet his body still seemed to want more.

“There’s roast, and beans, and potatoes if you want,” Sherlock offered.

A sick knot formed in his stomach at the thought of food. He wasn’t sure if it was because of the meds he was on or the thought of what he confessed to Agar, but he felt too nauseas to eat.

“Please,” Sherlock pleaded, grabbing his hand. “For me?”

Rolling his eyes, John gave in.

“Fine,” he mumbled. “I might be able to stomach the potatoes.”

Another grinned flashed across his lover’s face, and Sherlock jumped up to help him into the wheelchair. John thought about what he told Agar, about the possibility of having cheated death, and he knew he couldn’t keep that a secret. He grabbed Sherlock’s arm, stopping him in his tracks.

“Sherlock,” he breathed. He closed his eyes as a small wave of dizziness hit him. When he opened them again he looked straight into Sherlock’s eyes, into his soul, hoping he could understand him. Gently, his boyfriend lowered himself back onto the bed and placed an arm on John’s shoulder. “When I was younger I was obsessed with my dad’s stories of my granddad and great-grandfather. They were both soldiers like me, and they both died in war…like I almost died. I felt this obligation, this destiny, to pursue the same path as them. I loved biology and anatomy in school, and I knew it would please my mother if I went into the medical field so I became a doctor. What I really wanted was to serve and protect. I had this sort of…never say die, live like there’s no
tomorrow, attitude about the world. An army doctor seemed like the perfect path for me.

When I actually got to go to war, when I was facing death every day and seeing other soldiers suffer…suffer things you couldn’t imagine, I realised I had two choices: I could either fear death and live every day of my life as an army medic in terror, or I could accept that there was a very real possibility I might return to London in a body bag. Somehow, accepting the latter made it easier to get through the war. I’m still not sure if I was right, but I became a risk taker. I learned that I couldn’t be afraid, not in my job, and once I was discharged it became impossible to think otherwise.

You thought I was addicted to danger when we first met. The truth was I was pushing my limits. I was playing games with destiny. And this week…destiny almost caught up with me. I confessed to Agar that…that I sort of have this fear that I cheated death, and death is finally catching up to me. And Sherlock I…I don’t want to die. I feel like, for the first time ever, that I have something to live for. I have something to lose. These past couple of days I’ve been in shock because I’ve seen how painful it would be to lose what we have. If something happened to either of us…I…I can’t even bear the thought. Our lives aren’t a game. But at the same time I don’t want to live in fear of dying, and I don’t want to start living in a glass box to protect ourselves from the world. I don’t know what I want, exactly, except you. I know that doesn’t make any sense, but nothing makes sense right now.”

And once again tears got the better of him, and Sherlock pulled him into a tight embrace. He let out a choked sob into his boyfriend’s shoulder as his fists grabbed at his back.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock said quietly as he rocked them back and forth. When he spoke again his voice was just a whisper. “It’s okay. I…I think I know what you mean. I’ve been stupid, John, incredibly stupid about my life. I’ve treated it like it’s worthless, like my future means nothing, but that’s just not true. You mean everything to me, your life means everything to me, our future means everything to me, and I’m glad you didn’t die in that dessert, or in that flat. I’m glad I didn’t…I’m glad I didn’t die from drugs, or Kirchhoff, or any of those other dozens of ways I’ve nearly been killed. All those times I took survival for granted. You’re not cheating death, John, you’re beating it. You’re beating it because your life is far too valuable to end now. We’ve both beat death so many times, and don’t you think that means something? I know I’m not usually the one to get sentimental about these kinds of things, but christ John…we have a future together, you and I. I’m not going to let any bullet, or any madman, or…anything at all come between us.”

John let out a final, stifled, sob before he pulled away. He and Sherlock both managed small smiles; he was shocked to see that even his lover had a stray tear running down one cheek. Sherlock let out a laugh as he wiped the tear away. A mobile buzzed, and his partner withdrew his phone from his pocket.

“Mycroft says the roast is getting cold,” he explained with another laugh.

“Well,” John said, letting out a sigh. “We can’t have that, can we?”
He woke up to the sounds of screams.
Sherlock gasped for breath as he sat up straight in the dark. He was broken out in sweat, and his body felt weak and clammy. Eyes blown wide, he looked around his bedroom.

He was in his old bedroom, in his old flat.

There were more screams, and he jumped out of bed. Breathing hard, he ran into the living room, but he was too late. There was already blood, so much blood, everywhere he looked. The world seemed to be frozen as he moved through it, feeling heavy. An eerie sense of deja vu hit him as he stepped toward a dark shadow lying on the floor. He knew it was a body before he reached it, and he knew who that body belonged to before he saw his face.

It was John.

Covered in blood, bleeding from a gunshot wound to the leg.

He’d been too late. There was too much blood, and there was the love of his life laying there, stone cold.

“Uncle Sirlock! Uncle Sirlock!”

Sherlock’s eyes shot open to the sound of his nephew’s voice. He was shocked to find himself nearly hanging off the bed. His chest felt too tight; he couldn’t breathe properly. Raising his hands to his cheeks, he was ashamed to feel tears rolling down them. He rolled over in bed, just to reassure himself that John was still perfectly alive and safe. Sure enough, his boyfriend slept soundly next to him, his hands tucked underneath his pillow. He leaned over and planted a kiss to John’s forehead before turning his attention to the four year old jumping on the bed.

“What?” Sherlock finally replied, reaching out to take Dan in his arms.

“You were screaming,” Dan explained.

His breath became caught in his throat. In a panic, he checked his mobile and saw that it was actually only one in the morning. Dan must have turned on the bedroom light. He’d forgotten the room Dan was staying in was directly above theirs, and were he to have one of his night terrors his nephew would hear.

“I was just...” Sherlock hesitated, thinking quickly. “I was just reading a book and came to a really scary part.”
Dan raised an eyebrow at him.

“You were reading in the dark?” He challenged.

With a sigh, Sherlock sank back into the covers and let Dan cuddle up beside him. He ran a hand through his nephew’s curly hair before wiping his arm across his face, just to make sure all the tears were gone. Shedding a tear in front of John was bad enough, but to cry in front of a bloody kid?

“I was having a bad dream,” Sherlock finally admitted, “and sometimes, when people have dreams that are bad enough they start acting out those dreams.”

“I know,” Dan whispered. “Mommy says I scream in my sleep too.”

Right. He remembered Laura telling him about Dan having a night terror or two, but he had thought- had hoped- that was just a phase. He had no idea it was an ongoing problem.

“I usually don’t remember,” Dan said.

“Me neither.”

“Can I sleep in your bed tonight?”

His heart melted at the helpless plea, and he couldn’t help but to wonder if Dan had already been awake when he heard him screaming. He wondered if Laura and Jason would approve of him giving into Dan’s fear of sleeping alone, but how could he send him back to his own room after what he just witnessed?


Sherlock held the covers up so Dan could climb underneath. For a moment he considered that the lights were still on, but Dan didn’t seem to mind and it didn’t seem to bother John.

After all, his mum used to tell him nothing could bother him in this house if the lights were on.

When he woke again five hours later John was still sleeping. His quiet snores filled the room, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smile at the sight of his boyfriend hugging his pillow and his chest rising and falling. Though he knew what sort of nightmares must be plaguing John’s dreams, he looked peaceful enough as he lay there resting.

The bedroom light was still on but Dan was gone. Yawning, he stretched his arms and grabbed his dressing gown from the floor. The house was a bit cool, and he shivered as he cracked open the door and peered down the hall. There was no sign of life, at least not until he recognised the quiet echo of his sister’s voice from the living room. His feet shuffled across the hardwoods, heading toward the second downstairs living space, which Mycroft had converted into a sort of play area for Dan. He lurked in the doorway as he listened to his sister read:

“He should not be here,” said the fish in the pot. “’He should not be here-“

“When your mother is not’!” Dan finished.
Sherlock clapped, and his sister turned to him and rolled her eyes.

“Well done, Laura!” He teased. “Is Dan teaching you to read, then?”

“Dr Seuss is a classic for teaching kids to read,” she protested. “Dan loves it.”

“I really don’t remember learning to read that way,” he replied as he sat down beside them.

“Of course you don’t remember learning to read!” She laughed. “Then again, you and Mycroft were probably reading *Moby Dick* by the time you were his age so what do I know?”

He glared at her but she just laughed again. Then, out of the blue, she asked:

“So what do you think about going to the zoo?”

His mouth fell open, but he stopped himself just in time from saying something a bit not good about going to the zoo. What the hell would make Laura think he would ever want to spend a day watching a bunch of lions sitting around licking themselves?

“They’re doing this Halloween thing,” Laura explained quickly, like she realised she needed to think of a good reason for him to go. Of course, why she would ever think he would want to spend a day at the zoo looking at lions licking themselves while kids ran around in ridiculous costumes and stuffed themselves with candy, he did not know. “Dan and I would like you to join us, if you’re up for it.”

Well, that made sense, didn’t it?

While a voice in his head begged him not to do it, reminding him of how boring it would be, how many people would be there, the noise, the smells, his mouth opened and he heard himself reply:

“I’d love to go!”

*But John!* The voice reminded him.

“But John-” he echoed.

“Jason will be here,” Laura offered. Apparently she had it all figured out. “He’s doing some work from home- well, from Mycroft’s home. John needs to rest, Sherlock, and you…you need some fresh air.”

He tried to find a good excuse to say no. Not only did he not want to admit to his four year old nephew that zoos were not at all, in any universe, *his thing,* but now he felt guilty about leaving John. Even if there were someone else at home, he didn’t want to think of his boyfriend being stranded in that bedroom, alone, while he was out.

“Please Uncle Sirlock!” Dan begged. “There will be gaffes!”

“His word for giraffes,” Laura explained, winking at him.

“Do you like giraffes?” Sherlock questioned, studying the four year old carefully.

His nephew nodded as he squirmed in his mother’s lap, like he couldn’t wait one more moment to go.

“And monkeeyyyyyss!” Dan sang. “And powa bears!”
Sherlock frowned.

“I’m not actually sure if there are-“

“You’ve never actually been to the zoo, have you?” Laura asked.

He was ashamed to answer that question.

“That’s it, we’re going to the zoo,” his sister announced as she stood up.

“Yay!” Dan exclaimed.

“But-“

“No buts,” Laura argued. “Go on, get dressed. It’s okay to get dressed before noon, you know.”

Wrinkling his nose, Sherlock protested:

“I get dressed before noon!”

With a laugh Laura carried Dan back toward the bedrooms they were staying in.

“John’s told me stories,” she’s warned. “It’s very rude to show up in a case in a bed sheet, you know!”

His cheeks turned red, and he decided to pretend he didn’t know what she was talking about as he trudged back to his own guest bedroom.

Two hours later he found himself shoved amongst hundreds (okay, probably only dozens) of other zoo-goers as they made their way into the London zoo.

“Gaffes!” Dan exclaimed.

“Okay, okay, just slow down!” Laura called as they chased after him.

Sherlock had to laugh; he had to admit there was a sort of adrenaline rush he felt as they wandered through the zoo grounds. Although he might have been pursuing a four year old instead of a criminal, his senses were still heightened. While Laura was focused on keeping her son in her line of sight he noted every footstep Dan took and every person they passed. Were Dan to go missing he could have told Lestrade the colour of every shirt every visitor wore. He memorised their scars, their eyes, their shoes. How was he supposed to have fun when there was so much to focus on? When at every moment Dan could trip and fall, or be grabbed up by a stranger, or take a wrong turn and get lost? How did Laura do this, day in and day out?

“Gaffes!” His nephew’s voice cried again up ahead.

Letting out a sigh of relief, Sherlock and Laura finally caught up to Dan, who was jumping up and down at the entrance of the giraffe enclosure. Sherlock lifted Dan up in his arms and sat him on his shoulders so he could get a better view- and perhaps feel, for just one moment, that he was just as high up as his favourite animal.

“Where do giraffes live when they’re not in the zoo?” Dan asked.

“Africa,” Sherlock replied. “They’re the tallest animal in the entire world.”
“Wow!” Dan exclaimed. “Did you know that Mommy?”

“I did,” Laura said, grinning at Sherlock.

“Have you ever been to Africa Uncle Sirlock?”

He had to admit that Africa was on his bucketlist, but there was only one Holmes that had ever set foot on that continent.

“No, but Uncle Myc has,” Sherlock said. “He’s been there loads of times.”

And unwillingly so, he thought.

While Mycroft’s career tended to take him abroad frequently, and even more frequently when he was lower in the ranks as a mere spy, he knew his brother was secretly a homebody. It was too true how much Mycroft hated legwork. He knew his brother would be perfectly happy running the country from his sitting room.

“I’m gonna name that one Bob,” Dan announced, pointing at the tallest giraffe. Laura stifled a laugh behind her hand, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to snort. His nephew pointed at the shortest giraffe. “And that one is Larry.”

“Is he really naming giraffes?” Sherlock murmured to his sister.

“Just go with it,” she warned.

“Sherlock?” A voice called behind them.

He lowered Dan to the ground and turned at the voice. The voice was familiar somehow, one he possibly deleted some time ago but one that still once had a place in his life. Even when he turned around, though, he still could not place a name to the petite brunette that stood in front of him. Her skin was pale and face was scarred with acne. She was a little overweight, which did not suit well for her kakhai shorts and polo she had to wear as a zoo uniform.

“It is you!” The girl (Anna, her nametag read). “Anna Henderson. Biology at uni, remember?”

Sherlock blinked.

Thanks to the cocaine he hardly remembered the specifics of courses and professors, let alone classmates.

“Professor Harding’s course,” she explained. “You sat in front of me the whole term. I was surprised you didn’t sign up for the second course, the next term. You did so well. You seemed really interested in biology.”

Had he been? The sad thing was that he didn’t have a clue if he was interested in biology in uni or not. He had been interested in Luke and drugs, and that was all.

“I…yeah, it was a good course,” he lied. “Sorry, I don’t quite—“

“Oh, don’t be sorry,” Anna said with a smile. “I just have a great long-term memory. Unfortunately short-term, not so much. Like remembering I was scheduled to cover someone’s shift today. I remembered just in time to catch the tube. Not that you care about that. It’s cool to run into you though, Sherlock. And is this- is this your family?”

It took him a moment to realise she meant was this is wife and kid. A grin crossed his face as he
explained:

“This is my sister and nephew, Dan.”

Anna knelt down to Dan’s level and smiled.

“Do you like giraffes, Dan?” She asked.

Dan beamed.

“They’re my favourite!” He cried.

“Well,” Anna said, “it just so happens that I’m running the giraffes show today. Would you like to meet the giraffes?”

“Yes!” Dan exclaimed, jumping up and down. He looked up at Laura with puppy-dog eyes.

“Please Mommy, pleaseeee can I?”

Laughing, Laura threw a grateful smile toward Anna.

“Are you sure?” She asked.

“Yes, of course!” Anna said. She reached out her hand to Dan. “How would you like to help me run the show?”

He wasn’t sure he had ever seen Dan so happy. Christmas had come early, and Sherlock suddenly found himself living through Dan. He had to admit that would have been quite the experience, to be up close and personal with zoo animals as a kid. Sherlock was fairly certain he remembered being obsessed with animals as a small child, but Mycroft had had no patience for his fascination with other living beings. Mycroft was too busy burying his nose in history books to care about a trip to the zoo.

It turned out Anna really did mean for Dan to help her run the show. He got to feed the giraffes and tell everyone about the names he gave for him. When they exited the exhibit Dan was full of giraffe facts and was even asking if he could have a pet one to ‘keep at Uncle Myc’s house’.

“That’s very sweet, sweetie, but I think Uncle Myc has more than enough visitors at the moment,” Laura teased. “So Dan… I believe you said you wanted to see spiders?”

The skin on the back of Sherlock’s neck crawled at the thought.

“Spiders?” He said with a gulp. “Dan, I thought you wanted to see monkeys.”

That familiar, teasing, grin spread across his sister’s face, and he knew she knew.

“You’re afraid of spiders!” She exclaimed. “The great Sherlock Holmes is afraid of spiders!”

His eyes dashed around in horror; he secretly hoped there were no members of the press or anyone with a blog around.

“Shh!” He shot. “I just…don’t care for them, that’s all. You’d understand too if you used to live in squats.”

“Fair point,” she sighed.

He ended up making the excuse that he wanted to phone John while Dan and Laura checked out
the spiders. Instead of phoning him, however, Sherlock backtracked and went to a gift shop.

“Can I help you?” The shopkeeper asked. The young clerk working behind the counter smiled at him, as though he were instantly able to figure him out. “Looking for the perfect gift?”

“For my…partner,” he admitted. The clerk smiled at him again and waved him toward a wall of stuffed animals. With a nod, Sherlock acknowledged that he understood the man’s suggestion and wandered toward the collection of stuffed pandas, giraffes, monkeys, and dozens of other zoo creatures.

What is John’s favourite animal? He wondered. Does he even have one? How do I not know this already?

Then he found a small red panda, stuffed in the back of the shelf amongst pink flamingos, as though a child changed its’ mind at the last moment about it. Somehow, he knew it was perfect.

Fifteen minutes later he watched Laura and Dan exit the spider exhibit. His nephew was practically jumping up and down in excitement; he had to admit he was enjoying seeing him get so excited over science. He could only imagine the things he could teach Dan once they all lived in the same city. The experiments he could show him, the wonders he could help him discover. Maybe, he thought, Dan would even like a chemistry set for Christmas. Sure he was a bit young for it, but he was almost certain he received his first one around Dan’s age.

“The spiders were the coolest thing ever!” Dan exclaimed. He held his arms up and opened and closed his hands- his way of signaling that he wanted to be picked up. Sherlock hoistened him up onto his shoulders as he challenged:

“Cooler than the giraffes?”

“Well…” Dan hesitated. “Maybe not that cool.”

They didn’t get back to Mycroft’s until after dinner. Greg’s car was still gone, and both his and Mycroft’s coats were missing from the coat rack. Sherlock held a sleeping Dan in his arms, and Laura let out a huge sigh of relief as they stepped through the foyer. Sherlock ran his hand through his nephew’s curls and let out a yawn.

“I don’t see you do it, day in and day out,” he announced, “the cooking, the cleaning, the running around. Going to zoos and malls and doctors. Teaching him to read.”

“He’s a handful,” Laura admitted as she placed a kiss to her son’s forehead.

“I kept worrying something was going to happen to him,” Sherlock confessed.

“Tell me about it,” Laura sighed. “I feel that way every second of every day.”

“You’re an amazing mum.”

His sister beamed at him and held up her arms so that he could pass Dan over to her. He did so, reluctantly.

“You’re a great uncle, Sherlock,” she said. “You two are going to have so much fun when we move.”
A tired smile crossed his face. His feet were burning and his heart was still racing from the adrenaline of chasing Dan around the zoo, but his shoulders finally relaxed for the first time that day.

“I’m really, really glad you’re here,” he said quietly, though he knew no one was around to hear him.

“You and John will be fine,” she promised, somehow knowing that was exactly what he needed to hear. “But I’m glad I am here too. Thank you for going to the zoo with us.”

“Thank you for inviting me.”

“I’m going to go give this one a bath,” Laura announced. “Get some sleep tonight, okay?”

“Yeah, I will.”

With that they parted. He still holding the bag with John’s stuff panda in his hand, though he now felt a bit silly for thinking the gift was a good idea. His face was hot from the nerves prickling at his skin as he gently knocked on the guest bedroom door.

He found his boyfriend sitting up in bed asleep with his laptop resting beside him. It had obviously fallen off his lap while he was writing. Quietly, Sherlock slipped the stuffed animal out of its bag and held it up to John’s face. He planted a soft kiss on his lover’s forehead, and when John stirred his eyes went wide at the panda that was right in front of his face.

“Jesus Christ!”

Sherlock laughed as his boyfriend sat up and jerked the panda away from him.

“What’s this?” He asked as a grin spread across his face. “I love red pandas!”

“Really?” Sherlock said.

He sat down on the bed beside John and rested a hand on his boyfriend’s good leg.

“Yeah, they were my favourite when my granddad took me to the zoo when I was a kid,” John explained.

“Your granddad took you to the zoo?” He couldn’t help but to feel a pang of jealousy, though he wasn’t sure why. He was far too old to feel angry about missing out on things as a kid.

“Yeah, once on my eighth birthday,” John said. “I thought it was the greatest thing in the world.”

He smiled as he watched his boyfriend stand the panda up in his lap, as though it were a child.

“That’s how Dan seemed today,” Sherlock replied. “He had such a great time. We even ran into an old classmate who worked the giraffe show, and she let him help.”

“Wow, she remembered you after all these years? Then again, how can you forget a name like ‘Sherlock’?”

John smirked at his own joke as he stroked the stuffed panda’s fur.

“Well you can tell her that you’re taken,” John said as he leaned over and brushed his lips across Sherlock.
They pulled apart with smiles on their faces, and Sherlock tugged John’s computer so that it rested on both of their legs.

“How’s the writing coming?” He asked.

With a shrug, John pulled up the chapter he was working on to show it to him.

“I’m struggling with the hound scene,” John admitted.

“The hound scene?”

“Yup.”

“Mmm,” Sherlock murmured. “What about the part where we both share a room that evening and pretend like we weren’t just lying there in the dark, listening to each other breathe?”

John’s eyes narrowed and his breathing suddenly became shallow.

“You were listening to me sleep?” John asked quietly.

“Yes,” Sherlock breathed, “listening and wondering…and imagining.”

“Imagining what?”

They turned to look at each other, the air between them thick with arousal.

“Imagining what would be like when I would finally get to do this.”

Sherlock slid the computer out of the way as he began showering John’s neck with kisses.

“Missed you today,” Sherlock murmured into John’s ear.

Letting out a quiet moan, John replied, shakily:

“Yeah. I missed you too.”

He wrapped his arms around John’s waist so they were spooning. His lover felt warm, though his body trembled. Sherlock’s hand crept up to John’s wrist so that he could check his pulse.

“Elevated,” he whispered.

Closing his eyes, Sherlock let out a long sigh. The Baskerville case. That was one he, admittedly, hadn’t thought about in a while. After obsessing over it for months the case had nearly slipped from his mind completely once he and John became romantically involved. It was funny, though, to think back on their relationship. All those nights where they ate dinner in silence and pretended like the room wasn’t heavy with tension. All that running around London and pretending like it didn’t bother him when John left his sight, even if it was just for a moment.

John’s hands folded over his own, holding them tightly against his chest. He sucked at his partner’s neck, creating a small bruise just below the neckline of his pyjama shirt.

They could have gone further that night, but they both felt too comfortable, to completely at peace, to move. He held John in his arms until he fell asleep, and even then he must have spent nearly an hour lying there and listening to his breathing. Just like at Baskerville. He couldn’t bear the thought of suffering more nightmares about John, but although he thought he could manage to stay awake all night his body soon broke down into sleep mode. His muscles hurt from carrying Dan all day
and his feet burned from all the walking. At last, he gave in and reached for the stuffed panda, letting it rest between them as he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading, commenting, and for all the kudos! I hope you enjoyed this chapter as much as I enjoyed writing it. I'd love to know what you thought about it!
I didn't intend for the Halloween chapter to coincide with actual Halloween, but funny how that worked out! Happy Halloween!!

“This curry is delicious, Mycroft,” Laura complimented as she scraped the last of her dinner from her plate.

“It’s brilliant,” Greg agreed, mouth stuffed with food. A sheepish smile slipped across the eldest Holmes’ face. “You should try his Punjabi chicken. It’s out of this world!”

Mycroft’s eyes diverted down to his plate, and John smirked. He still couldn’t get over the thought that the same man who kidnapped him and tried to bribe him into spying on Sherlock was an excellent cook and a gardener.

“Who taught you to cook so well?” Laura asked.

A moment of silence followed as everyone stuffed the last of the curry into their mouths. As they finished Mycroft stood up and began gathering up plates but didn’t bother answering.

“I think it had to do with an old partner,” Greg teased.

Beside him Sherlock snorted and almost spit out a mouthful of food.

“I’ve traveled a lot in my line of work,” Mycroft began, sighing with defeat as he felt obligated to explain himself. “Carry-out food gets old. Not to mention I had a baby brother to raise so I had to learn my way around the kitchen.”

John flashed Sherlock a grin, and his boyfriend looked embarrassed at being called out.

“Mum was a good cook,” Sherlock spoke up.

“That she was,” Mycroft replied. “She made the most amazing shepherd’s-”

There was a clatter of glass and silverware, and a tiny voice muttered:

“Damn.”

Their eyes turned to Dan, who was glaring at the milk he just spilled all over his end of the table. Laura and Jason’s eyes went wide with panic, and her face paled with embarrassment.

“Dan!” Laura exclaimed.

Swallowing nervously, Jason grabbed some napkins and began cleaning up the milk.

“He’s sort of started a swearing phase,” he sighed.

“Sorry Mommy,” Dan whispered as he stared longingly at his empty glass.
“It’s okay, sweetie, just remember what we said about bad words,” Laura replied. She kissed the top of Dan’s head and then stood up to get him more milk.

“Sorry Mommy,” Dan said again.

“Sherlock went through a bit of a swearing phase,” Mycroft announced with a grin.

Sherlock’s face melted into a scowl as he shot:

“I did not swear as a child.”

A smile slipped across John’s face because he could just imagine a young Sherlock storming about the house and swearing. He could even picture a young Mycroft telling him off for it.

“Why do you think we were never invited to any dinner parties?” Mycroft pointed out with a smirk.

His boyfriend opened his mouth to protest but closed it, as though he were realising it was possible that he once also swore after spilling a glass of milk at dinner.

“Yeah well, Dan didn’t get it from us, by the way,” Laura said. Her eyes narrowed in on Greg, who tensed.

“What?” The DCI demanded. “I don’t swear around the kid!”

“I watched another soccer game with Uncle Greg!” Dan suddenly announced. “It was bloody brilliant!”

John laughed so hard that he choked on his food, and even Sherlock showed off a grin through a mouthful of beans.

“He doesn’t even know what he’s saying,” Greg said. He looked a bit panicked, and Mycroft squeezed his fiance’s shoulder. Laura raised her eyebrows, like he wasn’t fooling her for a moment. At last Greg sighed and turned to Dan. “Dan, you know I told you it wasn’t good for a kid to say those words too.”

Dan simply offered a small shrug.

“I’m sorry,” he said, innocently.

“Oh come on,” John chimed in. “I think it’s adorable.”

“Yeah, well it’s not your kid who is walking around swearing, is it?” Laura shot.

“It’s a phase,” Mycroft pointed out. “It’ll pass. I could write books on all the weird phases Sherlock went through as a child.”

At that moment, John would have given anything to be able to go back in time and see Sherlock and Mycroft as kids.

“Yeah?” John teased. “You’ll have to tell me about it sometime.”

The comment earned him a playful punch in the arm from Sherlock, but he didn’t care. One of the things he loved about staying at the Holmes’ estate was getting to see how the Holmes brothers grow up. After all that time of seeing Sherlock pretend like he was this cold, uncaring, person it was nice seeing him simply being a brother and an uncle. He loved imagining a young Sherlock running up and down the corridors and even eating in this same room.
“Gladly,” Mycroft replied, grinning at Sherlock, who looked miserable.

“I don’t swear around the kid!” Greg announced again, as though he were concerned no one was taking him seriously. The DCI looked down at his food in defeat. “At least not on purpose.”

Everyone laughed, and John found himself smiling more at that moment than he had in days. There was a bottle of pinot noir sitting in the middle of the table that had made its rounds amongst the family, and John found himself jealous that he couldn’t join in. He was still taking too many painkillers to drink, but he enjoyed seeing everyone else indulge.

“Don’t be mad at Uncle Greg, Mommy,” Dan pleaded. “The game was a lot of fun!”

“I’m glad, sweetie,” Laura said. “Maybe you can play soccer- I mean, football - when we move to London.”

“Yeah!” Dan cried, pumping his fists in the air. “Greg is teaching me to play!”

“Yeah,” Greg echoed as he tore off a few pieces of bread and popped them into his mouth. “The kid is good. Who knows, maybe I’ll try coaching a league.”

Both Laura and Mycroft let out a snort at that one, though John could honestly picture Greg teaching a bunch of kids how to play football. Sherlock must have been able to picture it too because he shared another grin with him.

“Yeah!” Dan agreed, his little brown eyes lighting up with delight. “You would be a good coach, Uncle Greg.”

“Thank you,” Greg replied as he scooped up some more of his curry “At least someone believes in me.”

Mycroft threw a sympathetic look to his lover as he finally took his seat at the table and resumed his dinner.

“I’m sure you would, love,” Mycroft offered.

“Thank you to you too,” Greg mumbled.

A mobile went off, and it took everyone a minute to realise it was for Mycroft. He excused himself, and dinner returned to normal even though Laura stole the occasional glance toward the doorway. For a moment there was just silence as they all finished up their dinner. Greg shook his head feverishly; obviously there was something going on that he and Sherlock hadn’t been let in on.

“Laura, please don’t!” Greg finally pleaded.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

“Well, I was thinking…’” Laura said, her eyes dashing around the table. “Mycroft has a birthday coming up, and we’re all here so why not…you know-”

John could see where this was going, and he burst out laughing at the very thought of Mycroft in a party hat, blowing out candles on a cake.

“What, throw Mycroft a birthday party?” Sherlock teased. “You’ve got to be joking.”

“She’s not,” Greg groaned.
After stabbing his fork into the last of his dish and scooping it into his mouth, John turned to Sherlock and announced:

“I didn’t know Mycroft’s birthday was in October. When is it?”

His partner glared at his plate, and even Greg looked uncomfortable. He didn’t get it: what was so embarrassing about Mycroft having an October birthday?

“It’s on Halloween,” Sherlock mumbled.

He nearly choked on his food. No wonder! He couldn’t imagine anything more embarrassing for the eldest Holmes sibling, the minor government official, than having his birthday be on such a silly holiday.

“No way!” John laughed. “Christ, no wonder he’s so scary.”

“That’s a long childhood of Halloween-themed birthdays,” Jason said with a grin.

“It’s not funny,” Greg snapped. “Honestly, just don’t mention it alright? Mycroft hates birthdays enough. He doesn’t need a bloody party.”

“I wanna party!” Dan chimed in. “With Halloween candy! And pumpkins!”

“See, Dan votes for a party,” John said, flashing a toothy grin at his boyfriend. “Why don’t we invite all of Mycroft’s little friends over? We can tell scary stories and carve pumpkins and—”

“Shut up,” Sherlock warned.

The morning of Halloween was just as somber as Sherlock warned him it would be. John awoke at five AM to the sound of Greg roaming the hall singing “It’s the most horrible time of the year,” to the tune of “It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year”. John groaned in protest of being woken up and shoved at Sherlock beside him.

“Sherlock,” he mumbled. “Greg’s singing.”


“A copper’s worst nightmare,” John sighed as he rolled onto his back. His lover grunted in response next to him. “Well, I suppose this will be another Halloween in bed watching a Halloween marathon.”

Sherlock managed to stay awake long enough to mutter in response:

“How do you watch a marathon of a holiday?”

John pretended like he didn’t hear that and fell back to sleep.

“Arrggggg!!!!”

A couple of hours later, John’s eyes flashed open in shock and his chest immediately began to pound at the sudden screech of Dan’s voice belting out into their room. John sat up and was
surprised to find Sherlock was missing beside him, but it didn’t take him long to find his partner lingering in the doorway. The mattress shifted, and John blinked as Dan was suddenly jumping on the bed, all decked out in a pirate’s costume.

“I’m a pirate!” Dan explained proudly, waving around a fake sword, which had been taped up a few times.

“What do you think?” Sherlock asked as he swept into the room. “Laura mentioned that Dan didn’t have a costume so I did some digging and found my old one still stored in the attic. Can you believe she was going to waste perfectly good money on a new costume?”

John’s nose scrunched up as he took a sniff of the costume. It smelled faintly of mothballs and was all wrinkled up, like Sherlock had just taken it out of the box.

“God, Laura let you put this on her kid?” John asked. Dan brandished his toy pirate’s sword again, and John couldn’t help but to laugh. “You look cool, Dan.”

“Why don’t you go show your mum?” Sherlock asked.

The four-year old let out a squeal of excitement as he ran from the room shouting “arrgggg!” again. Sherlock grinned as he shut the door behind him- and locked it. It was only then that John realised Sherlock was hiding something behind his back. His eyes were twinkling, and John’s heart skipped a beat.

“What?” John demanded.

With a goofy grin, Sherlock whipped his arm around and revealed the single chocolate that was sitting in his hand.

“Just one?” John teased.

“There’s more where that came from,” Sherlock growled as he jumped into bed and climbed on top of him, carefully minding his injured leg.

John let out a happy moan as Sherlock’s lips danced with his own, then down his chin and neck. Those long, pale, musician’s fingers popped the candy into John’s mouth. The sweet taste combined with a whiff of Sherlock’s mouthwash from their kiss was a bit unpleasant, but he’d never say no to sex and candy.

“You know what would really turn me on right now,” John whispered as Sherlock rolled his t-shirt up to expose his chest. He gasped as a tongue darted out, teasing his nipple, and was just barely able to manage to finish: “Is costumes.”

“Mmm,” Sherlock murmured in agreement. His tongue flickered at John’s ear, and he absolutely melted at the touch. “I’m saving that for later, Doctor.”

John groaned with delight as Sherlock’s cold hand dipped beneath his pyjama pants and made a grab for his cock.

“You’d make a good vampire,” John said, but his words fell to moans as Sherlock pulled his pants just below his hips.

In response to the suggestion Sherlock nibbled at his neck. The dance of Sherlock’s lips against his skin maybe him shiver with delight, and his body slid against the sheets as a hand began crawling up and down his shaft. He longed to be able to go all the way, to once again feel his lover inside
him and be taken, but even in this position his leg began to ache. He squirmed and grunted. He drew in deep breaths, forcing himself to relax.

“Sherlock,” he gasped, his hands grasping at his boyfriend’s back. “Sherlock.”

He meant to command his attention, but instead Sherlock took it as endearment.

“John.” Sherlock murmured in return, sighing into his neck.

“No,” John said, squirming, “Sherlock…Sherlock stop.”

When his lover sat back- confused, hurt, worried- John felt horrible.

“I just…” John tried. He glanced down at his leg, hoping Sherlock could understand. “I want to, it’s just-”

Sherlock’s face fell as he realised what he meant. His hand reached up to brush against John’s face, and without argument he climbed off him.

“It’s alright, love,” Sherlock whispered.

He offered John a kind smile before winking at him. A frown crossed his face as he was unsure of what Sherlock meant, but suddenly his lover was sliding back down the bed so that his face was level with his cock. Sherlock grinned up at him and John grinned back before he threw his head back against the pillow. He threw an arm over his face for good measure so he could stifle the moans that he knew would come. When that tongue- that tongue- first lapped around his cock John had to bite down hard to keep himself from crying out. Soon he was able to lift his hips, ever so gently, to match the rhythm of Sherlock’s head bobbing up and down.

“Shit,” he whispered when Sherlock’s hands fell on his balls, weighing them in turn.

His body broke out in sweat, and for a moment he completely forgot that he was at the Holmes estate, with other people within earshot. His lover’s pupils were blown when he looked up to meet his eyes, and upon seeing Sherlock’s messy, sweaty hair and his shirt all wrinkled and hanging out of his trousers, John decided he couldn’t be alone in this.

“Come here,” John murmured.

Reaching down, he grabbed onto Sherlock’s shirt as though he were going to physically pull Sherlock to the head of the bed. His partner’s hand stayed on his cock, rubbing slowly up and down as he leaned forward over his body and they shared a kiss.

“Turn around,” John breathed into his ear. Sherlock frowned, confused. There was the sudden patter of footsteps in the hall, and in attempts to keep as quiet as possible John held up six fingers and then nine fingers. His lover’s eyes went wide again, and he wasted no time pulling off his own trousers and turning himself around so that his hips rested just level with John’s mouth. Then his mouth was once again on John’s cock. “Jesus.”

John trembled as he took Sherlock’s cock in his hands and raised it to his lips. His heart leapt at first at the salty taste, but he forced himself to take it, as always. The head slipped past his lips, and John found himself moaning once again as he took Sherlock in all the way. At the same time lips danced around his own dick in quick laps.

“Fuck,” he heard Sherlock mutter.
He pouted as that mouth left his cock, but soon Sherlock’s mouth was back at it, this time sucking at his balls.

“Jesus shit bloody fuck!” John hissed.

His hands pumped Sherlock’s cock hard for a moment as he panted. Taking in a deep breath, he pushed the shaft back into his mouth and down his throat. John’s hips thrust forward, pushing his cock further down his lover’s throat until-

“Oh god, Sherlock!” He exclaimed, a bit too loudly, as he came down his boyfriend’s throat.

Hips coming to a still, John let out a breathy sigh before he returned to sucking down Sherlock’s cock. Warm hands roamed his legs, skirting across his skin, scars, and bruising. It felt good; it felt oddly comforting. He found it easy to finish the blow job, to let his tongue dance around his lover’s cock until he too came. They both moaned as cum shot in John’s mouth. He swallowed effortlessly, though a single drop still dripped from his lips as Sherlock’s cock slipped back out of his mouth.

“Oh Jesus Christ that was hot,” John sighed, throwing his head back against the pillow.

To John’s surprise, Sherlock didn’t argue with spending Halloween watching movies. He even clung to John all throughout Hitchcock’s *The Birds*.

“You okay?” He asked, brushing Sherlock’s curls out of the way.

“Tired,” was the reply. It was a pitiful lie, and they both knew it.

Laughing, he decided to not tease his lover about being frightened of Hitchcock. After all, he remembered many a Halloween of him and Harry watching horror movie marathons only to be too afraid to go to sleep later. But thinking of him and Harry as kids was too painful, and he didn’t allow himself to get lost in the past for too long. With a sigh, John looked around the media room they sat in. It held three rows of cinema-style sitting and a huge projector screen.

“I still can’t believe Mycroft has a cinema room,” John smirked before popping a few pieces of chocolate into his mouth.

“I think it’s more like Greg’s cinema room,” Sherlock said with a smile on his face. Lifting his head, he planted a kiss to John’s cheek before he settled back into his seat.

There was a sudden buzzing, and it took them both a moment to realise it was coming from an alarm system installed in the back of the theatre. Mycroft had nearly as many security cameras watching his own property as he did Baker Street. In almost every room there were screens showing camera shots from outside, including the front door.

“Were we expecting someone?” John asked as Sherlock jumped up to answer the alert.

“Hello?” Sherlock greeted skeptically.

“Sherlock?” Came a shaky, breathless, voice through the speaker.

John turned around in his seat and was shocked to find his lover staring at the young man on the screen. He looked about Sherlock’s age with unkempt, long black hair and a coat that was far too big on him. He wore a hat that was tilted to cover his face.
And Sherlock... Sherlock was staring at the image of the man with a pale face. His entire body was frozen as he replied quietly:

“Victor?”

Chapter End Notes

I love the story of Victor Trevor so I couldn't resist including him in this fic. It won't be anything like my other Victor story, Left Behind, so if you read that don't worry. Halloween may be over in 10 minutes, but this is only the beginning of the Halloween fun at the Holmes' estate! What do you think of the twist? I'd love to know! Thanks SO much for reading and for all your lovely comments and kudos!
Standing there, in the foyer of his brother’s home, Sherlock closed his eyes and put himself back in his nineteen year old self’s shoes. In his mind palace, he stood in the Victor Trevor’s dining room with new clothes he had just bought with Mycroft’s credit card. He had been staying at the Trevor’s for almost two months, and over that time they had almost become like family. Mr Trevor cooked for them most nights, despite the fact that he had cleaning service and kitchen staff. Tonight was one of those nights as the three of them sat down to quiche, fruit, and salad. Sherlock’s stomach growled; Mycroft would be pleased that he had gained almost half a stone over the summer. Thanks to dealing with his mother’s loss as a teenager he never had the appetite to help him gain the weight he needed to fill out his growing body. But now he was beginning to look like a man, more and more so every day.

And Victor...Victor sitting across from him, with those breathtaking brown eyes and flawless skin. Victor with his wavy hair and well-toned muscles he often bragged about while lifting weights in his own private gym. Victor with his giddy laugh and bright smile.

Victor was a man. He was mature, he was handsome, he was perfect.

His friend’s eyes flashed to his, and Sherlock blushed when he realised he was caught staring.

“How was your day, boys?” Mr Trevor asked through a mouthful of quiche as he began sorting through his mail.

Sherlock couldn’t help but to snort. With as much money as the Trevors had they weren’t exactly the proper sort of rich family they appeared to be on the outside. As father and son living alone, they’d gotten used to years of bad habits and poor manners that went unnoticed. Like eating with your mouthful- something Mycroft absolutely detested.

“Not bad,” Victor shrugged. “We hung out by the pool mostly. Swam a bit.”

And Sherlock couldn’t help it, he was blushing again at the very thought of how Victor looked out in the pool, all wet hair with no shirt...

Oh god, he thought, I’m hopeless. I’ve completely lost it.

“It was a nice day for it,” Mr Trevor commented. Luckily he seemed completely clueless about that fantasies going on inside Sherlock’s head at the moment. “I was thinking myself it would be a good day to go to for a nice walk. Maybe we can practise those deduction skills we have been working on, Sherlock.”

Rolling his eyes, Victor protested on his behalf:
“Please don’t make him do that stuff Dad, it’s embarrassing!”

“It’s really alright,” Sherlock said, shrugging his shoulders.

He was being honest. Back at home, all he got to do was hang around Mycroft- and no one was more miserable to hang around than his brother. Since his mother past away he had zero adult role models to look up to (Mycroft and his gram didn’t exactly count), and he was enjoying the fact that Mr Trevor actually wanted to spend time teaching him this stuff.

“See, the lad likes learning this stuff,” Mr Trevor challenged. “You know, why wait? Go on, Sherlock. I’ve seen you make fine deductions about every visitor I’ve had this week. How about the man of the house? What have you observed about me?”

Taking in a deep breath, Sherlock surprised them both by closing his eyes instead of studying Mr Trevor. It was a trick he had picked up; closing his eyes helped him concentrate. It made him forget that all eyes were on him. He took in the smells first and noted immediately:

“You had a burger for lunch, with onions, and a salad instead of chips.”

“Excellent.”

He remembered how oddly Mr Trevor’s ears looked, all flat and thick. Sherlock had been a boxer before uni, just for a couple of terms, and just for a way to let out his anger about his mum passing away. All the older, more experienced boxers and coaches all had the same flattened and thick ears from their years of boxing.

“You were a boxer when you were younger,” Sherlock announced. “A very good one; you boxed for a long time, right up until you got married.”

“Correct on all accounts,” Mr Trevor amused. “Was it my nose?”

“No,” Sherlock replied with a smile. “Your ears. And the fact that boxing is probably not something a young newlywed would want their husband participating in.”

“It was a bit dangerous for her,” Mr Trevor admitted. “Go on then. Anything else?”

“You used to be a banker.”

“Correct, I worked in a bank in my youth, in Australia.”

“You’ve been to New Zealand.”

This one was most obvious, thanks to the map of New Zealand in Mr Trevor’s study.

“Obviously,” Victor teased.

It might be obvious, but he would have felt stupid if he missed it. In which case, he also felt the need to point out:

“You recently visited Japan.”


Taking in a deep breath, Sherlock thought back to every artifact and souvenir Victor told him about. He thought of every book he’d picked up and every visitor he’d met. But none of that was good enough. He needed something to top it all to impress Mr Trevor.
A sudden memory came back to him- it was the only time he had actually ever seen Mr Trevor out by the pool. He remembered Victor commenting his father must be the only person in Norfolk who actually owned a Hawaiian shirt. He considered adding ‘you’ve been to Hawaii’ to his observations, but he wanted to show he could do more than just figure out where Mr Trevor’s clothes and souvenirs were from. Sherlock remembered laughing along with Victor’s joke (he laughed at all of them, even the unfunny ones), but he also remembered noticing a particularly strange tattoo on Mr Trevor’s left arm. The tattoo simply read ‘J.A.’.

“You were once in love with someone named ‘J.A.’,” Sherlock announced, with a smirk, and opened his eyes.

“Dad!” Victor teased, playfully punching his father in the same arm in which he had that tattoo. “You never would tell me what that tattoo was about. An old lover?! Really?

Before he could finish, Mr Trevor’s face suddenly went red. His eyes went wide before they closed and he pitched forward onto the table.

“Dad!” Victor screamed, rushing to his father’s side as Sherlock made a dash for the kitchen telephone.

Mr Trevor woke up just moments later, claiming he just had a fainting spell. He seemed fine afterwards, but there was definitely a different atmosphere around the Trevor house in the following days.

“I think he’s afraid he taught you too well,” Victor joked one night as they sat out one evening by the pool. The sun was setting, painting a magnificent orange-purple glow over the Trevor’s estate. Victor looked perfect sitting there, with his hair cut shorter for the start of the new term and his shirt with the top buttons undone. He was in such a trance that it took him a moment to realise Victor was even talking to him.

“What?” Sherlock asked, shaking himself out of his thoughts. “Oh, yeah. I kind of have the feeling he doesn’t like having me around too much anymore.”

“That’s ridiculous!” Laughed Victor. “He loves you. You just have too much power for your own good.”

But Sherlock didn’t find it too funny. Yes, Victor’s father had taught him these amazing skills of deductions, but what was he supposed to do with them if everyone got so offended by what he observed?

“Excuse me?”

They both looked up to find an older man wearing a jumper that was too big and trousers that were torn at the knees. Victor jumped up and stood defensively in front of Sherlock, and Sherlock’s heart fluttered at the thought that his safety was the first thing on Victor’s mind. Even though the older man was hardly any threat to them; Sherlock could have taken him with one punch.

“I’m an old friend of your father’s,” the stranger explained. His Australian accent made his story somewhat convincing, considering the time Mr Trevor spent working in banking in Australia before coming to England. “We worked together in Australia.”

“How did you find him in Norfolk?” Victor asked, immediately going on the defensive. “This is private property you know, you can’t just-”

“Hudson?” Mr Trevor’s voice suddenly boomed across the yard.
The two friends turned, stunned to see Mr Trevor looking just as in shock as he did when Sherlock revealed his ‘J.A.’ deduction.

“James!” The old man cried, raising his arms like he was going to embrace him. But Mr Trevor took a step back, holding his hands up as though he too thought he was in danger. But the Hudson fellow just flashed a knowing smile at him and waved his hand toward the house. “You have a beautiful house. You must have become a very successful businessman, yes?”

Mr Trevor suddenly became pale and quietly invited Hudson into the house.

Within the next twenty-four hours Hudson had been offered a job as a butler. Then within a week, a cook. Then in the next week, as an assistant in Mr Trevor’s office. Sherlock and Victor spent the rest of their holiday avoiding Hudson at all cost. He seemed to bring out the worst of Mr Trevor: they got drunk most nights, Hudson even more so than Victor’s father. Productivity at the office was obviously down, as Mr Trevor brought his work home most nights and escaped back to the office on the weekends while his assistant continued drinking day and night. Within a month Hudson got a raise, and by the time they were ready to go back to school the old man was bragging about a full-time, salaried, position.

He and Victor had no idea why Mr Trevor felt inspired by Hudson. They hardly acted like friends at all. It seemed more like Mr Trevor owed him something, and if he turned Hudson down something horrible would happen.

At the end of the summer he and Victor returned to school and realised they had no classes together. Between their two opposite schedules they hardly saw each other, and Sherlock ended up spending most of the new term doing chemistry experiments in the labs. By finally managing to get Victor off his mind, Sherlock was able to concentrate on the work and only the work. He was getting good, very good, and he was beginning to catch the eye of many of the professors- even ones whose classes he didn’t take. It was the first time he had confidence that he could actually succeed at Cambridge, and he was beginning to think it was best to stay away from friends of any sort so he could do the best he could while at uni.

By the third month of the term he was asking questions in class that even his professor couldn’t answer. Then he’d spend that night in the library researching, and by the next morning he’d be able to give the class a half-hour lecture on the answers he found. Everything was going rather smoothly, until Victor knocked on his dorm room door at four in the morning one day.

Sherlock had fallen asleep with a chemistry book in his arm, and he found himself a bit embarrassed at how wrinkly his clothes were and how tangled his hair was. At that moment, all the thoughts of Victor he managed to put in the back of his mind came rushing back to him as he opened the door and found his old friend standing in the hall. Victor wore tracksuit bottoms and a Cambridge sweatshirt. His face was white as a sheet, and his body began shaking when his eyes fell on Sherlock.

“Hey,” Sherlock said quietly, pulling Victor into his dorm. “Is everything okay?”

Taking a deep breath, Victor tried to explain himself, but all he could do was bite his lip and shake his head ‘no’.

That morning they were on the first train back to Norfolk. It wasn’t until they were at the station that Victor explained he got a call that his father had committed suicide. His own stomach turned to knots, and suddenly he felt awful for not speaking to Victor throughout the term. Victor and his
father had once been like family to him, and he felt sick at the thought of Mr Trevor taking his own life.

After the confession Sherlock couldn’t help himself: he threw his arms around Victor and held his friend close until their train pulled up.

“So…” John announced beside him as they stood in the foyer. “Are you going to let him in?”

Sherlock let out a long breath and looked up to Victor Trevor’s reflection in the stain glass. His old friend looked exactly as he had left him: slightly shorter than he was, with curly hair that was just as dark as his. And his eyes…his eyes were still the same brilliant, brown eyes he had once...

He shook himself out of it, refusing to go there. At least he was man enough to know that the first time those thoughts popped into his head, he should tell John.

“John, there’s something you should know about Victor Trevor,” he said.

His partner’s eyebrows shot up with interest, but instead of getting angry he simply quipped:

“Besides who he is, how you know him, and why he’s here?”

_Clever, John._

“He was a friend of mine from my first year at uni,” Sherlock admitted quickly. “I…I sort of… fancied him.”

Feeling his own body go perfectly still, he dared to move only his eyes to get a glimpse of John’s reaction. Instead of the angry (possibly even jealous) eyes he expected, John…burst out laughing.

“Fancied him?” John echoed.

“A lot.”

John laughed even harder at that, leaving him confused. Shouldn’t John be angry at him? Shouldn’t he be interrogating him and doubting his trust?

“I’ll get the bloody door,” John said with a giggle.

At least he pulled himself together in time to properly greet Victor.

“Hi,” John offered, stretching out his hands. “I’m John, I belong to this one.”

He nodded back to him, and Sherlock’s face became bright red. A small smile peered from Victor’s lips, but it didn’t mask the sorrow behind those emerald orbs.

“Good to meet you, John,” Victor offered. Hearing his accent in full swing took Sherlock back, and for a moment his breath became caught in his throat. He _adored_ that accent (secretly, of course) when they were mates. “I’m sorry, Sherlock, but I had to see you.”

Swallowing, he struggled to find words as he ushered Victor inside and closed the door behind him.

“It’s fine,” he lied. “What’s wrong?”
“You mean you aren’t going to tell me that?” Victor teased with a sudden grin that sent him reeling. He was uncomfortable that John was there, watching him make a fool out of himself. He was ashamed that he was letting himself even be charmed by Victor once again. ‘I’ve seen you in the news, you know. You’re... quite impressive. Dad would have been proud.”

He could only hope so.

Victor’s eyes flashed to the floor and he hugged himself as he finally explained why he was there:

“Sherlock, my house was burnt down today.”

The confession sent the room into silence, and it sent Sherlock’s heart pounding. There was a vague smell of smoke from the jacket and Victor’s hair, but his throat sounded seemed free of smoke inhalation. He must have gotten the call while he was out; perhaps that old jacket of his father’s he owned was one of the few things left salvageable. Perhaps he was so in shock he grabbed it for sentimental reasons.

“Christ,” John finally muttered beside him. “Were you inside? Are you alright? Jesus, you should be in hospital!”

Victor seemed a bit put off by John’s concerned, and Sherlock realised he should explain:

“He’s a doctor, it’s his natural instinct to worry.”

He was offered a feign attempt at a smile, but Victor’s face quickly fell again.

“I found out while I was at work,” Victor explained. “Please Sherlock, I’ve been talking to the police all morning, and they don’t believe what I have to say. They just think it’s a simple arsonist case. I just need someone to hear me out.”

_Rarely are arsonist cases ever simple_, Sherlock thought.

He met Victor’s eyes, and his breath caught in his throat. The last time they saw each other they were practically kids, and he couldn’t help but to see Victor as that young, innocent, nineteen year old again.

“Okay,” Sherlock finally agreed. He stole a glance to John, just to make sure he thought it was okay. John offered him a nod, and he threw a grateful smile toward him.

They led Victor down the main hall and into the kitchen.

When they reached the doorway the three of them stopped.

There were bowls of candy everywhere, black and orange streamers taped to the ceiling, fake mini-skeletons and skull figures scattered about the kitchen island, and a hideous plastic life-sized skeleton hanging by the window. Even paper bats were taped to the walls.

He was certain if his brother came home and found his kitchen in this state he would simply walk and go buy a new house.

The culprit was putting away dishes and whistling to herself, like nothing was wrong.

“Laura?” Sherlock announced, not really sure what to say.

His sister swirled around in shock; she clearly hadn’t expected to be found out this soon.
“Oh,” she replied innocently. “Yeah, this is all for Dan.”

“And the happy birthday letters?” John asked, pointing to the letters hanging just above the skeleton.

“And Mycroft,” Laura admitted, cringing. “And me. I really, really like Halloween. And so does Dan! And Mycroft deserves to have a good birthday. And- sorry, who is this?”

Victor was too lost in the absurd state the kitchen to answer for himself. Judging by the look on his face, Victor had never been to a Halloween party in his life.

“This is Victor,” Sherlock explained. “He’s an old friend from uni. It’s…it’s a long story.”

Laura nodded, like she somehow understood.

“Well I’m Laura,” she greeted, “Sherlock’s sister.”

Sherlock winced, realising Victor would have no clue who she was and would probably be offended that he didn’t know. Indeed, his friend’s eyes went wide as he held out a hand to her.

“I had no idea…” Victor said as they shook hands.

“Neither did I,” Sherlock admitted quietly. “Not until this summer, actually. Apparently my father had a few secrets too.”

“Oh,” Victor muttered, “shit.”

But John, who Sherlock had (to his embarrassment) nearly forgotten was in the room, was growing impatient.

“Okay, someone needs to explain what’s going on,” John demanded.

His own eyes lifted to meet Victor’s again, and his friend nodded, giving him permission to explain everything. Letting out a deep sigh, Sherlock grabbed a chocolate from one of the bowls and fiercely bit into it as he considered his story.

“But John, who Sherlock had (to his embarrassment) nearly forgotten was in the room, was growing impatient.”

“Like I said, Victor and I were in uni together. We were partners in chemistry lab first year. That was back when Mycroft was becoming…” he glanced toward Victor, who still didn’t know the truth about what his brother did, “you know, Mycroft. He was to be abroad most of that summer and didn’t want me staying home alone-”

“Probably a good call,” John teased.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock continued:

“I stayed at Victor’s for the summer.”

A small smile peered from the corner of Victor’s lips as his old friend admitted:

“It was a brilliant summer. We did all sorts of chemistry experiments. We nearly blew up the entire kitchen once. Oh- and that’s when Dad taught you all the deduction stuff.”

_Deduction stuff._

Sherlock grinned.
Funny how Victor said it so casually.

“Deduction stuff?” John repeated, grinning ear to ear himself. “I always thought Mycroft taught you all that.”

“Mycro?” Sherlock shot, offended. “No, it was Mr Trevor. He was…he was brilliant.”

“That’s putting it lightly,” Victor chimed in. “My father was…everything to me. He knew everything about a person the moment they walked into a room. He would know where I had been just by looking at my shoes. He knew what part of the country someone was from by their coat—”

“Sounds familiar,” John said.

Sherlock knew he was thinking of their first case, and while he hated admitting the method behind his skills he knew John enjoyed hearing the history.

“I can’t believe you’re the reason he keeps eyeballs in the fridge and starts fires in the living room,” Laura teased.

“That was one fire!” Sherlock protested. “And it actually helped solved an arson case, thank you very much. Anyway, Mr Trevor was a Justice of Peace. There were always people coming in going, and Victor’s dad taught us how to read everything about every single one of them without even speaking a word to them.”

He and Victor exchanged glances; both of them knew the next part of the story wasn’t easy to tell. Sherlock knew he had forced himself to not think of it for years since, but he knew Victor probably thought of it every day.

“Eventually Sherlock was able to outsmart my father,” Victor continued, for him. “He realised that my father had some secrets, that he wasn’t exactly who he said he was. My father committed suicide later that year. He left me a note- it was a confession. He had once been arrested for stealing from his own bank, and he escaped prison during a riot with a man who had named changed his name to Andrew Beddoes. His real name was Andrew Prendergast. The two of them fled from their prison in Australia and fled to New Zealand, where they both managed to get new identities and jobs. Soon they made enough to flee New Zealand and head to England, where they parted waves and both sought to turn their lives around. My dad met my mum, and then they had me. He and Beddoes thought they had gotten away with it until one of the guards, Hudson, found them both in England years later. He found my father first, and he blackmailed him into giving him a job. He was a horrible employee, but my father kept him on the whole summer. Later that year when my father died Hudson left, saying that he was going to go pay a visit to Beddoes. He didn’t even seem sorry that my father had taken his own life.”

“Oh my god,” Laura said, bringing her hand to her mouth in shock.

“My father had received a letter from Beddoes that day,” Victor continued. “I found it with the suicide note. It just said ‘H has told all. May God have mercy on our souls’. He had tried to warn my father so he would have enough time to run, but my father…he took his own way out.”

The room fell silent as Laura wrapped her arms tightly around herself and John gripped the armrests of his wheelchair. Sherlock’s hands gripped the kitchen island to help keep his balance, and Victor absent-mindedly reached for one of the chocolates. After a few moments of uncomfortable silence, he realised that Victor was probably ready for the attention to be taken away from him so Sherlock spoke up:
“Victor and I just parted ways after that,” Sherlock admitted. He regretted it even as he said it. There was really no reason they should have ignored each other through the rest of university career. He knew full well that if he had remained friends with Victor he probably wouldn’t have been swayed toward drugs. The truth was Victor had admitted he needed his space, and even though Sherlock knew that was really code for ‘I could use a friend right now’ he let him slip away.

“Honestly I never heard anything about Hudson or Beddoes again,” Victor said. “When we talked to the police Sherlock told them he believed Beddoes would try to kill Hudson, but the police believed Hudson was out to kill Beddoes. The police were never able to find either man.”

“Jesus,” John muttered.

“Which one do you think is after you now?” Laura asked. "Because, no offence, Sherlock, it doesn’t seem like Beddoes would have much of a reason to come after him now.”

As much as he hated to admit he might be wrong, he had to confess she had a point.

Now that he would ever say this out loud.

“I know,” Victor sighed. He turned to Sherlock and those haunting brown eyes gazed into his. “What do you think? Will you take the case?”

Sherlock blinked and echoed:

“Take the case?”

Somehow, he hadn’t realised Victor was pitching a case to him this whole time.

“Please Sherlock,” pleaded Victor. His eyes danced around the room, hesitant, and Sherlock realised there was even more he was keeping secret. “I don’t want the local police helping me out. I only want the best, and I know that’s you. I saw on John’s blog that you were staying with family, so I figured that would be here. I came all this way to see you. I know you’re the only one will believe me so please…don’t let me down.”

Sherlock blushed at the compliment of being ‘the best’, and he had to admit it was enough to convince him to say yet. After all, who was he to turn down an old friend who had come all this way?

“I haven’t had a good arsonist case in a while,” Sherlock admitted. He looked down to John, who looked unconvinced himself, but Sherlock didn't have the heart to say no. “I’ll take it.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm SO sorry for the delay! Have you ever written an entire chapter only to realise you want to take it in a different direction? That's what happened with this chapter. Twice. But I'm finally happy with it, and I'm finally am ready to publish it! Also, I spent some time working on some one-shot fic ideas I've had. I'd love it if you would go check them out!

I love the story of Victor Trevor, so I hope you like what I do with it! I appreciate all feedback! Thanks so much for reading!
Chapter Notes

This chapter turned out massive, but I didn't want to split it up! So I thought I'd just give you a longer chapter for all the waiting you have put up with!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“I can’t believe I agreed to do this,” Sherlock murmured under his breath as he walked along the London streets with their trick-or-treating group.

“Come on, Sherlock, you look adorable,” Laura grinned.

Sherlock turned to Victor for help. His old friend just smiled at him through the vampire teeth he wore before spitting them out of his mouth.

“It helps me get my mind off things,” Victor admitted, “thanks for inviting me along, really.”

“Don’t mention it,” Sherlock mumbled.

What grown person wanted to dress up in ridiculous costumes and walk around for hours on a cold night to collect candy for someone else? Yet Laura had complained that Dan was being deprived of a “real Halloween” and suggested that it might do everyone some good to go out and get some fresh air.

“And Dan loves it,” John said, nodding to the four-year-old who was skipping ahead in front of them, pirate sword in one hand and a bag of candy in the other.

“I look ridiculous,” Sherlock said with a huff.

“You look hot,” John corrected, making him blush.

Somehow, not only had he found himself agreeing to this mad trick-or-treating plan, but he had allowed John to dress him up. John had found a deerstalker for himself and had stolen Sherlock’s Belstaff.

As for Sherlock, John found an old lab coat from the detective’s uni days. He wore a toy stethoscope around his neck from a play set John had bought Dan and had a toy thermometer stuck out of his coat pocket.

John was Sherlock and Sherlock was John.

Originality at its finest.

“You missed your calling as a doctor. It looks good on you.” Victor commented with a wink.

If possible, his cheeks turned even readier.

“Can I go to this house Mommy?” Dan pleaded, pointing to a house where a big group of kids had just run away from, all happy smiles and hands full of candy.
“Sure sweetie, take my hand.”

They watched as Laura and Jason led their son to the front door and knocked.

“It really is nice of you to invite me along,” Victor said for the dozenth time.

“It’s nothing,” John offered. “We couldn’t leave you in the house alone on Halloween. Sherlock thinks it’s haunted, you know.”

“Not anymore,” Sherlock protested through gritted teeth.

Suddenly Dan was running toward them, pulling Laura with his hand as he waved a chocolate bar in front of their faces.

“She gave me a whole chocolate bar!” Dan exclaimed.

“He can’t take all this candy on the plane,” Jason sighed. “We’ve got to get rid of it all in a week. How did I not see this coming?”

Laura pried the candy out of her son’s hands and placed it into the bag he was holding. The bag obviously weighed too much for the four-year old to carry around for much longer. Thankfully that, plus Laura checking her mobile for the time, were signs that it should be time for them to go back to Mycroft’s.

“We’re just a couple of blocks from Baker Street,” Sherlock pointed out. “Do you need anything from the flat, John?”

With a sly grin on his face, John replied:

“Besides the satisfaction of seeing Mrs Hudson freak out from seeing us dressed as each other?”

A pit fell in Sherlock’s stomach, and he found himself wishing he could melt into the ground.

He echoed Jason’s previous comment:

“How did I not see this coming?”

With a laugh, Jason slapped him on the back.

“Hey, I hate Halloween just as much as you,” he said, “but there are just some things you have to do for the kids.”

And that was how he found himself ringing the doorbell of his own flat. Dan stood in front of the group, his candy back already stretched out before him as Mrs Hudson opened the door.

“Trick-or-treat!” Dan cried happily.

“Oh!!” Mrs Hudson exclaimed, her eyes watering a bit from being so overwhelmed with emotion. “Oh Dan! Look at you! A little pirate! I saved some treats just for- oh Sherlock!”

Sherlock had made a failed attempt to hide behind his sister, but Mrs Hudson found him anyway. Her eyes absolutely burst with delight at the sight of him and John in costume. He might as well have been her grandson, the way she grabbed him and hugged him until he was gasping for breath. John was next, though his boyfriend looked sincerely pleased to see their landlady. After hugging each of them in turn, Dan stuck his candy bag back out and demanded:
“Candy, please!”

“Dan!” Laura cried in horror, pulling her son back toward him. “I’m so sorry, Mrs Hudson. I promise I didn’t teach him that.”

“Oh it’s quite alright,” Mrs Hudson said as she reached for her candy bowl. “I’m sure Sherlock did.”

Everyone burst out laughing but him. Why did everyone have to gang up on him on every holiday?

“It’s just so quiet without you two here!” Mrs Hudson said, beaming ear to ear as her eyes dashed between him and John. “Here you go Dan, I have some nice chocolates for you.”

“Yay!” Dan cheered, jumping up and down. He showed off his latest addition of candy to his dad, who looked a bit embarrassed that his son was clearly more obsessed with the candy than seeing Mrs Hudson.

“I’m going to grab a few things,” Sherlock announced.

He shoved past his family as he made his way into the quiet flat. On instinct, he pounded up the stairs just like he always did…and stopped at the sight of his empty living room. There was John’s chair, waiting for the good doctor to return to it. There was the telly, with all of John’s crap programmes hidden inside it. There was the kitchen, with its lights out and a clean countertop for a change. Apparently Mrs Hudson had taken advantage of being able to clean while they were gone.

Taking a deep breath, Sherlock forced himself to walk into the bedroom. His body felt cold as he flipped on the light. Even though it was home the room felt a bit unwelcoming. It was like the flat was mocking him. It was reminding him that even when John was able to move back home things just wouldn’t be the same. John would be using a cane again, he wouldn’t be able to run around with him on cases for a while, and not to mention returning to normal meant they had to confront what had happened to them. Being at Mycroft’s was all about healing: they had so much to focus on, what with changing John’s bandages, keeping track of his meds, and starting physical therapy soon. All of his family was there, and he even had a case now. It was proving to be a great distraction to not be in the flat but now, now he was realising what he had to come home to. As much as he was looking forward to having John all to himself again, being back in the flat made everything seem so much more real.

“You okay?”

Sherlock jumped at the sound of Laura’s voice. He forced a smile as he replied:

“Yeah.”

He couldn’t have sounded more unsure of himself. Laura, who simply donned cat ears for her costume. She let out a tired sigh, crossed her arms, and took a look around the flat.

“It makes it all seem real, doesn’t it?” She asked. Sherlock couldn’t help but to nod. He let Laura follow him into his bedroom and watched as he picked out clothes to take back. “I felt the same when we got back home after our last trip. I just couldn’t believe that all that had actually happened. The kidnapping, meeting you, the cases…not to mention the bloody wedding and getting married.”

Swirling around, he raised an eyebrow at her choice of wording. Laura simply shrugged.

“I’m trying out British speak,” she explained.
With a roll of his eyes he turned back around and tried to remember the things they might need.

“Coming home, back to reality,” she went on, “it’s when you realise you have to deal with it. But you and John will be fine. You two are so amazing together, and you’re such an amazing partner to him. know inside you have to be scared and nervous and worried and just downright bloody—“

“You really don’t have to use it twice in the same speech,” Sherlock pointed out.

He turned around to face his sister, who just grinned at him.

“Bloody terrified,” she finished. They stood forehead to forehead, reminding Sherlock of the many fights he had gotten into with Mycroft. Together they burst out laughing. “You know if you ever need to—“

He wasn’t sure how that sentence was going to end, but suddenly he felt the need to throw his arms around his sister and hug her. She was clearly surprised, but she let him bury his head into her shoulder and let a long sigh. He had been so busy with John, and no so preoccupied with Victor being here, that he hadn’t been able to fully appreciate the fact that his sister was here and moving to London.

“The past couple of weeks have been a nightmare,” he admitted. She squeezed him before they let go, and he let out another shaky breath. Suddenly he felt a bit vulnerable: emotions, John’s voice explained to him. Emotions are what make you feel like this. It’s a good thing. “And now Victor Trevor shows up, and god it just…it can’t get any worse, can it?”

Laura offered him a half-smile.

“That’s pretty much been my life since day one,” she admitted. “You always think it can’t get worse, but then life surprises you. I just think this promotion of Jason’s and the move to London has to be a sign that things are finally turning around.”

“That’s true,” Sherlock grinned. “Dan’s going to love growing up here.”

“I know, he probably won’t even remember America!”

“Probably for the best,” he teased, earning him a punch in the arm.

“And you know, I was thinking…” Laura paused, as though she were contemplating the best way to tell him something he wouldn’t want to hear. It was then he realised she hadn’t followed him in here just to make sure he was okay; she wanted something for him. “Dan loves Halloween. Luckily it’s one of those holidays where we’ll get to continue our traditions in London. But there are certain ones that he will never get to experience again, so I want to make his last days in America extra special.”

Sherlock was getting a very bad feeling about where this was going.

“What are you saying?” He demanded, though he had a good idea.

“I want you to come spend the holidays with us!” Laura blurted out. “This could be Dan’s last Thanksgiving in America, and he’s never really had a big family to celebrate it with. And Christmas…we’ve got to spend one last Christmas in New York! We can even go into the city. It will be amazing, I promise you. Please!”

She was practically jumping up in down in excitement. Sherlock just blinked; had he really just been invited to stay in America for what, a good month, at least? He wasn’t sure his heart could
manage being away from London that long. He wasn’t sure his mind could manage it.

“Please?” Laura added, grabbing his hand. “I know Mycroft and Greg can’t take off work that long, but it would be a great opportunity for you and John to just take some time away from everything. We practically live in the middle of nowhere; no one would bother you there. It would be a great place for John to heal and get his energy back.”

*Isn’t that why we’re here, at Mycroft’s? Why is everyone coddling us?*

But then he read in between the lines- this was Laura’s family’s last couple of months in America, which meant they were focused on one thing:

“Plus you would have extra people to help you move,” he replied dryly.

Laura blushed, making it obvious that was a secret part of this plan.

Well...I wouldn’t make John help out,” she attempted, flustered, before she switched subjects and continued going on about Thanksgiving. “Jason and his parents were around for Thanksgiving and Christmas last year, but before that it was just me and Dan, and we didn’t really have much. I want to give him one great Thanksgiving dinner-“

“For his British family?!”

“One great Christmas, and one great New Year’s before he leaves America, possibly forever!” She finished.

He could only stand there, mouth agape, wondering if she had even realised where she had gone wrong.

“I know the holidays aren’t really your thing,” she offered.

“Yes, as a citizen of the United Kingdom the American Thanksgiving is not really my thing!”

“But it’s all in good fun, right?” It wasn’t convincing enough; in fact it was quite possible she’d gone insane. “Come on, Sherlock. Even though Mycroft and Greg work through most of the holidays they’re going to try to make Thanksgiving dinner and maybe even Christmas weekend and New Year’s.”

*Yes, well Mycroft is clearly the favourite brother,* he thought bitterly.

“You asked Mycroft before me?!”

An evil grin crossed her face as she declared:

“Well I figured if he agreed to go then you would feel like you have to go, or else we would never leave you alone about it.”

“That’s just…” he said, struggling to thing of the best way to express how betrayed he felt. She asked Mycroft before him?! “Mean.”

With a laugh, Laura turned around and began to lead him back out of the flat. And with that, he knew she had gotten her way.

“Of course, they’re refusing to tell people why they’re taking off over the American Thanksgiving holiday, but at least they’re game.”
“They just like to eat,” Sherlock mumbled.

Back downstairs they found Mrs Hudson loading John up with containers of treats.

“Mrs Hudson!” He barked. “John is not a tray!”

“It’s fine Sherlock,” John insisted. “Plus, biscuits and cupcakes!”

He handed Sherlock a Halloween-themed biscuit. His stomach grumbled at the sight of it (when was the last time he ate?) so he promptly snatched it out of John’s hand and stuffed it into his mouth.

“I was going to say no candy before dinner,” John teased, “but whatever you want, love.”

“She wants us to spend Thanksgiving with her,” Sherlock said, jabbing an accusing finger at his sister.

John just blinked.

“You mean the American Thanksgiving?” He asked. “She knows we’re British, right?”

Letting out a dramatic sigh, Laura grabbed Dan’s hand and announced it was time to go. They all bid farewell to Mrs Hudson and made their way back down the street.

“I want you all to spend the holidays with us,” Laura explained.

“You’re coming to Tank…Tank…” Dan tried to ask.

“Thanksgiving,” Jason offered.

“Thanksgiving?!” His nephew finished, grinning up at him.

His lips were stained with chocolate and the pirate sword still swung in his free hand. How was Sherlock supposed to say no to that face?

“I thought the Americans celebrated Thanksgiving to celebrate breaking away from us,” Sherlock mumbled.

With a laugh, Jason took some candy out of the bag he was holding and popped it into his mouth.

“It’s not that weird,” Jason said, “I have British friends in America who celebrate it. Don’t look at it as a holiday about breaking away from the British-“

“Which is what it is!” Sherlock insisted.

“Look at it as a time to spend with your family and be thankful for what you have,” Jason finished. “We’re a British-American family that has a lot to learn about each other’s customs.”

“He has a point,” John admitted. “We’ve asked them to try some of out some of our customs. We should try theirs. It will be fun! Besides, I should be well enough to travel, and we’ll have a massive case of cabin fever by then. And we have wanted to visit them.”

“Aww, you have?” Laura teased. Sherlock glared at her, and she just giggled as she wrapped an arm around her husband’s waist.

Secretly, he would have given anything to get to spend the holidays with his sister, but he wanted
them to admit he was right. It was incredibly weird to be asked to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Of course, there was a small part of him who knew there was a completely different reason he was avoiding going to New York: New York was where his father was. His living, breathing, father who he hadn’t seen in so long he didn’t even remember him. His father who abandoned him when he was two years old. His father who abused his sister and her mother. He wasn’t sure he could handle being in the same state as his father, knowing he was just a car ride away from meeting him for the first time. Sherlock wondered if Mycroft had thought about the same when Laura asked him to visit.

He wondered if Mycroft would go with him were he to decide he wanted to meet his father.

He was sure that part of the reason Laura was so excited about moving to London was to be able to put distance between her and her father- and that was one of the reasons he dreaded going to America. He would lose that distance for himself.

Yet he understood how important this was to Laura, and he knew it would be sad if Dan grew up to not remember any of his holidays in America.

“Fine,” Sherlock finally sighed, “we’re going to bloody America.”

Dan let out a cheer and jumped in the air. John and Laura were both beaming ear to ear.

But behind him, he noticed Victor was still completely silent. Sherlock hung back while the others walked before him so he could have a chance to talk to him.

“Sorry, family drama,” Sherlock explained

“I don’t mind.”

He smiled as he turned to look Sherlock in the eye. It was one of the first times they had made eye contact since Victor had first arrived, and Sherlock’s heart leapt as his green-blue eyes met those dark brown orbs again. Used to, he could get lost in those eyes. He could dream about them for hours. Now those eyes were foreign; they held secrets and stories Sherlock knew nothing of.

“We’ll talk, when we get back to Mycroft’s,” He offered. He glanced over to Victor, and a knot formed in his stomach when he saw the pain and sadness in Victor’s eyes. His old friend must have been traumatised: he’d just lost his childhood home to a fire, and he was afraid someone was after him. He had no family of his own to look after him, and it didn’t even seem like he had a best friend like John to turn to.

“It’s okay,” Victor shrugged. “I suppose there’s not much to do until we get to Norfolk. Being around your family…it’s comforting. I’m glad you have this amazing, supportive, family now.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock said quietly. “Yeah, I really didn’t until just a few months ago. Before that it was just me and Mycroft and, well, you can imagine how that went.”

With a snort, Victor admitted:

“I’m surprised you two didn’t kill each other.”

“Yeah, me too.”

The two shared smiles before walking ahead to catch up with the group.
After sharing a dinner together in London the family made it back to Mycroft’s around nine. Although it was close to Dan’s bedtime his nephew showed no signs of slowing down.

“Cake! Cake! Cake!” Dan said, bouncing up and down as their car pulled into the driveway.

“It’s Mycroft’s cake, sweetie,” Laura said, referring to the cake she had made earlier that day. “We’ll eat it when he gets home. If he’s very late we might have to eat it tomorrow.”

“But it’s for his birfday!” Dan pouted. “We gots to eat it now!”

Laura sighed as she placed her arm around her son’s neck, leaned her head against his and closed her eyes. Sherlock understood how she felt; trick-or-treating was exhausting. He wasn’t sure how parents did it year after year. If Dan wasn’t trying to run ahead of them he was begging to eat candy, and when he didn’t get his way he threw the most temper tantrums Sherlock had ever seen him throw.

“Hey, Greg’s home,” John pointed out as Greg’s car came into view.

Greg had warned him he might have to pull a double shift that day, so Sherlock wondered how he’d gotten out of it.

“Oh!” Laura said as she sat up. Her face went pale. “I hope he hasn’t seen the kitchen…”

Everyone in the car burst out in laughter- save for Dan who was too busy pouting over the cake.

The house was quiet as they walked through the entryway. All the lights were off, just as they left it, and they found themselves looking at each other, wondering what Greg’s reaction would be to finding they had disregarded his advice when it came to celebrating Mycroft’s birthday.

Sherlock flipped on the living room light, as they had to move through the room to get to the kitchen, and they stopped at the sight of Mycroft, sprawled out in his three piece suit on the sofa. Greg lay on the floor below him, his hand rested above him so that it almost touched Mycroft’s arms. They looked like a couple of uni students who had passed out after drinking. As the light flickered on they both jumped, and Greg rubbed his fists in his eyes as he explained:

“We’ve both had bad days. Myc pulled me out of work. If anyone asks, I’m working on special assignment with the government.”

Laura giggled, and Dan wasted no time in climbing up to join his uncle on the sofa.

“Look at all my candy, Uncle Myc!”

“That’s nice,” Mycroft muttered, without even opening his eyes.

Dan beamed anyway, and Laura quickly swooped in to save Mycroft.

“Maybe we should let these two sleep,” she suggested.

Suddenly one of Mycroft’s eyes shot open, in a very shark-like way, like he was hunting them down.

“Gregory has forbid me to go into the kitchen,” Mycroft announced. “What did you do to it?”

Their sister tried to slip behind Sherlock, who promptly stepped aside, leaving her exposed.
“Why don’t you come find out?” Laura challenged, her eyes twinkling.

Even Victor was grinning as Greg helped Mycroft stand up and led him into the kitchen, his hands covering his partner’s eyes. Before they revealed anything to Mycroft, John sat the containers of treats from Mrs Hudson onto the counter, and Laura got her cake out of the fridge. Carefully, she lit the candles that read ‘43’, and she nodded to Greg to let go of Mycroft.

“Happy birthday, love,” Greg murmured into Mycroft’s ear before he cleared his throat and admitted: “I tried to tell them not to.”

Mycroft simply gaped at the sight of his kitchen decorated like a cross between a child’s birthday party and a haunted house.

“My kitchen,” Mycroft sighed longingly. “What did you do to it?”

“Can’t you just ever have fun and celebrate something?” Laura demanded.

Sherlock snorted as his brother threw a glare his way.

“Sherlock, when was the last time I celebrated my birthday?” Mycroft asked.

With a shrug, Sherlock gave the question an honest moment of thought. Truth be told, the last memory of a birthday of Mycroft’s was his eighteenth birthday - one month before their mother died. Their mother was very ill by that point, but even in her weakened state she still insisted Mycroft celebrate turning eighteen. As hard as it was, Mycroft did it for her. Sherlock had a specific memory of his eleven year old self creeping by Mycroft’s bedroom and hearing him cry. It was the only time in his entire life he had ever heard Mycroft cry.

After that, his brother took on more of a parental role in his life, which seemed to include cutting out all emotions whatsoever. It became obvious that Mycroft was determined not to let his baby brother see how much his mother’s death upset him. It was really no wonder why he stopped celebrating his own birthday after that.

“It’s a bit of a sore subject,” Sherlock finally said.

But the dampened mood didn’t stop Dan from throwing his arms around Mycroft’s legs in a sort of awkward hug. Bending down, Mycroft scooped his nephew up in his arms and studied his pale, innocent, face.

“Did you help decorate?” Mycroft asked.

“I picked out the skel-ton!” Dan announced proudly.

A grin spread across Mycroft’s face.

“Well then, aren’t you all supposed to sing or something?” Mycroft shot playfully.

It was possibly one of the most human things Sherlock had ever seen his brother do, and even he had to smile as he joined everyone in a round of “Happy Birthday”. He managed to find Victor’s eyes once again, and he realised he was happy that his friend seemed to be having a good time. Victor might have lost everything that day, but within hours of being back in Sherlock’s life he seemed to be finding his way again. And that was something Sherlock was an expert at, wasn’t it? Finding his way again?
When they finished, Mycroft picked up Dan in his arms and let their nephew blow out the candles. Dan clapped when the candles were blown out, and Jason took him from Mycroft’s arms so the government official himself could begin cutting the case.

“I suppose it doesn’t hurt to celebrate my birthday once in a while,” Mycroft admitted.

He stole a kiss to Greg’s cheek and the DCI blushed.

“Mommy, can I have some cake, pleasssee???!!!!!” Dan begged, as though he knew how late it was and how unwilling his parents would be to give him cake at this hour.

Laura and Jason exchanged uncertain glances before Mycroft finally stuffed a small slice of cake in front of the kid’s face.

“Let him live a little,” Mycroft offered. Dan let out a squeal of excitement as he dove his fork into the vanilla goodness of the birthday cake. “After all, he has no school tomorrow.”

“Yes, and he will get no sleep tonight,” Laura sighed.

“Then he’ll just have to stay up and tell ghost stories with us,” John offered as he pulled Dan into his lap.

Sherlock grinned as his boyfriend and his nephew both dug into their own slices of cake. It did make for some nice relief, seeing everyone in such a good mood. Everyone seemed so at ease and content. At that moment, John didn’t seem worried about a thing in the world- which was all that mattered to him.

When Mycroft turned to Sherlock and offered him a piece of cake, he couldn’t help but to offer his brother a smile and announce:

“Happy birthday, Mycroft.”

He couldn’t remember the last time he had genuinely wished his brother a happy birthday- let alone shared birthday cake with him- but his brother seemed so touched that he turned away from him quickly in attempts to hide how overwhelmed he was.

“Sorry you guys had such bad days,” Jason offered as he accepted his own piece of cake.

“Bloody teenagers,” Greg mumbled, stabbing his cake with his fork. “They set up a fake murder scene. A fake murder scene! And they phoned the police about it. How sick can you be? Then they started shouting matches when they were arrested for reporting a false crime.”

“Christ, where are these people’s parents?!!?” John replied, disgusted.

“I think the real question is, how long did it take you to realise the crime scene was fake?” Sherlock teased.

The DCI glared as he shot:

“Not that long.”

It had been a long time since Sherlock had seen his childhood home be filled with so match laughter. Mycroft even broke out some Champagne, which was much appreciated after enduring all the costumes and trick-or-treating.

“Cheers,” Sherlock said as Mycroft offered him a glass.
“No offence, mate,” John said to Mycroft after his second glass a mere thirty minutes later, “but it’s hard to believe you’re just two years older than me. It makes me feel old.”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide; somehow, he had never thought of it that way before. His and Mycroft’s age difference had always made his brother seem so old, but realising that his boyfriend was only a couple of years younger made him feel, well, a bit older himself.

“Oh come on, Sherlock!” John said, laughing at the look on his face. “Please don’t tell me that makes you feel insecure.”

“It doesn’t!” Sherlock lied.

“Dating an older man can be intimidating,” John said with a wicked grin.

The consulting detective just scowled at his partner, and he was grateful when Mycroft tapped his glass, indicating a toast.

“It’s been a long, stressful, frustrating—”

“Horrible,” Greg muttered.

“Day,” Mycroft finished, “and I couldn’t be more grateful to spend my birthday with my family. Sherlock knows that prior to this year we were never ones for holidays. We let holidays and our birthdays pass like they didn’t mean anything and it wasn’t until recently that I learned they did, in fact, mean something. I’ve always been grateful for you, Sherlock, and now I am grateful for this extended family, this new family who has helped me see that life is too short to spend it alone, in the dark.”

He raised his glass, and Greg commented:

“That’s awfully human of you, love.”

With a shrug, Mycroft took a sip of his champagne and admitted:

“I may have had a glass or two of wine at the office before I left.”

“Ah,” Greg laughed before he stole a kiss from his partner.

That night Sherlock was incapable of sleeping. Beside him John slept like a log, snoring quietly thanks to his pain medication. Sherlock planted a kiss to his lover’s forehead before he slipped out of bed and grabbed his dressing gown. He thought a nice walk around the house might help him clear his mind, so he softly opened the door and tip-toed down the hall. He thought about going upstairs to his old bedroom for a dose of nostalgia, but he was intrigued when he looked down the long, narrow, hallway to notice a light on in the small library at the end of the corridor. It was a library Mycroft installed after he inherited the house; their mum had owned a decent collection of literature- both fiction and non- but his brother chose to fill it with countless political and historical works.

He snuck up to the door and listened quietly, hoping to hear some sign of whom might be in the room. He didn’t recognise the sound of either Mycroft or Greg’s breathing, so he took the chance and knocked on the door. To his surprise, it was Victor who opened it.

“Hey,” Victor greeted softly, as though he were embarrassed to be caught snooping around. “Sorry, I couldn’t sleep so I decided to explore. Your brother’s collection of modern political texts is quite fascinating.”
“Tell me about it,” Sherlock snorted.

Personally, politics bored him because he knew men like his brother always managed to either fix everything or make sure everything was in place to go their way. There wasn’t much rhyme or reason besides having the right amount of money and the right kinds of connections.

“You don’t have anything to drink, do you?” Victor asked as he snapped a book closed.

“Sure, I’ll get some water,” he offered.

With a laugh, Victor shook his head and replied:

“I meant something stronger than water.”

Sherlock felt stupid for not understanding. He remembered Mr Trevor was quite the drinker, and he didn’t mind his son joining him for a shot of whiskey or glass of scotch in the evenings.

“Yeah,” he offered, “yeah, I know just the thing.”

Quietly, he tip-toed through the hall and back toward the kitchen, stopping at the butler’s pantry that Mycroft used to store liquor. He bent down and entered in the code that unlocked the liquor cabinet. There was a bottle of scotch Sherlock knew Mycroft had kept stored in there for years but never wanted to drink. He would probably never even know it was gone. He grabbed two shot glasses before tip-toeing his way back to the library. The room was actually small and cozy; just big enough for two armchairs and a side table that fit the bottle of scotch perfectly.

“Just like old times, eh?” Victor asked as Sherlock poured him a glass. “Being here with you, surrounded by books.”

Sherlock snorted; little did Victor know he was actually a lot like he was when he was nineteen as far as his love for research went.

“Cheers,” Sherlock said as he raised a glass.

The buzz from the glass of champagne he had earlier was long gone, and he had to admit the warmth of the scotch was welcoming.

“Jesus that’s good,” Victor mumbled as he nursed his glass.

“Yeah, it’s fifty years old,” Sherlock said, glancing at the date on the bottle.

Victor choked on the scotch at the comment.

“Nothing like drinking something that’s older than you. Your brother’s not going to kill us for drinking this, is he?”

“Mycroft’s more of a whiskey drinker,” he explained. “Plus I can just buy him another bottle with his credit card.”

Laughing, Victor reached for the bottle to pour himself another shot.

“You still pull that stuff?” Victor asked. “Amazing.”

“What’s amazing is that Mycroft never catches on,” Sherlock said, raising his glass to allow Victor to refill it. “He’s too busy to notice.”

On the subject of money, Sherlock was tempted to ask if Victor had inherited all of his father’s fortune. He hadn’t even considered that Victor could be well, rich. But he didn’t have the heart, not after his friend had lost so many things that actually meant something to him in the fire.

“I’ve often wondered what Beddoes has spent his life doing,” Victor suddenly announced. “I wonder if he has some fancy job, some amazing house, maybe even a family in kids. I wonder if his kids know who he really is. I wonder how he sleeps at night. I wonder…I wonder if he knows about my father and if he even would care about what happened to him.”

Victor turned the glass in his hand and let the room fall silent. He just wasn’t sure what to say—until he realised that he had actually been through this before himself.

“I know what you mean,” Sherlock admitted quietly. “I felt the same about my father. I didn’t know him at all— he left when I was two. So I used to wonder if he still had money, or what he did for a living. I wondered where he lived and if he ever got married again. Now I know all of those answers, and even though I love my sister and don’t blame her for the divorce…it’s strange, thinking of my father abandoning my mother to have this second family.”

“She seems really lovely,” Victor commented. “I remember I was so grateful to have you as a friend because it was really boring being the only child.”

Sherlock replied with a smirk:

“Having Mycroft as a brother wasn’t exactly fun.”

“True.”

They clang their glasses together and both let out sighs. Sherlock sank a bit in the armchair; with the extra alcohol in his system his body was actually enticing him to sleep.

“Maybe we’re just wasting our time,” Victor muttered. “Maybe the police are right. Even if it was Beddoes, he could be out of the country by now. They might never track him down.”

As much as he hated to admit it, Victor had a point. Sherlock knew he would probably be able to tell rather or not it was likely that Beddoes started the fire within moments of looking at the crime scene, but if he had already taken a plane to the other side of the world the police would have very little to go off of if they tried to catch him. This was a criminal who had spent decades in hiding: he would know where to go if he didn’t want to be found.

“What if it is him, and what if we can never find him?” Victor asked quietly. “How am I going to live, knowing he’s out there?”

*The same way I lived knowing Kirchhoff was out there,* he thought.

“You can’t spend your entire life obsessing over it,” Sherlock replied. “You can’t spend your entire life planning revenge because if you ever actually get the chance to act on it…you might do something you regret. There will be no turning back.”

“But I can’t live for the rest of my life knowing someone who wants me hurt or dead is out there!” Victor hissed. “Christ, what have I gotten myself into?”

Running his hands through his hair, Victor jumped to his feet and reached for the bottle of scotch. His old friend swayed a bit on his feet, and Sherlock remembered he had already had a couple of
glasses of the champagne earlier. Victor wasn’t exactly a lightweight, but between the stress he was under and his obvious lack of sleep getting drunk didn’t seem to be something he should be doing right now. Sherlock could have kicked himself for not seeing this earlier.

“Maybe we should slow down,” Sherlock suggested as he jumped up and gently tugged the bottle away from Victor.

He received long, heartbroken, stare from his friend, but at last Victor nodded and let him put the scotch aside.

“Sherlock,” Victor suddenly breathed. Sherlock turned back to him and was surprised that Victor’s eyes were watery and he was breathing hard, like he was on the verge of a breakdown.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock whispered as he placed a comforting hand on Victor’s arms. “It’s okay.”

He found himself pulling Victor into an embrace. Victor’s body went limp in his arms, and Sherlock had to fight to hold him up so he wouldn’t collapse. The sobs came one after another; an endless cry that surely would echo back down the hall.

But he knew Victor needed it.

He knew Victor probably didn’t get many opportunities to break down like this.

Instead of whispering empty words of hope like ‘everything will be alright’, he just held Victor, knowing that really all his friend needed was for someone to be there for him. In fact, that could have been the real reason Victor came to London. Maybe this wasn’t so much as about solving the case as it was about not being alone.

Suddenly Victor released himself from Sherlock’s grip and stepped back. He ran his hands over his face and forced a half-smile. He looked every bit the spitting image of his nineteen year old self there, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk, thinking of how much he would have loved to have been able to hold Victor like that back when he was a kid.

Then out of nowhere, Victor made a move.

He stepped forward so suddenly, so quickly, that Sherlock never saw it coming. A pair of soft, chapped, lips were on his, and Sherlock went completely stiff. Victor grabbed his arms, as though he thought it would be a romantic touch, but Sherlock’s body was going into overdrive. He froze; his body was so in shock that his lips didn’t even respond to the kiss. And how could they, when those weren’t John’s lips that were kissing him? He felt sick inside. He felt like a monster. His face went sickly pale, his body broke out into a cold sweat, but within moments he was able to regain the strength to push away.

Breathing hard, Sherlock stared wild-eyed at his friend, wondering what had just happened. Even Victor looked terrified, like he had immediately realised he had made a mistake.

“Oh my god,” Victor whispered. “I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry; I don’t know what I was thinking. I’m so sorry.”

Sherlock just didn’t know what to say. He didn’t know what to do. All he knew was that he never felt so disgusting in his life. Even if he hadn’t initiated the kiss, even if he hadn’t responded to it, he felt disgusting.

Instead of responding, Sherlock backed away slowly before breaking into a run and fleeing from the library.
Okay...everybody take nice, deep breaths! Don't panic! I repeat: do. not. panic! It will all be okay!

Stay tuned, because there's lots of fun stuff coming up! Besides the whole going to America bit! Which yes, John might not be at his strongest by then, but you know he wouldn't pass that chance up!

Up next: Greg helps Sherlock sort out Victor and John gets called on special assignment...by Mycroft! And Laura goes house hunting.

Happy Thanksgiving to those who celebrate! For my fellow Americans, I hope you are with your family and friends today and not out shopping :) (sorry, I worked in retail for a long time and spend most of the holidays ranting about corporate greed lol).

I'm so thankful for everyone who has read this story, for the ones who have been with me for ages and for the ones who stay up all night to read all the chapters! Thank you for the kudos, the subscriptions, the comments. I'm so thrilled that people are still reading this and still enjoying this! I'm almost afraid to know what you think about this chapter- but hey, there was trick-or-treating!
Sherlock never did get to sleep; he simply lay in bed, replaying the kiss until his mind felt numb. He stared at John all night, forcing himself to face his lover—punishing himself by watching this beautiful man that he had the right to call his sleep peacefully. He counted down the minutes until John would wake up and he had to face the music. There was no if to it: he knew he had to tell John what happened. It was only fair, it was only right. If he had any hope of still maintaining John’s trust he couldn’t lie to him.

And yet, as soon as the sun began peeping through the curtains he bolted out of bed and fled the room.

He couldn’t take picturing John’s hurt, betrayed, face. He needed air, he needed clarity. He needed to sort things out with Victor before everything got too out of hand. His mind was still a bit of a blur from the drinking and his lack of sleep, and he found himself standing in the middle of the hall trying to remember which room Victor was in. Drawing in a deep breath, he pattered down the corridor and was just about to scurry through the living room when Greg interrupted him.

“Looking for Victor?” The DCI asked.

The consulting detective stopped dead in his tracks; a deer in the headlights.

He wasn’t sure how to answer, but he didn’t get a chance to figure it out as Greg leaned over and picked a sheet of paper off the table.

“He left,” Greg explained. Sherlock’s heart began to pound. How could Victor run from this? How could he just...kiss him and then escape? And what about the case? The fire? Beddoes? Where did Victor even have left to go? “He left you this.”

As he handed Sherlock the envelope, Greg sat back in his armchair with his arms crossed, looking every bit the part of a concerned father. Swallowing nervously, Sherlock unfolded the paper and found the familiar sight of Victor’s handwriting:

*I'm sorry. I should have told you how I felt long ago. You have a life now, and I’m not a part of it. You don’t deserve to have me ruin what you have. You’re as beautiful and brilliant as always. Never change. You were kind to offer to help me, but I can figure this out on my own. You’re very lucky, Sherlock. Luckier than you know.*

And that was all.

No signature, no hint of where he had gone.

But where else would Victor have to go...but home?

“I need your car,” Sherlock announced to Greg.

Greg’s eyes went wide as his arms tightened around his jumper.

“Come again?”
“Your keys,” Sherlock demanded, stretching his hand out to him.

His friend seemed even more like a father at that moment, as he stood up, only inches from Sherlock’s face.

“Whatever is going on, you’re not facing it alone,” Greg replied, his voice cool and steady.

Their eyes met, angry and frustrated. They had fought far too many times to have the energy to go down that road again.

“Fine,” Sherlock mumbled.

And that was how he found himself slumped in the passenger seat of Greg’s sedan, his head rested against the window as he watched the scenery.

“So you used to fancy Victor, then?” Greg asked suddenly.

Sherlock shook himself away from his thoughts and sat up; he had nearly forgotten Greg was even there.

“Sherlock, it’s obvious,” Greg grinned. “You look at him all funny, you’ve been studying his hair and staring into his eyes-”

“I do not stare into his eyes!” Sherlock protested.

“If you’re worried about John feeling jealous, you don’t have to be,” the DCI offered. “This happens all the time when people run into people they used to have feelings for. Look, Mycroft once took me to this fancy party to help him spy on someone and I ended up running into this old girlfriend from uni. Who would have thought-”

“Greg?” Sherlock asked.

“Yeah?”

“Not helping.”

“Sorry.”

They rode in silence once again and Sherlock let his eyes drift to a close. It wasn’t that his body wasn’t worn down from not sleeping, it was his mind. He just wanted quiet. He just wanted everything to be back to normal.

But Greg’s story made him think– he had absolutely no experience when it came to all these relationship issues. Maybe Greg had the right intentions by offering to make him feel better. Perhaps his mate could actually offer him some advice.

“He kissed me,” Sherlock finally admitted.

Greg choked and accidentally jerked the steering wheel in shock so hard the car swerved. Sherlock’s head banged against the window and he groaned, regretting his decision already.

“What?!” Greg demanded, pulling over.

“Why did you stop?” Sherlock exclaimed.

“Because you can’t just confess something like that without warning!”
“I’m sorry I said anything.”

“No.” The car shut off. Greg leaned back in his seat and drew in a deep breath. “No, sorry, I just wasn’t expecting that. Christ, I’m gonna punch that bloke in the face whenever we find him—wait…you didn’t…kiss him back, did you?”

Sherlock slammed his foot against the dash just to piss Greg off.

“Of course I didn’t kiss him back!” Sherlock hissed. “I completely froze. I love John, and Victor knows that. I feel so…”

“Violated?”

Yes, he wanted to say, but he couldn’t bring himself to admit to feeling something like that. A comforting hand landed on his shoulder, and Sherlock’s lips turned up in the smallest of smiles to show his gratitude.

“He shouldn’t have done that,” Greg said. “It’s hard enough, being faced with old friends as close as you and Victor are without one of them acting like that. It was immature and selfish.”

Secretly he agreed, but he was beginning to doubt trying to talk about relationships with Greg. What if he told Mycroft what happened? Or blurted it out to John? Maybe he should just keep things to himself.

“You have every right to be upset,” Greg continued quietly, “but I know what you’re doing— you’re hiding, and you can’t do that. You have to tell John.”

Eyes widening, Sherlock’s head whipped around toward his friend.

“I will!” Sherlock cried. “Do you really think I’d keep this from him? I’m telling him, I just have to—”

“Run after the long lost mate who snogged you first?”

Letting out a sharp breath, Sherlock resisted the urge to slap Greg in the face.

“That’s not fair,” Sherlock mumbled. “Victor could be in trouble.”

Greg closed his eyes and tightened his hands around the steering wheel.

“You’re right,” sighed Greg. “You’re right, Sherlock, I’m sorry.”

He started the car again, and they continued onto Norfolk in silence. Victor’s father lived a bit outside of the town, and Sherlock’s heart began pounding as they turned down a familiar road. But what used to be the magnificent Trevor estate was now an acre of rubble surrounded by crime scene tape. Greg stopped the car in the middle of what used to by the driveway. Silently, they got out of the car and admired the burned down house Victor grew up in. Most of the foundation and construction was destroyed. Some of the back of the house was left intact— Sherlock recognised the framework of what used to be Mr Trevor’s study and library.


“Poor Victor” didn’t even begin to cover it. The property still smelled of smoke. There were dozens of charred remains of personal items scattered about the rubble— clothes, books, furniture.

“Sherlock, be careful!” Greg warned as he ducked under the crime scene tape.
Greg sounded far away, almost like he wasn’t even there. Closing his eyes, Sherlock remembered running around the garden as Victor attempted to teach him to play football. He was so clumsy that he tripped over his own feet and fell flat on his face. He could still hear Victor’s laughter…

“Looks like the fire started in the kitchen,” Greg said, suddenly appearing beside him. “Actually…it almost looks like-

“Someone tried to make it look like an accident,” Sherlock whispered.

Carefully, he stepped toward a collection of collapsed kitchen counters. The kitchen was heavily damaged, even more so than the rest of the house. In fact some of it looked like it had been damaged before the fire…there was broken glass on the ground that looked as though it might have been thrown, not like it had burst from the heat of the fire.

And then he saw it.

He wouldn't have noticed it if he hadn't have been examining a particular spot beneath the fallen cabinets. There was a pile of burnt kitchen table legs there as well- but Sherlock knew Victor's table was in the dining room, not kitchen. The legs had been moved there to cover something.

“Oh god,” Greg breathed. He appeared beside Sherlock, his eyes following his consultant's down to ground. “Christ.”

Buried beneath the rubble of the destroyed kitchen was a human body, almost burnt beyond recognition.

“Victor said no one else was home,” Greg said.

Yes, he did.

Before Sherlock could say anything something snapped behind him. He turned toward the noise, but the intruder was too quick. A hand came down over Greg just as Sherlock shouted out to warn him, and the butt of a rifle hit the DCI so hard he felt to the ground, unconscious.

It wasn’t the sight of his friend lying injured on the ground that scared him the most, nor was it the sight of Victor holding his father’s old hunting rifle.

It was seeing a gun again, up close. It wasn’t even pointed at him, but he stopped breathing at the sight of it. He stopped thinking. He completely froze up, and the only thing he could see in his mind was the image of John lying on the ground, bleeding.

He couldn’t function.

“It wasn’t supposed to be like this,” Victor announced, his voice shaking. His face was pale and his eyes weren’t his- they were wild, possessed. “You were supposed to come up here and help me solve this, alone.”

Sherlock found himself glancing down to the dead body, but he didn’t feel in control of his own motions.

“It’s him,” Victor said, nodding toward the body. “It’s him. I was telling the truth, Sherlock, I told you the truth. It’s just…I was at home, alright? Right here, in the kitchen. I heard him break in so I went to grab my father’s old gun…he really did come here to kill me. Beddoes did. I knew he was there to kill me. He’s been on the run all this time, and he came to me to demand money. He wanted everything I had, and if I didn’t give it to him…he had a gun, and I knew I had to act first
so I shot. I hit him in the head. You were supposed to come up here and help me…cover it up.”

At the confession, Sherlock was somehow able to snap out of it.

“Cover it up?” Sherlock repeated, putting emphasis on each word as he tried to breathe easy again. “It sounds like self-defence, why didn’t you just tell the police?”

Victor let out a hollow laugh that wasn’t his. A shiver went down Sherlock’s spine, and it hit him for the first time: what was going to happen now? Both he and Greg had both seen the body. Victor attacked a copper. He probably lied to the police when he talked to them about the fire. It might have started out as self-defence, but it had now spiraled out of control. If Victor wanted to use self-defence for his story he wasn’t setting himself up for it very well.

“Talk to the police?” Victor snapped. “When has talking to the police ever done anything?! They didn’t fucking believe us before so why would they now? I fucking shot someone! Jesus!”

“It’s okay,” Sherlock breathed, slowly raising his hands. “Just…put the gun down. I know what you’re going through.”

“No you don’t,” Victor said, violently shaking your head. “No you don’t because you left me! You just…left and went on and lived this fantastic life. You have this great relationship and this amazing family and-“

“Fantastic?” Sherlock laughed. “Fantastic? Victor, I became a drug addict and dropped out of uni. I lost my flat. I lived on the streets until this man saved me.”

He pointed down to Greg’s unconscious body. Victor’s eyes went wide, and Sherlock hoped he’d finally gotten through to him.

“You did drugs?” Victor asked. Sherlock nodded, feeling sick inside. “How could you be that stupid?”

Shrugging, Sherlock was grateful to hear Victor sound at least a little like himself again.

“I was completely lost,” Sherlock admitted. “I was vulnerable. I didn’t let anyone help me, not until I met Greg and he showed me how I could be useful to the world again.”

His old friend bit his lip and glanced down at the DCI.

“I’ll listen to you, Victor,” Sherlock said, “and I can talk to Greg. He’s a great guy. If anyone will believe you, he will.”

“I hurt him,” Victor replied quietly.

“Yeah,” he sighed. “That doesn’t help. But he’ll listen to me. Just put the gun down and let me help you.”

Victor glanced between him and Greg one more time before he finally put down the gun. Wrapping his arms around himself, Victor threw a longing glance around his former childhood home before he walked away and sat against a nearby tree. Sherlock checked to make sure Greg’s breathing was okay before he went to join him.

“I feel like I’m not myself,” Victor whispered as Sherlock sat down. “Ever since it happened I can’t sleep. I hadn’t shot a gun since Dad took me out hunting with him, and I shot someone in the head the first try. He bled so much…he died so quickly. I panicked. I didn’t know what to do, who
to call. All I knew was there was a dead body in my house with a bullet inside him that came from my gun. There was no way I could prove it was self-defence. I knew I had to get out of there, and the only person I could think of that might be able to help me was you. I thought maybe if I burned the place down it would cover up the murder. Then you could have helped me pin the fire Beddoes. But I guess the fire wasn’t as effective as I hoped. Well...there you have it: I’m a murderer.”

His stomach did flips. If Victor was telling the truth he was clearly innocent, but he could see if his old friend’s point. As much as he loved Greg, he knew not all policemen were nearly as understanding. And not all courts were.

“It was self-defence,” Sherlock said, placing a hand on Victor’s shoulder. “I’ve been there before, I…it’s a long story, but I’ve been there before.”

Nearby, the DCI let out a soft groan, and Sherlock and Victor looked at each other, knowing they had to act fast.

“No jury is going to believe me, no matter how nice you DCI friend is,” Victor said.

Sherlock thought quickly, but he had known from the beginning there was really only one way for Victor to get out of this.

“Hit me in the face,” Sherlock announced as he stood to his feet.

“What?”

“You heard me,” Sherlock smirked, reminding himself of the time he had asked John to do the same. “Punch me in the face and then run. Run away, run away from England. Become someone new. Start a new life, like your dad did. Just hit me, and Greg will think you attacked us and ran.”

“You sure?” Victor asked.

Sherlock nodded and their eyes met. He couldn’t remember ever having a single fight with Victor, but he could remember one summer’s nice they spent, lying in this very spot as they stared up at the stars. Victor had taught him all about the constellations and all this fancy space terminology.

After that summer Sherlock forced himself to delete it all.

“Do it,” Sherlock whispered.

With one quick move Victor’s fist flew across his face, hitting him hard enough to go flying backward. His head hit the ground, and Sherlock’s eyes fell to a close. He only pretended he was out cold, but his head was really spinning when Greg rushed to revive him a few moments later.

He told Greg that after Victor attacked him they had a scuffle. Victor got away.

And Greg didn’t question him about it anymore the entire car ride back.

He wasn’t sure if it was because Greg thought he might not be ready to talk about it- or if it was because Greg knew he was lying, but Sherlock decided to not argue with the silence.

As soon as they stepped foot in the door of Greg and Mycroft’s home they were greeted by a crowd of Laura, Mycroft, John, and Jason.

“Oh thank god!” Laura sobbed, grabbing Sherlock and pulling him into a hug.
“I’m fine,” Sherlock murmured into her shoulder as she squeezed him.

“Gregory,” Mycroft said simply, his eyes drenched with concern.

Greg only nodded, acknowledging that all things considered, he was alright too.

And there was John, in his wheelchair, hidden toward the back of the group. He and Sherlock just stared at each other for a moment. The sickness the consulting detective had been feeling inside ever since the kiss got worse. He decided he was a coward; he just wasn’t ready to tell John yet.

Instead, he turned to his brother.

“Mycroft, can we talk?” He asked quietly.

His brother offered him a stiff nod and led Sherlock through the house and into his office. Once inside, Mycroft locked the door before turning to his younger brother, waiting for him to explain himself. Sherlock wanted to turn away, wanted to hide, but he knew if he wanted Mycroft to take him seriously he had to look him in the eye.

Taking in a deep breath, Sherlock met his brother’s eyes and announced:

“I need you to help someone disappear.”

Chapter End Notes

Again...it will be okay! I promise! Do you really think I’d be mean enough to hurt Johnlock at Christmas? They are about to go to America after all ;)

So...what did you think of the resolution of Victor's story?

More John, coming up next!

Thanks so much for reading for and for all the lovely feedback!!
John tried not to feel angry that the moment Sherlock returned home from his mysterious trip away he wanted to talk to his brother instead of...oh, say, hugging him, kissing him, explaining why he disappeared? Explaining his black eye? Why couldn’t he have at least said hello?

Trying to not show how disappointed he was, John went back into their bedroom to start getting ready for bed. Tomorrow he started physical therapy, and he knew that was what he should be focused on. He needed to mentally prepare himself...he needed to not freak out.

Because that’s what he had been doing all day, freaking out.

When the door to the bedroom opened and Sherlock slipped inside, John bit his lip to keep himself from lashing out.

“Sorry,” Sherlock muttered, “needed Mycroft’s help with something.”

“Yeah, it’s fine.”

Truth be told, he was most concerned that Sherlock didn’t seem to want to tell him what happened.

“Are you okay?” John asked, motioning to his eye.

His lover simply nodded.

For a moment they just stood there, unsure of what to do. Then at last Sherlock shuffled over to him, took his hands, and pulled him into a deep kiss. Their lips brushed together a few times before John pulled away.

“What was that for?” John asked.

Smiling, Sherlock replied:

“I love you.”

John nodded, understanding at that moment that something bad must have happened. It had to be something big for Sherlock to be so distraught, so distant. It hadn’t gone without notice that Victor had disappeared that day, but no one seemed to know what to say about it. They got a text from Greg that he and Sherlock were going after him, but they hadn’t heard anything else until the two of them returned.

“Are you okay?” John asked again, and this time he didn’t just mean physically.

Sherlock just kissed him again and whispered into his ear:

“Come with me.”

He was led into their bathroom, where Sherlock began running the water and pouring in bubble bath. He helped John undress before taking off his own clothes. When he took his mobile out of his pocket, Sherlock pulled up his music app and cued up a classical album. John didn’t have a clue what artist it was, but he knew it was one of Sherlock’s favourites because he had heard him listen
to it dozens of times. His boyfriend turned the music all the way up as though he wanted to make sure no one would be able to hear him. He helped John into the bath, and together they sank down into the warm bubbles.

Before he could say anything, a pair of lips began attacking John’s neck, planting a line of kisses down to his collarbone. For a moment John gave in and let out a soft moan, relishing the warmth of feeling Sherlock so close.

“I miss you,” John murmured as Sherlock sucked at a particular spot on his neck that always made him moan. “Oh!”

“Mmm,” Sherlock replied, raising a hand to John’s chest. “I’m so sorry.”

“I’m just glad you’re okay.” His voice was so broken that his words were barely audible. “Sherlock.”

But just as soon as things were beginning to get heated, Sherlock pulled away abruptly. He glanced down, licked his lips, and looked back to John with eyes…with eyes that weren’t quite his. They were eyes full of guilt, and John’s stomach turned to knots.

“John, something happened last night,” Sherlock admitted quietly. He looked away again, swallowing nervously, before looking John straight in the eye. “Victor kissed me.”

The world stopped.

He had been in this situation before with lovers…he’d been cheated on, used, lied to. But those women were never too important to him. He never really had feelings for them. But Sherlock…he had poured his heart, soul, and mind into this relationship. He never would have pictured Sherlock as the type to…to…he couldn’t even think it.

Because it was just too unlike him.

Maybe Victor kissed him, maybe something even- dare he think it- happened between them, but Sherlock obviously loved him. He obviously felt horrible about it. Sherlock actually looked a bit ill.

“I didn’t kiss him back,” Sherlock whispered. “I’m so sorry, John. I wish he hadn’t, I wish I had seen it coming, but just happened out of nowhere.”

John raised his hand to Sherlock’s face and ran his finger across his lips. Of course Sherlock would blame himself if someone else violated him like that. Of course Sherlock would never cheat on him- it was Sherlock, for crying out loud! John actually felt worse for his lover than himself because he knew how hard it must be for Sherlock to accept that this wasn’t his fault.

“It’s not your fault,” John announced. “He shouldn’t have done that. He violated you, and it’s not right.”

His partner offered him a small, grateful, smile and buried his head in his shoulder. He stroked those black curls and listened to Sherlock gently breathe against his skin.

“I wish you’d tell me what happened,” John murmured, “but if you can’t, I understand.”

Sherlock simply ‘hummed’, and John took that to mean there was something top secret going on that he really couldn’t tell him.
“We don’t have to worry about Victor anymore,” Sherlock sighed. “I’m so sorry.”

Kissing the top of his head, John replied:

“I’m just sorry that I couldn’t punch him in the face myself.”

He chuckled, but Sherlock just wrapped his arms around him and pulled him close.

“I love you,” Sherlock murmured as he sucked on his neck. “I love you.”

He sucked on another spot, then another…and then John’s body became warm, and not because of the bath they sat in.

“Sherlock,” he moaned, raising his hand to his lover’s flushed chest.

Their eyes met, and they knew: they both wanted this. They both needed it.

But most importantly, they both wanted it. They wanted it so badly that their pulses quickened in unison, and their quick gasps for air echoed across the room as their lips attacked each other’s. Hands falling on Sherlock’s shoulders, he held onto him tightly as his body was pushed against the tub.

“You’re mine,” John breathed, and Sherlock nodded before replying:

“I’m yours.”

Running his hands through Sherlock’s hand, John giggled.

“Your hair is filthy. Can I wash it?”

“Only if I can do this while you’re doing it.”

Sherlock continued his line of kisses down John’s neck and shoulder as he reached for the shampoo and poured some into his palm. His lover moaned softly as John began massaging his scalp and lathering his curls. John paused long enough to run a finger across the bruise under his boyfriend’s eye, and Sherlock winced at the touch. His partner looked guilty afterward, like he hadn’t meant to show any pain.

“How does it hurt?” John asked softly.

“It’s not too bad.”

“Maybe I should be taking a look at Greg,” he wondered out loud, “he looked pretty beat up.”

“Mycroft will take care of it.”

Ignoring his concern, Sherlock simply cupped his face and kissed him again. John’s hands ran through his hair, digging into his curls and, carefully making sure Sherlock was thoroughly washed. Knowing Sherlock, he wouldn’t bother washing his hair again for a week or two. He breathed in the minty scents of the shampoo and smiled at the thought of knowing Sherlock would smell like that while they-

Long, pale, fingers dipped underwater and wrapped around his cock. Groaning, John’s head fell onto Sherlock’s shoulder for a moment.

“Keep going,” Sherlock whispered.
John forced himself to reach up and continue massaging Sherlock’s hair just as those hands, those hands he loved so much, ran up and down his shaft.

“You keep going too.”

Fingertips dug into his back as John reached down to cup water in his hands. He began rinsing Sherlock’s hair. His boyfriend shuddered, and John reached down for more water. Sherlock turned from him, wincing as the water trickled down the bruise. John planted a gently kiss to the injury and finished rinsing his hair.

“Want to help me to bed?”

It was a bit of a struggle, but with a towel draped around his waist and Sherlock’s arms holding him up he managed to get himself to bed. He lay with the towel underneath him to get the sheets dry as a naked Sherlock stood before him, drying himself off.

“My hair smells good,” Sherlock commented.

With a smirk, John shot:

“Your hair would smell like that all the time if you washed you hair every once in a while.”

Sherlock snickered before he got into bed and climbed up John’s body. He shuddered at the feeling of his boyfriend over him; his leg twitched but he forced himself to deal with it.

“Is this okay?” Sherlock asked quietly.

John nodded.

He could do this. Sherlock knew he had his limitations; Sherlock wasn’t going to hurt him. He just had to be honest with him, when it got too much. He could trust Sherlock—there was no need to be nervous.

“I hate to ask, but can we not-”

“Whatever you’re comfortable with.”

“I’m sorry.”

“John, please…don’t be sorry.”

As Sherlock climbed up his body he awkwardly crutched over him, careful not to lean against his legs.

Then John had an idea about how to make this work.

“Here,” he said, grabbing ahold of Sherlock’s arm. He motioned for Sherlock to swing one leg over his good leg and rest his other leg between John’s thighs. That way he could get into appropriate positions without putting any pressure on his bad leg. “How about this?”

He brought Sherlock’s hand down to his arsehole. Sherlock drew in a quick breath before reaching over to the bedside table where they had stashed some lube.

“Let me know if-“

“I will.”
John stayed quiet, forcing himself to relax and just breathe as Sherlock worked in the first finger. It had been awhile since they’d done this- or at least it felt like it had been awhile. It almost felt... new again. And normally in a relationship, he enjoyed everything feeling new again.

But this time everything felt new because he was, well, disabled.

*Everything’s not new, he decided, it’s different.*

And that’s why he felt nervous: different wasn’t always good.

“Breathe, John,” Sherlock whispered as he placed a kiss on his lips, then across his jaw.

Right. Breathing was good.

He gasped at the pressure as the finger slipped inside him. Sherlock paused for a moment before pushing the finger further; he grabbed onto his lover’s shoulders and closed his eyes. He had prepared himself for the sharp pain that came with the pressure, but it hadn’t been enough. He wasn’t sure what was wrong with him: why was this so hard?

“John,” Sherlock called to him. His eyes flashed open to meet Sherlock’s. His partner gazed down at him, begging him to trust him, and at the sight John finally relaxed. The slide of the finger in and out of him made him shiver, but at least the pressure was finally subsiding. “How does that feel?”

It was nice, seeing Sherlock being so careful and courteous. While deep down he’d like to have it fast, hard, again, slow and romantic was good too.

“Pressure at first, like always,” John admitted, “but that... that’s good.”

Then Sherlock hit it, that spot: the spot that drove him wild.

He hissed, and added:

“That’s really good.”

“Good,” Sherlock breathed before kissing him a few more times. Then his tongue jumped to his earlobe, and he whispered into his ear: “Because I’m going to make you come like this.”

Shuddering, John simply threw his head back against the pillow and hissed as Sherlock slipped a second finger into him.

“Good,” John whispered, his fingernails digging into Sherlock’s shoulder blades. “God, Sherlock.”

Sherlock sped up his pace; his precision was driving him wild. With each thrust of his fingers he hit his prostate- sometimes forcefully, sometimes with soft brushes. Gently, he began thrusting his hips up to meet him. He didn’t move so dramatically that it hurt him, but instead in quick little movements so that their bodies bounced together. Sherlock’s cock rested between his thighs, hard and ready, but he didn’t seem ready to let John out from under him. He was going to finish him off, just like this.

Somewhere in the distance the music swelled on Sherlock’s mobile- John had forgotten it was even playing, but it fit the mood perfectly.

“Mmm,” John moaned as Sherlock’s pace sped up and then slowed down. Then he slipped out of him entirely, and a throaty groan escaped him. “More.”

“More?” Sherlock teased. He waved three fingers in the air. Pre-cum leaked steadily from John’s
cock, and he wasn’t sure how much longer he could hold on. John nodded, desperate for Sherlock to get him off before he came, completely untouched.

Because he would not give Sherlock that kind of satisfaction.

His body tensed up as Sherlock slipped three fingers inside of him. He could feel arousal building first in his stomach, and then as Sherlock brushed his prostate again and again he grabbed for his cock. The feeling dropped below his stomach and gathered in his cock, which became more and more tense until…

“Oh god,” he groaned.

He came.

A satisfied smile crossed Sherlock’s face as he leaned down to give him a long, slow, kiss. Sparks flew between them, and John felt happier and more relaxed than he had in days.

“Now you,” John whispered with a smile. “Come here.”

Sherlock swallowed nervously as he scooted up so that John could take his cock in hand. He rubbed it first, giving his shaft some much-needed attention before he lowered the head to his lips. He sucked softly first, enjoying the salty taste as the head slipped in and out of his mouth. His boyfriend’s eyes drifted close as he let out a soft moan, and John took more of his cock in.

“Christ,” Sherlock whispered as John fingered his balls and sucked him down at the same time. “Yeah…like that.”

Letting out a shaky sigh, Sherlock tensed as his cock slipped in and out of John’s lips. His eyes drifted up to Sherlock’s, dreamy and intrigued as he watched his lover fall apart.

“Yes,” Sherlock breathed. “John.”

Suddenly Sherlock tensed, and John knew. He was prepared when the cum hit the back of his throat; he swallowed it down and the room went silent, save for the music playing in the backroom. As he came down from his orgasm Sherlock groaned. He fell into bed next to John and their lips found each other’s again.

“Thank you for that,” John murmured in between kisses. "That felt amazing."

His partner pulled away and held his face as he whispered:

“I love you.”

John nodded, understanding that Sherlock still felt guilty about what happened.

“You’re amazing,” John whispered. “And you’re mine.”

Sherlock’s finger traced his lips for a moment before he kissed him again. When they broke apart Sherlock smiled and told him, quietly:

“I got us a hotel, in New York. For our trip.”

John frowned, confused.

“Aren’t we staying with Laura?” He asked.
A wicked grin crossed Sherlock’s face, and John shuddered at the feeling of the warmth of his boyfriend’s breath against his face as he explained himself.

“I figured during our stay there we’d need a break. It’s a place in Manhattan—"

“Jesus, Sherlock, we don’t have that kind of money!”

Sure, they’d have a few great cases this year, but that money wasn’t going to last forever. Secretly, he’d been worried from the start how they were going to be able to afford this nice New York trip, but Sherlock seemed to have it under control so he didn’t argue.

“We do,” Sherlock insisted. He kissed him again before telling him softly: “We deserve this. We’ve had one crazy year together, Dr John Watson. We deserve one night together in New York City.”

“They do say it’s the greatest city in the world,” John teased.

Sherlock glared at him.

“Who says that??!” He demanded.

With a laugh, John waved it off as Sherlock settled into bed next to him.

“It’s just a saying,” John sighed. He traced Sherlock’s chest with his hand and picture the two of them staying in some romantic hotel with a spectacular view of the city. “Me and you in New York City. Are you going to go to Central Park with me?”

His lover planted a kiss to his neck.

“I’ll go wherever you want.”

He wished he could have made a recording of that to play back to him when they were in New York and Sherlock was refusing to do anything.

“So you’re taking me up on a romantic night in Manhattan?” Sherlock said.

John traced Sherlock’s lips with his fingers before he offered him a long, soft, kiss. As he pulled away he smiled and replied:

“Sounds good to me.”

Chapter End Notes

See, everything is okay! Before we skip ahead to their holiday in New York Mycroft has a special assignment for John.

I'll be going out of town for the holidays. If I decide to take my laptop with me I'll try my best to update, but in case it takes longer than normal to update just know that I haven't abandoned you!

Thank you so much for reading and for all your wonderful comments! Each one of them makes me smile!
“That’s it, John!” Sherlock encouraged as John’s hands gripped the parallel bars so tightly his hands turned blood red.

He was almost done with his very first physical therapy session for his latest gunshot wound. Originally he had thought the first session would be pretty simple- he assumed his physical therapist would just give him some stretches and exercises to do. He expected it to be more of an assessment of how he was doing and an overview of what was to come. But after his initial assessment and a quick look at his latest medical records his therapist informed him that he could try taking a few steps today if he wanted. The thought of walking again was so appealing that he jumped at the opportunity, but as he stood up and held himself up using the parallel bars he began to regret his decision.

Just standing on his own was so painful he felt like he might pass out. Lifting his injured leg was damn near impossible, and his good leg quickly began to get sore because of being relied on as support.

But Sherlock was by his side the entire time, cheering him on and placing a comforting hand on his shoulder whenever he needed it. His partner actually took notes when the therapist gave him instructions on which exercises and stretches to do. When it came time for John to try to walk a few steps Sherlock’s face looked like that of a proud father watching his son walk for the first time. This obviously meant everything to his boyfriend, and so John wasn’t going to let him down. He was going to prove to him that he could do this, that he could get well again within the time frame his therapist and doctor thought he could. He wasn’t going to give into depression and frustration like last time. He had Sherlock this time, and only with Sherlock’s help would he be able to do this.

“You’re doing so well,” Sherlock said, beaming.

Suddenly John’s feet gave out from underneath him, and Sherlock had to reach out and catch him to keep him from falling.

“Christ!” He swore, closing his eyes tightly as pain rushed through his legs. It was though he was on fire from the waist down- and all his other bones felt impossibly heavy and tired. His body became weak once again, and he almost felt straight to the floor. His therapist and boyfriend caught him just in time, but instead of letting them help him stand John waved them away and lowered himself to the ground.

Bringing his hands to his head he let out a shaky sigh as he tried to not get too emotional. John buried his fist against his eyes like a child, and he trembled when he felt Sherlock sit down next to
him and place a hand on his back.

“You did really well,” his boyfriend said quietly.

John glared at him through red-rimmed eyes.

“I took two bloody steps!” He exclaimed. “Two bloody steps were all I managed! I thought I wasn’t going to have to be in this wheelchair for long but Christ, Sherlock: look at me. I’m a disaster. I’m tired, I ache all over, and I’m so fatigued that I barely feel like getting out of bed. I can’t walk, I can’t do anything by myself.”

Frowning, Sherlock stole a glance up this therapist before pointing out:

“Perhaps the fatigue and tiredness are side-effects of the medicines.”

He let out a long breath. He knew Sherlock was probably right, but there was so much going on with his body right now it seemed like there was no rhyme or reason to anything.

“I’m just so frustrated,” he muttered under his breath.

“Come here,” Sherlock whispered as he pulled him into a warm embrace.

As he sat there in Sherlock’s arms he let out another shaky sigh and closed his eyes tightly. He told himself when he opened his eyes again everything was going to be okay. He had to be strong; he had to feed off of Sherlock’s encouragement and have confidence in himself. He felt Sherlock begin to let go but he kept his eyes closed until the last possible second.

When he finally opened them he found Sherlock smiling at him.

“You’re so beautiful,” his boyfriend said quietly as he cupped his cheek, “and you’re so brave. You will get through this.”

John nodded.

“Thanks,” he sighed. “I know I can. Thanks for being there.”

“Always. Do you think you can finish the session?”

He hated to admit he was so weak that he couldn’t finish his session, but he was so exhausted both mentally and physically that he didn’t feel like he was ready to push himself any further. He shook his head, avoiding the eyes of both his partner and his therapist.

“That’s okay, John,” his therapist told him. “You really did do very well. You know how this works- you shouldn’t push yourself too hard right now. We’ll tackle this in little steps…pun not intended. This will be hard, very hard, and this won’t be the first time you’ll feel like giving up. But you do have to go at your own pace. The point is not how fast you get there but that you get there at all. I’ll leave you with Sherlock and see you in a couple of days.”

“Thanks,” John muttered under his breath.

He waited until the therapist left the room before burying his head against Sherlock’s shoulder.

“Christ that was hard,” he mumbled. “Why is this so difficult?”

His boyfriend’s hands gripped his back, pulling at his shirt first before he began massaging him. It actually felt really good, and he sat there and let Sherlock continue for a few minutes as he tried to
“You’re learning to walk again,” Sherlock pointed out. “What your therapist said was true: it doesn’t matter how long it takes. You will walk again. It will take whatever amount of time you’ll need, but when you’ve overcome this it will be so worth it.”

“I know,” he whispered. “God, I know.”

Sherlock gracefully kissed the side of his head before they pulled apart.

“I’ll go get you some more water,” Sherlock offered. “How about I move you to the sofa so you can rest?”

John nodded, grateful. He braced himself one more time to get to his feet as Sherlock placed his hands under his arms and helped him up. Once he was able to collapse on the sofa he let out a long sigh of relief. He felt like he would be okay if he never had to move from this spot again. Sherlock ran off to get him some more water, and once the room was clear he rested his head in his hands and began to shake.

“I can’t do this,” John whispered to himself. He drew in a deep, shaky, breath. “No, I can do this. Fuck.”

Not a few moments after Sherlock left there was a knock at the door. He muttered for the person to come in; even though he didn’t feel like seeing anyone he didn’t want anyone else besides Sherlock to realise how frustrated and down he was.

His eyes widened in surprise when he saw it was Mycroft. The minor government official was dressed smartly in his usual three-piece suit. John was surprise to see him home so early, as it was only three and usually Mycroft worked late. He wasn’t sure he had ever heard of Mycroft getting out of work early.

Considering the file the eldest Holmes sibling held in his hands, John could only guess this was a work-related matter. The serious, determined, look in his eyes confirmed it: this was about a case. But then, why wasn’t Sherlock here?

“Hello, John,” Mycroft greeted. “I’m sorry to interrupt your session, but I’m afraid I have an urgent matter to discuss with you.”

“It’s fine,” John replied. “We, erm, finished up early. Does Sherlock need to be here?”

Shaking his head, Mycroft said:

“No. In fact Sherlock can’t know anything about we are going to discuss. No one can. I’m afraid I’ll need you to sign this.”

He handed John a familiar confidentiality agreement. He signed it without glancing at it; he’d seen enough of these to get the gist of what it said. Basically, he knew if he dared say anything about Mycroft’s government secrets he’d disappear in the middle of the night and never see London again.

“How can I help?” John asked; he had to admit, it felt good to be needed.

“One of our agents has been critically injured following a top secret, highly confidential, mission abroad,” Mycroft explained. “I was hoping to enlist in your help. We usually have our own doctors that we turn to, but this is a matter of upmost secrecy.”
Clearly it was Mycroft’s way of saying the mission wasn’t officially authorised by the government.

He had to admit this wasn’t what he expected, but it did feel nice to be asked for his medical help again. It was a bit ironic yes, considering his own condition, but he was determined to help.

“Yeah, definitely,” he said. “I mean, I’ll have to stay in the bloody chair, but I’m fully capable of examining someone. And as far the secrecy goes, you can trust me. I’ve dealt with classified situations before in the army. I can keep a secret if I need to.”

“I know,” Mycroft replied. “I trust you, John, and my staff and I will accommodate you however you need. There is one thing… the assignment requires you to go back to Dartmoor.”

John raised an eyebrow.

“You mean…I’m going back to Baskerville?”

And so he found himself once again riding through the rolling landscape of Dartmoor. He rode with Mycroft in his official car, though his partner’s brother didn’t speak a word to him the entire trip. He wasn’t given any more information about the patient he was seeing—at this point he didn’t even know if they were male or female. He didn’t know how old the patient was, their nationality, or even what was wrong with them. He didn’t have a clue what to expect—which was actually rather thrilling. The anticipation was enough to make him forget about the exhaustion he had previously been feeling from his session. He was ready to work.

When they pulled up to Baskerville’s entrance the driver let them out and Mycroft took his ID out of his pocket.

“No need to pull rank on this trip, Doctor,” Mycroft smirked.

John snorted at the rare Mycroft Holmes joke. It calmed his nerves a bit (he had noticed from the moment they stepped out of the car that everyone was staring at him). They went a different route through the Baskerville complex than what he and Sherlock took before which made him more than a bit relieved; he didn’t want anything to do with the hound this time.

They went down an elevator three flights before Mycroft led him down a long, narrow, white corridor and stopped at the last door on the right. There was no window to the door so John still didn’t know what he was in for, but when Mycroft met his eyes before opening the door and he realised how worried he was it hit him: whoever this agent was, it was someone Mycroft knew well. Perhaps it was even someone he…cared about. An old partner of his in the service, maybe? A…friend, even?

At last Mycroft pushed the door open, and John was immediately greeted by the familiar beeping of a heart rate machine. The patient was a woman, who looked to be a little younger than him and Mycroft. Her long brown curls hung around her bruised and battered face. John’s stomach turned to knots as he saw the significant bruising beneath her eyes. Her lips were cut, her nose was clearly broken. Her fingernails were bruised and battered, as though she’d been tortured.

He saw the handcuff marks on her wrist, and he knew that’s what happened. Mycroft wasn’t ever going to admit that’s what happened, but he knew.

“Can I see her medical records?” John asked.
Mycroft gave him a stiff nod as he handed him a file. All the pages were stamped with ‘confidential’, and John was lucky that he was even cleared to look at these records. He couldn’t imagine the strings Mycroft had to pull to get him here, let alone let him view the medical history of one of his agents.

From one glance at her records John realised this wasn’t the first time the agent (whose name wasn’t even on her records) was tortured. She had clearly been in the service for some time, and during her years as an agent she had broken both arms, one of her legs, and had her nose broken multiple times. She’d sustained fractures, burns, and even internal bleeding once.

“Christ,” John swore as he turned to the second page of her records. “She’s really gone through it all, hasn’t she?”

“I’m afraid I can’t comment,” Mycroft sighed, “but I thought it would be helpful for you to see her previous medical history.”

John bit his lip to keep from laughing- obviously the first thing any doctor would want to know before treating a patient was the patient’s medical history. But he could tell Mycroft was genuinely concerned for his agent so he simply replied:

“Yeah, it’s definitely helpful, thanks. I’ll start with a vital check. How long ago was she brought in?”

“The medics brought her in just an hour before we arrived,” Mycroft explained.

“Their stitching looks good,” John commented as he examined the cuts on her cheek that had already been stitched. He checked her heart rate monitor, checked her blood pressure, and took her temperature. “It says here they cleaned and stitched her major wounds. She has a slight fever, and her blood pressure is a bit high. The medics reported her heart rate was a low when they brought her in, but it’s leveled out which is good.”

Stepping back, he looked over his patient, taking in the visible injuries and considering what other injuries could be hiding beneath the gown. Without knowing the extent of Mycroft’s relationship with this woman he couldn’t assume he’d be comfortable with her boss seeing her being examined by a doctor.

“I’ll have to examine her fully,” John said, glancing at her hospital gown again, hoping Mycroft would get the picture. “I may need to do some x-rays as well.”

Mycroft paled but offered a stiff nod.

“I’ll be outside if you need me,” Mycroft replied.

The room became eerily silent once Mycroft left. It was the first time he’d been left alone with a patient in a hospital room since he was discharged for the army. Nerves began building up again- what had he been thinking? He was in a wheelchair, on medication. He couldn’t walk, he was exhausted.

But Mycroft had entrusted him with this patient. It was his duty to heal her.

“I can do this,” he whispered to himself.

He closed his eyes for a single moment. When he drew in a deep breath and opened them again he began to get to work.
John started with simply placing his hands on the patient’s ribcage to feel for anything that was broken. She had definitely broken a couple of ribs, and he gasped in shock when he pulled up her gown to revealed how bruised her abdomen was. There were clear marks where she’d been kicked. He carefully ran his fingers across her stomach to feel for any tender spots, but he stopped when he caught sight of her hips. Fingerprint-shaped bruises coloured the skin there, like someone had been holding her down.

Suddenly his body turned very cold as he realised the full extent of what her torture had involved.

At that moment the patient stirred. First she simply twitched in her sleep, but as soon as John looked up at her, her eyes flashed open in panic. She began breathing in and out in quick breaths—too quick.

“It’s alright,” John said, holding his hands up. He realised how terrified she must be to wake up to find a strange man examining her after all that had happened. “You’re safe. You’re in hospital.”

He wasn’t sure if she was supposed to know she was in Baskerville- or even back in England- so he decided to leave all the details to Mycroft.

The patient’s eyes flashed around the room in horror, but when she saw that they were alone and she was indeed hooked up to hospital equipment she finally seemed to calm down. She pointed to the sink, and John quickly got her a cup of water. She downed the cup gratefully; as he watched her drink he realised how chapped her lips were.

“I’m Doctor John Watson,” he explained. “I was brought in to help you. I know there’s a good amount of secrecy involving what you do, and you can’t tell me anything, but for the sake of your health I need to know as much as possible. Right now your heart rate is good, but your blood pressure is up and you appear to be dehydrated.”

The patient simply stared at him like she wasn’t even sure if what was happening was real or not.

“It’s okay,” John said again, forcing himself to keep calm in order to make her feel more relaxed. “You can trust me.”

After glancing him up and down, sizing him up, the patient finally whispered:

“You’re in a wheelchair.”

John offered her a small smile.

“I was brought in especially for you,” he said.

“By Mycroft?”

He stopped—was he even supposed to answer that? She glanced down at her empty cup, and he refilled it for her. It only took her a moment to down all of the drink before she spoke up again.

“Is Mycroft here?” Her voice was hoarse, and she swallowed before demanding: “I want to see Mycroft. I need to see him.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” John promised, “but first I need to get you started on IV fluids. You’re malnourished and dehydrated. You have a few broken ribs. We’ll need to do an x-ray. You have some cuts and bruising; the medics started the stitching. I haven’t quite finished your examination—“
“But you saw,” the patient whispered. He stopped, afraid to answer. “You were looking at the marks on my hips.”

“Yes,” John admitted quietly, “yes, I was. I’m afraid I have to ask this now because it will determined the next steps we need to take. Were you raped?”

The agent looked him dead in the eye and nodded.

His heart skipped a beat. He had worked with rape patients before in the past, but it never got easier. Seeing the psychological trauma these victims went through was heartbreaking, and each case had to be handled delicately. He often had to work with the victims to gain their trust before he could even begin treating them.

“Yes,” John admitted quietly, “yes, I was. I’m afraid I have to ask this now because it will determine the next steps we need to take. Were you raped?”

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 Anything you tell me is completely confidential,” he assured her. “I’ll start you on fluids and—when you’re ready, at your own pace, I’ll get a rape kit.”

“Can I see Mycroft?” The patient asked, as though she hadn’t heard a word of what he just said.

“Let me get you started on fluids first. I’ll see if you can talk to him, but only a few minutes, okay? You need to rest. Now, on a scale of one to ten how bad is the pain?”

She made a face before muttering:

“About an eight?”

He knew patients seemed to round down when they were trying to estimate their pain so he made a mental note of it for the morphine. Once the IVs got going he stepped outside where he found Mycroft waiting for him, his hands clutching his umbrella like a child clinging to a teddy bear.

“She’s asking for you,” John explained. “You can have a few minutes, but as her doctor I’d recommend for her to rest. I’ve started her on fluids, and she’s been able to sit up and drink some water. Do you mind me asking how long she was missing?”

“Five days,” Mycroft sighed. “Everything appeared normal on day one, but by the end of day two she had not reached her safe house. We were able to find her location on day four, and yesterday—day five—she was rescued and immediately brought here.”

Five days. Five potential days with no food and water, probably in freezing and damp conditions. Being hurt and torture and…

He closed his eyes again, trying to regain control.

“There is more, isn’t there?” Mycroft asked, his voice stiff.

John nodded without opening his eyes.

“Doctor-patient confidentiality?” The government official continued. He nodded again. “I respect that, John. I suppose it does no good to mention that I need a statement for her?”

“I’d give her some time,” John admitted, “but she really did want to see you. I’ll just grab some supplies while you two are talking…actually, where—?”

“Up the elevator one flight, first door on the left. You can use the badge you were issued to get in.”

“Thanks.”
He watched as Mycroft turned toward the door, paused—like he was nervous about going in, and took a deep breath. At last he walked in, and John couldn’t help but to be impressed with the sympathy Mycroft seemed to be feeling toward his agent. John waited a few minutes, just to make sure Mycroft didn’t come out saying the agent needed something, before continuing up the elevator to the supply room.

And it was a supply room it was. He stopped as soon as he opened the door—the entire supply room was looked to be practically as big as his flat. When he finally snapped out of it enough to wheel down the rows he found himself mesmerised at the quality and quantity of drugs Baskerville had. There were experimental drugs he had only heard of via rumor, rare drugs, vaccines for just about anything he could think of, along with a vast quantity of popular drugs.

John realised he didn’t have a clue where he was going so he spent some time rolling up and down the aisles, trying to figure out how this room was categorised. He came to a stop again when a certain drug caught his eye. It was an experimental drug for muscular development. Looking around the room, John searched for any sign of security cameras. He was sure they were there, but he didn’t see any right away and his interest was too peaked. He knew it was a bad idea, but he picked up the box anyway and opened it up. There was a small leaflet inside, just like any drug he’d issue his patient, and right away he confirmed what the drug was for:

For improvement of muscular use in gunshot victims.

His heart rate sped up as his eyes scanned the document. It was a drug meant for gunshot victims in war, to help speed up their recovery. The drug was supposed to greatly improve any fatigue and muscle weakness. It seemed to be a new sort of pain medicine, containing levels of medication he wouldn’t normally prescribe the average patient. The regimen required two pills a day for seven days, then one pill a day for four weeks after that. In trials, patients showed 30% faster improvement in their physical therapy sessions than those who didn’t take the drug.

30%. He couldn’t figure out how new this experimental drug was, but he would take 30% faster improvement right now.

He was tempted to steal the pills. He had never been more tempted to steal in his life. Sweat ran down the back of his neck as he panicked, considering his options. If only he could deal with this fatigue, this weakness that was plaguing him so much he couldn’t get through a single therapy session. If he could deal with the fatigue he would be even more capable of helping the agent than he already was. Maybe the next time he tried to walk he would be strong enough to take more than just two steps.

He knew he was being naive. He knew how risky experimental drugs were; he knew it wasn’t something meant to be tried by the public yet. And most of all, he knew what the consequences would be if he was caught stealing from Baskerville. At the least he would be stripped of his rights to work on his newest patient, but his medical license would be at risk as well. He might even be imprisoned.

It was only the thought of imprisonment and losing his license that made him put the drugs back. He forced himself to turn around and focus on finding the morphine. When he finally found the shelves containing what seemed like an unlimited supply, he grabbed enough for his patient and got out of the room as quickly as possible.

He wished he could forget the room—and the experimental drug—existed. He cursed Mycroft for letting him go in there alone; hadn’t he considered John would stumble across something like that? As he reached the patient’s room again he took a deep breath to cool down before knocking and entering the room.
When he entered both Mycroft and the patient jumped, and John’s breath caught in his throat when he realised why: they had been holding hands.

Holding hands.

Mycroft Holmes did not hold hands. John rarely saw him holding Greg’s hand, let alone some random employee’s.

The shock in the government official’s eyes quickly turned to a dark glare, warning John not to ask. And John didn’t dare.

“Right,” John announced casually, “let’s get you started on morphine.”

“Thanks,” the agent replied with a kind smile.

John glanced between her and her boss. It was becoming more than a bit awkward to not have a name to refer to her by.

“Is there anything I can call you?” John asked as he prepared the morphine. “It doesn’t have to be a real name. Usually it helps if, you know, doctors have a name for their patient.”

The agent glanced up at Mycroft before replying:

“You can call me Sam.”

She replied without hesitation, and John was so taken aback that he just stared at her for a moment. For a split second he wondered if they both trusted him enough to give him her real name- but then again, she was a spy. She would probably lie about how old she was if he asked.

“Alright, Sam,” John spoke up, trying to sound as calm and collected as he possibly could. “You’re doing well so far. I’m going to work cleaning some more of your wounds, but then I want you to rest, okay?”

“Okay, Doctor.”

A sweet smile crossed her face, and John was taken aback by how calm she was being. Perhaps it was the morphine kicking in, but rape victims were rarely this relaxed and trusting. He reminded himself that it was his job to make her feel as safe and comfortable as possible instead of going all ‘Sherlock’ and try deduce her so he simply smiled back at her. He glanced over at Mycroft, suddenly wishing he had privacy with his patient once again so they could talk about the next necessary steps.

“I think it’s most important that you rest and get some fluids in you,” John reiterated, “then we can discuss what we talked about.”

Out of the corner of his eye he caught Mycroft’s eyes narrowing, and John immediately regretted announcing that in front of him. Sam just nodded before she closed her eyes. Mycroft withdrew his mobile, ready to make a quick exit.

“I need to make some calls,” Mycroft announced before disappearing from the room.

And so John was left alone.

If anyone had told him this morning that he would be ending the day taking care of an injured spy at Baskerville he would have laughed in their face. Even at the moment he almost felt like he was
hallucinating, like this was too surreal to be reality. As the room became quiet and the steady beeps of the machines filled his ears, John was lured to rest himself. He shook himself out of it, knowing now wasn’t the time. Now was the time to be strong; he was being depended on to do this. Whatever the reason, Mycroft only trusted him.

Yet as he considered how he caught the official and the agent holding hands, and as he remembered the shocked look in their eyes- the warning, the determination, for him to not mention that he ever saw them like that- he wondered…why him? Why did Mycroft only trust him with this?

Why had Mycroft trusted only this agent, who he appeared to be close to, with this mission that didn’t even seem to be authorised? Why were they at Baskerville and not a London hospital?

What was Mycroft hiding?

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! What do you think about John's own case? And what is Mycroft hiding?

Happy New Year to everyone :)
There was blood all around him as he lay still in an unfamiliar flat. Sherlock’s voice was shouting nearby, but everything was so…red. He couldn’t speak. He tried to get up but the room was spinning. He tried to move but his legs didn’t work.

All of a sudden John jerked up, only to find himself sitting in his wheelchair back in the hospital room at Baskerville. He had fallen asleep! Ashamed, he looked around in panic, hoping no one had caught him dozing off. To his relief Sam was still resting, and Mycroft was nowhere to be seen. After starting Sam’s morphine and giving her something to help her sleep, he had checked each of her wounds to make sure they were dressed properly. There had been an x-ray room nearby where he captured images of her broken ribs, and he had wrapped the injury carefully. All there was left to do that night was to monitor her, and he hated himself for giving into the fatigue and allowing himself a few moments sleep. The few moments had been just long enough for him to have yet another nightmare about the shooting, and John knew after that there was no way he was going to be able to get any rest.

He rolled himself over to check her vitals again. Everything was still looking good. Her wounds seemed to be healing properly, with no signs of infection, and the fluids were improving her dehydration. Checking his mobile, John was surprised to see he had already been at Baskerville for nearly seven hours. He hadn’t been allowed to tell Sherlock where he was going, but when he admitted Mycroft needed his help his boyfriend seemed to have an idea of why he was needed. They shared a kiss goodbye before John was whisked away in Mycroft’s car, and he hadn’t talked to him since. That felt like days ago instead of hours, and he found himself missing his lover. He thought about sending his text, but he had no signal.

There were two knocks at the door, a pause, and then three more quick knocks. It was the code he and Mycroft had agreed on. If anyone but the government official were to want to enter the room, John was to refuse them entry. After opening the door just slightly he peered through the crack, just to make sure it was him. When a tired Mycroft smiled back at him and helped up a tray of food, he let him in.

“I brought you some food from the mess,” Mycroft explained as he glanced down at the broccoli cheese soup and salad on the tray. There was a piece of bread on the side and bottle of water. Being brought a meal like this made him flashback to his days in the army, when he spent much of the day treating patients and rarely had time to sit down and eat. “I know it’s not the most exquisite of cuisines, but I thought you would be hungry.”

“Thank you,” John muttered as he took the tray in hand, wheeled himself over to the counter, and sat it by the sink. He opened the water and took a bite of the salad.

For a moment Mycroft just stood over Sam, his eyes roaming over her resting body.
“How is she?” Mycroft asked, his voice hollow and drained.

“She’s holding up well, considering,” he replied. He took a sip of the soup (it was way more cheese than broccoli). “Her wounds are all stitched up. The x-rays came back fine, save for the broken ribs. Now she just needs to rest, get her blood pressure back to normal, and get her fluids back up. She’s been in and out of a slight fever, but I think she’s doing well.”

He bit his lip, feeling guilty about using the term “well” considering what she had been through, but he wasn’t sure if Mycroft knew or not. He still hadn’t done the rape kit, but he had been serious about wanting to proceed only at her pace and will. John knew it wasn’t right to keep this information from Mycroft- after all the man was trying to carry on an investigation and the DNA would be extraordinarily helpful.

Then again… it was Mycroft. If Sam had been rescued by his team then they had probably taken care of the captors already.

He caught Mycroft placing a comforting hand on Sam’s shoulder, and when his friend looked up at him, shocked at being caught, they both looked away quickly.

“This mission you sent her on,” John began quietly. “It wasn’t authorised, was it?”

Of course Mycroft didn’t answer, he didn’t expect him to, but his silence was all he needed to know his answer.

“Look, I’m sure whatever you had her do you had a good reason for it,” he went on. “It’s just… clearly she’s someone special to you. You only trusted her to do it. Then you brought me on board to help clean her wounds, when really any doctor could have done this. You brought us to Baskerville, when she could be in hospital. And frankly, Mycroft, you hanging around here almost makes it seem like you’re hiding. I just wanted to ask: are you in over your head about something?”

Mycroft was visibly startled, but nevertheless he raised his eyes to meet John’s. For a moment he stopped breathing out of pure shook of the darkness in Mycroft’s eyes, but he forced himself to just keep breathing and not freak out.

Obviously, he was right about Mycroft being in trouble.

At last the government official sighed and confessed:

“This mission that I sent… Sam… on was, I admit, somewhat of a personal mission. No, I didn’t have clearance for it. Usually getting clearance isn’t an issue for me, but in short, I was forbidden to send an agent out, and I was outraged by it. Sam agreed with me: she thought the matter needed to be… taken care of. She swore she could complete the mission quickly and quietly, while drawing no suspicion to herself and causing no drama. I told her to ring in sick with the flu, and she did. Instead of staying home she snuck out of the country. We knew the coordinates of our targets, and the whole operation should have been fairly simple. I’m sure you’re wondering why I have been hanging around here instead of returning to the office. The truth is John, Sam and I put both of our jobs on the line by pursuing this off-radar mission. We’re both on probation while being investigated for treason.”

John blinked, unsure of what to think. That certainly wasn’t the answer he was expecting. Mycroft Holmes… on probation? The thought was simply impossible to comprehend. It was like hearing that the elder Holmes brother had gotten caught cheating on a test or stealing from the shops.
“I suppose I didn’t realise there was anyone above you,” John admitted. “I know everyone has a boss, but you always seem to be able to get yourself out of these situations.”

“Yes,” Mycroft said with a faint smile. “Yes I do, but this was a highly confidential matter of national security.”

“And you committed treason,” John breathed; the phrase was playing on repeat in his mind.

Nodding, Mycroft admitted:

“In a sense, yes. I can see how one could have that viewpoint.”

“So by bringing me here, I’m committing treason too,” he breathed.

Mycroft shook his head violently.

“No,” he insisted.

“Yes!”

“No, John!” Mycroft proclaimed. “I protect the people I care about and the people that work for me. I have spoken with my superiors and they agreed to let me bring in whomever I needed to take care of Sam. They agreed that I needed to take care of the mess I caused. You are still under my protection.”

A moment of panic took over him as he begin to consider just how much he had taken Mycroft’s protection for granted. What if the government official really did lose his job? What if he was even dare he think it imprisoned? What would happen to all the security the Holmes family were lucky enough to have? All the protection Mycroft provided him and Sherlock would be gone. The whole family would be vulnerable.

And Greg…what would he think?

“Does Greg know?” John asked quietly.

With a defeated sigh Mycroft shook his head.

“I haven’t the heart to tell him,” he confessed. “I don’t want him to know anything until I know the outcome.”

“What if you’re sent to prison?” John challenged. “What if…god, Mycroft, what if they take care of you too?”

The comment actually earned a chuckle from Mycroft, who dropped into a plastic chair beside Sam.

“Trust me, John, this matter is more personal than professional. My superiors and I have lately not gotten along like we have in the past. Their priorities, their strategies, are changing and we find ourselves on opposite sides of the fence more often than not. It’s truly only been a matter of time before they found a reason to put me out.”

“Was it worth it, then? Was it worth it to risk everything you have when you knew what the consequences were likely to be?”

Mycroft’s face fell, and John knew he wasn’t being fair. He knew Mycroft put everything on the line every day he went into work, and he of course he constantly thought about his family.
Regardless, Mycroft shot:

“I was protecting the lives of every citizen in this country.”

“Except this one,” John pointed out, waving his hand toward Sam.

The government official’s eyes darkened once again as they trailed down to his agent. He placed a hand on the railing of her bed and let out a heavy sigh.

“Yes, I know,” Mycroft whispered, “and although I know it was for the greater good- and although she would agree with me on that- I will never forgive myself.”

“I don’t think she’d agree with you this time.”

John’s voice was silent and cold and he had to bite his lip before he confessed anything else.

“She’s more than just an employee to you, isn’t she?” John asked, trying to be a bit more sympathetic. “The way you look at her, the way you held her hand, the way you trust her- you two are close, aren’t you?”

Fingertips rising to his chin, Mycroft pondered his answer for a moment. Then he stood and did something that shocked John- he stroked Sam’s cheek ever-so-gently with his hand. This affection he was showing her was beginning to scare him. What the hell was going on?

“We used to be,” Mycroft finally confessed, his voice so quiet John could barely hear him. “We used to be partners in the field. My whole life was working with her, protecting her. We got ourselves into quite a bit of trouble, but those years only made us sharper. Eventually I realised I had more a knack for negotiation while she was more skilled at the legwork. I was transferred to another department while she stayed and became a brilliant, highly respected, field agent. She’s the absolute best in this line of work, and she’s one of the few people I can trust to do anything.”

Yet Mycroft was still staring at her in that peculiar way, that way that hinted there was something else going on.

“But you were closer than partners, weren’t you?” John questioned. “Mycroft, you look at her like you care about her- like you really, truly, care about her. I have no doubt that you’re solely devoted to Greg now, but I suppose you’re just as likely to have past relationships as anybody. Was she a… girlfriend?”

He felt a bit bad about putting it that way, but Mycroft actually chuckled.

“Sherlock’s rubbed off on you,” Mycroft teased before he let out a tired sigh. He gazed into Sam’s face, as though he could see right through her closed eyes and into her soul. “Yes, we did have a personal relationship at one point. Our relationship was against every rule in the book, and no one could ever find out so we’ve never told anyone. This was back when I was quite young, after I first entered the Service. My baby brother had run away from home and didn’t want anything to do with me. I had no other family, no friends. I did have her, though, and eventually I learned to open up. I learned how to feel and how to trust. Work became meddled with my personal life until it all felt like the same thing. It felt much like I was living in a dream. Our affair continued for nearly a year until…until the unthinkable happened.”

John raised his eyebrows, not entirely sure how to respond. He hadn’t heard Mycroft speak so personally, with such emotion, since that time he told John the story of his and Sherlock’s parents. He was sure Mycroft and Sherlock had heart-to-hearts recently, as they learned to trust each other more, but he almost had the feeling the government official wasn’t quite aware of what he was
confessing.

“Were you found out?” He finally guessed.

Mycroft paused for a long moment before he offered the single shake of his head. His face paled and he looked more fragile than John had ever seen him.

“There’s a page missing from Sam’s medical history,” Mycroft stated quietly. “Would you care to guess what’s on it?”

He looked down at his patient, studying the cracks of her lips from the dehydration, the cuts from the punches and bruises. Perhaps cancer, or another medical tragedy? John guessed. Perhaps a personal issue? He honestly didn’t have a clue, and he was afraid to guess so he just shook his head.

“She became pregnant.”

At first John thought he had imagined hearing it. Maybe this all was just a big hallucination, a crazy dream. Maybe his meds were playing tricks on his mind.

But Mycroft was staring at him, more serious- more hurt- than ever, and John knew he was telling the truth.

“Are you…are you saying you have a kid?” John asked.

Now that he just couldn’t imagine. He honestly couldn’t imagine Mycroft in another relationship besides his one with Greg, let alone with his work partner. He just couldn’t imagine Mycroft being a, well, baby daddy. The thought was almost laughable! It was insane. It was…

Entirely possible.

This was a different Mycroft they were talking about, after all. Mycroft had pointed it out himself— he had been so young at the time. He knew Sherlock’s brother had joined the Service early in life, straight after uni, and that wasn’t exactly an uncommon time to be experimenting with relationships. It wasn’t an uncommon time to find yourself faced with a situation like an unplanned pregnancy. He had met many young couples who went through exactly that— they were in a casual, innocent, relationship, like thousands of other couples, but all of a sudden one day they woke up and they were going to be parents. It could happen to anyone, so why not Mycroft?

“No, I’m saying that she was pregnant,” Mycroft said. He let out a shaky breath as his eyes trailed down to Sam’s belly. His face was white as a ghost, and the doctor in John worried Mycroft might actually pass out from having to confront so much emotion. “She had a miscarriage.”

A pit of sadness formed in John’s stomach and guilt hit him so hard he felt like throwing up.

*The Iceman.*

No wonder.

No wonder Mycroft was so reserved, so private. No wonder he took the security of what little family he had left so seriously— he had lost so much. First his father left, his mother passed, and he lost a child.

John couldn’t think of anything worse.
“For two months of my life I was going to be a father,” Mycroft went on, his voice like stone, so still and quiet. “We were absolutely terrified. We didn’t know what to do, and we didn’t have anyone to turn to. I only had Sherlock, and her upbringing wasn’t much better than mine. We couldn’t tell anyone at work. We had no other friends. We did all the doctors’ appointments in secret. For the first few weeks we just didn’t know how to act. I was only twenty-four, she was twenty-three. We had some money, thanks to work, and I had a decent enough flat, but we were in no position to raise a child. I had already failed so much at raising Sherlock that I was terrified of being given the responsibility of another life. We went through the motions but it took a good few weeks before we really realised what was happening: we were going to be parents, and there was nothing we could do about it. Then at sixteen weeks it happened. In one night we lost everything. I had spent so long wondering how I was going to be a father and feeling guilty for getting her pregnant and then…our child was gone.”

There was a long pause, and John had a sickening feeling about what Mycroft was suggesting. He must have felt like the miscarriage was somehow his fault because he had been so scared and so nervous about the pregnancy.

“I’m so sorry, Mycroft,” John said softly, “but you know it wasn’t your fault. Miscarriages are awful and traumatising to both the father and the mother. And when you were so young and you were both so alone, I can’t imagine how hard it must have been.”

“We didn’t know how to react,” Mycroft confessed. “For two months we had panicked, we didn’t sleep, and we were distracted at work. We fought, even. Then it was all gone. And you know, I don’t think what I lost truly hit me until I went out, and I saw fathers with their sons and daughters. Baby clothes seemed to pop up everywhere I went. The rest of my life I found it hard to pursue relationships because I knew so well how a single moment could change your entire life. One single night gave us a child, and then one single night took that away from us. I couldn’t go through it again, and so I focused on my career. I was transferred to a different department that year, and Sam moved for a temporary reassignment. We have crossed paths many times since then, and although we try not to talk about it, I imagine that tension will always be between us. We’ll always wonder…what if?”

At that moment Mycroft got to his feet, placed his hands on the rails of the bed, and gazed down at his former love.

Yes, John thought, what if?

Would Mycroft have continued down the same career path with a child in tow? For a moment he allowed himself to imagine a young Mycroft and Sam feeding a baby in the Holmes’ family kitchen, and a sad smile crossed his face. Needless to say, that kid would have had the most over-protective, over-bearing father on the face of the planet.

“Twenty-one,” Mycroft announced suddenly. John looked up at him, confused; a small smile peered from the corners of Mycroft’s lips. “It was only a rough estimate, but baby was set to be due on October 31st. My birthday. My child would have just turned twenty-one. Can you imagine that? Me, with a twenty-one year old?”

John snorted, and was about to play along when it hit him:

“Is that why you don’t like celebrating your birthday?”

He looked up to meet Mycroft’s eyes, but the government official just stared at him, solemn, sorrowful. He was just like Sherlock, giving him everything he needed to know without saying a thing.
So instead of pushing it he offered:

“I can picture it, actually: a little you running around, coming to see me and Sherlock to complain about how ‘Dad keeps following me with the CCTV’.”

This actually earned a small laugh from Mycroft.

“Yes, it’s interesting to think of the choices we both would have made,” Mycroft mused, “but I have made peace with it- as much as one can make peace with something so horrible. I’m happy with my life with Gregory. More than happy. It is hard though, every year on my birthday…and then every year on the anniversary of…but then in this mission came up and I knew the only person I could count on her was. And now…”

He’d never heard Mycroft struggle for words. The government official- his friend- looked so defeated that for the first time ever John wondered if it would be out of place to embrace him.

Before he could do anything, Sam suddenly cried out and began thrashing about in bed.

“No! No! Get off me! Don’t! DON’T!”

The final word was shouted with such force that John was surprised when people didn’t come running from upstairs. Sam’s arms flailed about as John and Mycroft tried to catch him. As his eyes flashed over to his friend’s he saw once again how scared Mycroft looked. It was just so unlike him that John could believe every word Mycroft just told him about his youth. It was all true. It was all so very real, and he was certain Mycroft was worried he might lose his friend next.

“Sam!” John tried calling. Then he remembered that wasn’t her real name. Despite how well it flowed off the tip of Mycroft’s tongue as he told their story, it was just a made up identity to protect her. He scowled in frustration; how was he ever supposed to help this patient without even knowing their real name?!

Then suddenly, Mycroft cried out:

“It’s okay! Shh, it’s okay!”

John stopped, startled as Mycroft grabbed the agent's arms and practically forced her into an embrace.

“No, please!” She pleaded. “Get off me, get off! No!”

At last Sam’s eyes fluttered open and she collapsed against Mycroft, sobbing. The two stood like that for a long moment, holding each other as Mycroft’s hands gently brushed her hair out of her face.

That’s when he noticed- in her fit she had kicked the blankets off her. Her hospital gown had gotten all twisted up, enough for Mycroft to see the bruises on her legs, her thighs. Her hips. Sam was too upset over her nightmare to notice that Mycroft noticed too, but the government official’s eyes raised to meet his, and John swallowed nervously at the anger he saw in them.
background some more and show why he became ‘The Iceman’. More explanations to come! Thanks so much for reading and for your feedback. I really appreciate hearing from you guys!
House Hunting

Chapter Notes

Time to check in on Sherlock and Laura! Some house hunting first...but Mycroft’s not the only Holmes sibling keeping a secret.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Okay Sherlock, your turn,” Laura announced.

Sherlock scowled at her mocking tone and looked down at the board. He knew it was hopeless: there was no point of even being in this stupid game anymore. He was out of money, and his property was all gone. Even Dan was doing better, and Sherlock wasn’t even letting him win!

“Do I have to?” Sherlock groaned.

“Yes,” Greg replied with a big grin.

Glaring at him, Sherlock’s eyes warned him that he would remember this next time Greg needed his help. With a sigh he rolled the dice, and sure enough he landed on the same stupid property of Laura’s that was making him broke.

“Yes!” Laura exclaimed, pumping her fists into the air as Sherlock handed her the money.

“Well that’s it, I’m quit,” Sherlock announced as he jumped up.

“Don’t be like that!” Greg whined. “You’ve got to stay until you’re officially out of money. It’s the rules!”

“We’d be here all night!” He pointed out. “We’ve already been playing this bloody game for three hours.”

His nephew giggled as he rolled the dice. With his move he was successfully able to collect more money, and he let out a cheer.

“It’s a game of luck,” Sherlock insisted. “It’s pointless. It takes no skill whatsoever.”

“Sore loser,” Jason teased.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock ignored him as he stormed out and headed to the bedroom he was staying in. He closed the doors, threw himself onto the bed, and took out his mobile, hoping for an update from John. When he saw none, he finally decided to call. There was no answer, but it was reassuring just to hear John’s voice on the answering machine. He smiled at his boyfriend’s voice and paused before leaving his message:

“I’m guessing Mycroft is keeping you pretty busy, so I’m going to try to not worry about the fact I haven’t heard from you. I just wanted to say that I feel a bit out of place without you. I love you. Have a goodnight, and make sure Mycroft lets you get some rest.”

He hung up quickly as a blush rose on his cheeks; he felt schoolboyish leaving a message like that,
but he really did feel lost without his partner. To his surprise, his mobile rang the moment he hung up, and his eyes lit up when he saw it was John returning his call.

“John?” He answered, his voice littered with excitement.

“Hey,” John replied. He let out a sigh of relief at hearing his boyfriend. “I saw you phoned. I’ve wanted to call, trust me, but Mycroft been keeping me busy.”

“Well tell him to let you rest,” Sherlock replied. “You’re still in recovery.”

“I know,” his boyfriend said. “Someone here just needs my help.”

“Medically?” Sherlock deduced. There was just a pause of silence, confirming his suspicions.

“Please tell me what’s going on! Please!”

“I could tell you…but then I’d have to kill you.”

“That’s cute,” Sherlock mocked, “you know you’d never kill me.”

His boyfriend let out a laugh and Sherlock smiled, thinking how great it was to hear him laugh.

“Give me a hint,” Sherlock pleaded. He hated being left out. He didn’t understand why John got to go help and he had to stay at home. John was injured too, wasn’t he? He needed someone to watch his back.

“Well…your brother’s drunk.”

Sherlock blinked.

“That’s…not good.”

Sure Mycroft was one to enjoy a fine wine at dinner and the occasional bottle of scotch or whiskey, but Sherlock could only remember a couple of times he had actually seen his brother drunk. The first was the Christmas after their mother died. The second was on Mycroft’s birthday, around when he turned twenty-five. After running away from his gram’s house that summer, Sherlock officially entered into Mycroft’s care when he turned 18 that year. He had come home from school one day to find his brother collapsed on the sofa with a tumbler in his hand and a half-empty bottle of scotch by his side. It was only five, and he had clearly been drinking for hours. Sherlock was actually terrified at the time; he had little experience with alcohol himself, and it scared him to see how drastically it could affect someone. Mycroft never did tell him what prompted his binge, and Sherlock hadn’t mentioned it since. Either his brother had learned his lesson and was careful to not get drunk anymore, or he was more careful about it, because Sherlock couldn’t remember seeing him drunk since.

“Yeah, I’ve got it under control though,” John said, letting out a chuckle. “He’ll have one hell of a headache in the morning.”

So Mycroft was drunk and John was needed by the government for his medical talents? Nothing made sense anymore.

“Look after my dear brother,” Sherlock said with a small smile, “and look after yourself too.”

“I will. I love you, Sherlock. God I love you.”

“I love you too,” he replied, his voice falling to a whisper, “more than you could ever know.”
“Get some sleep.”

“Good night.”

Sherlock stared at his mobile after hanging up and decided to not over-analyse. If Mycroft was drunk because of this mission he probably didn’t want to know what it was about.

The next morning he found Dan and Laura in the kitchen eating scrambled eggs and toast while watching a children’s movie on his sister’s laptop.

“Morning Sherlock,” Laura greeted, pausing the movie as he came in. “Want some eggs?”

“I’ll make them.”

He yawned and stretched, trying to get himself to wake up. He made himself some tea, hoping it would give him a spike of energy, before starting on his eggs. Although he had vowed to not worry about John’s government mission he couldn’t help but to spend the night tossing and turning as he thought of his boyfriend. Mycroft drunk…did that mean something was wrong? Something personal, maybe? Shaking his head, he forced himself to snap out of it as he made breakfast.

“So Dan and I are going to go look at some houses,” Laura announced. “Jason’s meeting with his boss, but he’s meeting us for lunch and to look at a couple of flats. Want to join us?”

His mobile burned in his pocket as he considered his options. What if John returned home today and he was out? Then again what if he didn’t and he spent the day lying around the house going mad while he waited? Not to mention he was itching to get back into London. Maybe a day of wandering around the streets would do him some good.

“Sure,” Sherlock said. “Where are you looking?”

Laura let the movie play in the background as she showed Sherlock her list of homes. The list had originally been fifteen, but half of them had been crossed out with a red ink pen.

“What’s wrong with these?” Sherlock asked, pointing to the crossed out one.

His sister smirked as she replied:

“Those are the ones Greg insisted were in bad areas.”

“That street’s not so bad,” Sherlock said, pointing a listing he lived near his old school.

“Greg said there have been drugs busts in that area.”

“Oh yeah…”

The comment earned him a glare.

“I thought you said you knew every street in London?” His sister challenged.

With a shrug, Sherlock began to scramble the eggs.

“Some of us are less bothered by drug dens than others.”

“My son is not going to live next to a drug den!”
As they sat down at the table Dan studied them.

“Mommy, what’s a drugs den?”

Their eyes lit up in horror, and Sherlock decided a change of subject was in order.

“Maybe we can go by some of the schools you might be attending too,” he suggested to his nephew, who squirmed at the mention of ‘school’.

“Actually…” Laura said, grabbing him and dragging him away from the table again. Her eyes lowered to the floor as she muttered: “Mycroft offered to pay for him to go to private school.”

He stared at her, confused as to why that seemed to be the end of the world for her.

“Sherlock!” She hissed when he didn’t seem concerned. “Don’t you think that’s a little over the top? It’s like having a relative pay for college! I’m not sure if I’m comfortable with it, but honestly we couldn’t afford it any other way. Even with Jason’s salary and promotion, there’s going to be so much expense involved with moving and buying a new place that it doesn’t leave much room for education. I thought Mycroft might know about some of the public schools in the city, and he seemed horrified at the thought of his nephew attending one of them so he insisted he’d pay for private school, case closed. He didn’t even seem to have any concern that he might not get in.”

Sherlock smirked.

“Oh, he’ll get in.”

_Honestly Mycroft could probably get Dan into Cambridge if he wanted_, Sherlock thought.

“See?” Laura cried. “That’s just it. I don’t want Mycroft doing all of the work. I don’t want to feel indebted to him.”

Placing his hands on his sister’s shoulders, he offered her a kind smile as he replied:

“If he wants to help then let him help. Trust me: if you refuse his help it will offend him. As much as I hate to admit it, my brother does use his powers for good sometimes, and if that good means getting your son into a better school then why not?”

“Other kids should have the same chance!”

“Other kids are the competition!”

Laura raised an eyebrow at that and Sherlock swallowed nervously. He glanced toward Dan and wondered if he was picking up on any of this. His nephew seemed too engrossed with the cartoon characters on the computer so he continued.

“Other parents would do the same in a heartbeat if they had the means, and they wouldn’t worry about other children while doing it,” he pointed out.

“You’re probably right,” Laura sighed. “Sorry that I’m a good person with a conscience.”

He gave her a quick hug.

“And there’s nothing wrong with that…we’ll just have to help you grow a backbone once you move here.”

She hit him playfully before they both walked back to the table to return to their breakfast.
A few hours later Sherlock found himself back in London, and he couldn’t help but to feel relaxed at the familiar sounds of traffic and the smells of restaurants. They took one of Mycroft’s cars to the first house, on the west side of the city, and told the driver they’d take cabs from there.

“Right, first place,” Laura announced as they looked up at a row of townhouses seated at the end of a busy road.

She frowned as she looked around and glared at the passing cars. Dan squirmed beside her, pulling at her hand, itching to take a look around. While his sister studied the landscaping and exterior of the home all Sherlock could think about was Dan, fighting to get away. His eyes followed his nephew’s, and he instantly realised what he was so excited about.

“There’s ice cream!” Dan said, jumping up and down as he pointed to an ice cream shop across the street. “I want ice cream, Mommy!”

Laura turned around just in time for Dan to break away from her. Sherlock grabbed him to stop him from bolting across the street, and his eyes met his sister’s.

“Busy street…not a good idea for young children,” Sherlock breathed as Dan innocently clung to him.

They went to a home in the suburbs after that for an open house. It wasn’t a bad area; Sherlock was actually surprise to admit to himself that he knew little that went on here…probably because he wasn’t one for safe, family-friendly areas whilst living on the streets. This house was on a cul-da-sac. It was a nice two-story, with a landscaped garden out back and a fish pond in the front.

_Fish pond?_ Sherlock thought. _Who needs a bloody fish pond?_

But his sister seemed quite impressed, so he didn’t argue. Another family pulled up in a van just as they were walking up the driveway- it really couldn’t have been any more perfect of timing- and Laura wasted no time introducing herself.

“Oh, New York!” The woman neighbour exclaimed in excitement. “We had our honeymoon in New York!”

“We’re from upstate New York, actually,” Laura replied, beaming as she dragged Dan around to face the neighbours, “but we’re taking this one to New York City for the first time during the holidays.”

Sherlock forced a smile as Laura glanced up at him, but secretly he thought if he had to be trapped here with this lady for another minute he’d go insane. If his sister lived by her…god. He shuddered at the thought.

“Well you’ll love the house!” The male neighbour offered. “I went in there when they were fixing it up, and I’m actually quite jealous. They have new floors and paint. And there’s the perfect play area upstairs for your little one.”

He winked at the little boy, who grinned. Dan looked up to his mum and pleaded:

“Can we go inside Mommy, pleasssee? I want to see my bedroom!”

“It’s not your bedroom yet, sweetie,” Laura reminded him.
Dan didn’t seem to care as he tugged on her hand, trying to pull her into the house.

“Well, we’ll go check it out,” Laura said, “good to meet you both!”

They all exchanged goodbyes, but as soon as they were safely inside Sherlock scowled.

“You can’t possibly be thinking of moving next door to those people!” He hissed.

“What’s wrong with them?” Laura demanded as she examined the front window. She ran her hands along a crack that was forming on the windowsill.

“They’re so…” he balled his hands into fists as he tried to think of the word, “fake.”

“Fake?” Laura repeated.

“How can people be fake?” Dan asked from behind them. Sherlock paled in embarrassment; how did he keep forgetting his nephew was old enough to understand what was being said around him? “People are real…unless they’re ghost! Are our neighbours ghost?”

His sister sighed and threw him a glare that said ‘thanks a lot’ before turning to her son.

“They aren’t our neighbours yet,” Laura explained, “we’re only looking at the house to see if we like it, remember? And they aren’t ghost.”

“Then why are they fake?”

Laura glared at him again, and Sherlock knew this was one he would have to explain. He knelt down to Dan’s level and grabbed his shoulders, which seemed to always make his nephew concentrate on what he was saying.

“When people say that other people are fake it means that those people are pretending to be someone they’re not. Sometimes people pretend like they’re really nice and friendly when they’re really not very nice,” he explained.

Dan’s face scrunched up in confusion.

“So those people are mean?” He asked, sounding like he was now afraid of the neighbours.

“No sweetie,” Laura said as she led Dan away, “your Uncle is just weird.”

_Maybe I should be better about judging people_, Sherlock thought, _for Dan’s sake._

After all if he was going to be hanging out with his nephew so much once they moved he had to be careful about what he taught him. While he was anxious to start teaching Dan about deductions he didn’t want the kid to fall into his own habits. Even he could admit that he had, at times, judged people so quickly and cruelly by his deductions that he lost their respect before he even really met them. There was no telling how many potential mates he had lost as a teenager and in uni with his deductions- and not to mention potential boyfriends. He had never cared about it before, but he didn’t want Dan growing up alienating people like he did.

“Hmm,” Laura muttered as they walked into the kitchen. Clearly she wasn’t impressed. “It’s not as big as what we have now.”

Sherlock wondered what was missing as he looked around. There was the fridge, the stove, about the same amount of counter space he and John had, and a cupboard.
“What more do you bloody need?” He asked.

Rolling her eyes, Laura replied:

“One thing I’ll miss about our New York home is how much space we have there. I know we won’t that kind of space in London, but I’ll miss it. Our kitchen has this eating area where Dan loves to draw—”

“Why is he drawing in the kitchen?”

“And we have such a huge backyard. Just wait until you see it. Dan can just run for miles and—”

“Miles, really?”

His sister crossed her arms and insisted:

“Miles, really! We have nearly as much land as Mycroft does!”

He couldn’t help but to laugh. He felt bad about it, but there was just no way!

“You’ll see when you go,” Laura pointed out. She turned back to the kitchen, opened the fridge, and her face contorted into disgust. “This house will need work.”

Was there something about house hunting that he was missing? Why did his sister think she could just waltz into London and find the perfect home of her dreams? Homes were practically living, breathing, creatures. They had problems and stories and wear and tear. Homes aren’t perfect- they just aren’t meant to be. The more they walked through the house the more his sister’s impressions about it seemed to worsen.

“It’s just expensive for what it is,” Laura said as they peered into a cupboard in the hall. “The rooms are kind of small.”

“I like my room!” Dan announced.

Laura simply took another glance around the upstairs (which did have an odd layout, Sherlock had to admit) before she let out a sigh of disappointment.

“We should go if we’re going to meet Daddy for lunch,” Laura said to Dan.

She didn’t ask for any more opinions from Sherlock as they filed out of the house and headed to the restaurant.

Sherlock figured he was due for a visit to Angelo’s so he suggested going there. He had taken his family once before, but ever since Angelo had pestered him about when he’d get to see him again. The moment the four of them walked through the door of the half-empty restaurant a bright smile crossed the owner’s face.

“Ah, at last!” Angelo greeted. “The Holmes family!”

“Carter,” Laura mumbled under her breath.

“So I hear you’re moving to London?” Angelo asked Laura as he led them to a table in the back.

Laura glared at him, and he just shrugged. She was going to move soon enough, wasn’t she? It wasn’t like she could keep it a secret forever.
“Yes, Jason’s job is moving him here,” she replied.

“Excellente!” Angelo exclaimed, slapping Jason on the back. “Congratulations, my friend.”

Jason winced at being called Angelo’s ‘friend’ but thanked him nonetheless. Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk; not many people saw what he did in Angelo. People tended to be intimidated by him, but Sherlock admired the man for overcoming the addictions and the life he once led in order to live out his dreams of owning a restaurant. Once Angelo left them alone Laura began showing the pictures of the houses they visited to Jason.

“I agree, it’s not worth the money,” he sighed. “Maybe the next one will be better.”

They shared smiles and then something bizarre happened: they both looked at Sherlock. The consulting detective just blinked, not sure of what they were implying. Was he being set up for something?

Suddenly Laura’s mobile went off. She took it out of her pocket and glanced at the number. Sherlock recognised the area code as upstate New York. His sister’s eyes went wide as she seemed to recognise the number, but instead of answering she quickly reject the call and stuffed the mobile back into her pocket.

“You okay?” Her husband asked, placing a hand on her back as her head fell to her hands.

“Yeah, just…headache.”

It was an obvious lie, but none of them pushed her to talk.

When they arrived at the next house Sherlock realised why they had been staring at him.

“Wait,” he muttered, stopped as he looked up at the flat building. “This is…”

It was his old flat building: the one he and Mycroft lived in. His stomach did flips as a pang of nostalgia hit him. Those hadn’t been good times, but somehow he felt protective of those days as he looked up at the place he had once called home. He lived there between his last year of school and the short time he was at uni, but Mycroft had stayed for a few years. It was a pretty decent flat, and he had always been impressed his brother had been able to afford it, even if he did work as a spook.

“Yup,” Laura replied, grinning proudly. “Mycroft suggested it to us. He said he could probably talk to the landlord and get us a good deal. We would be renting, but it would give us a chance to get to know the city a bit better before deciding which part we want to settle down in.”

That did make sense, and it seemed like Jason was pleased with the idea as he wrapped his arm around his wife.

“Whatever happened to not wanting Mycroft doing all the work?” Sherlock teased.

“Well,” Laura said, but she stopped, unable to think of a comeback. “He said this was a great area for families and that the building is still safe and relatively quiet. I suppose you’re right, if our brother can make our lives easier why not let him?”

Sherlock let out a laugh.

“Right. I’ll remind you of that when he’s putting hidden cameras in your home and tracing your calls.”
His sister’s eyes went wide, and he grinned.

The landlord greeted him at the entrance, and he crossed his arms when he saw Sherlock approaching.

“Mr Holmes,” the landlord greeted dryly. “You aren’t going to be stabbing at any doors again, I hope?”

“Oh he’s upgraded from that,” Laura teased. “Now he shoots at them.”

The landlord’s eyes narrowed, as though he were trying to decide if she were joking or not.

“Third floor,” the landlord told them as he handed Laura a key. “I’ll let you show yourself in. I have no doubt the flat will sell itself, but if you have any questions feel free to ask.”

They showed themselves upstairs and into the flat, and Sherlock was immediately taken back nearly twenty years. He blinked, and he had to shake himself to remember it was 2011. The layout was exactly the same as their old flat, but just with more space. It was in a different section of the building- the section he always knew to have the nicer, more expensive flats. A living room greeted them as they walked in, complete with decent hardwood flooring and a fireplace. There was a small but open kitchen to the left. The master bedroom was off the kitchen and the secondary bedroom was down the hall, giving the parents and kid enough space between them.

“Dan will have to use the living room as a play area,” Laura commented as she wandered around the empty space.

“He does that anyway at home, and we have a bonus room,” Jason pointed out.

“It’s big in here!” Dan exclaimed as he jumped up in the air before taking off, running in circles on the hardwoods.

“That’s because there’s no furniture yet, sweetie,” Laura explained as she caught her son by the arms. “And no running!”

She stole a kiss to the top of Dan’s head.

“I like it,” Jason said as he wandered over to the kitchen. “There are two bedrooms and a small study. It’s actually bigger than I thought it’d be.”

“Again, no furniture,” Laura said.

“And Mycroft’s right, it’s quiet in here,” Jason said as he turned on the faucet for a moment and then opened a few cabinet doors. The building was certainly more updated than it had been when he and his brother lived here. When they lived there one of the burners never worked on the oven, the fridge had a weird stink to it, and the floors had cracks in the bedrooms. They also had a neighbour who would play trombone in the middle of the night.

Trombone.

It was actually when he began playing violin at all hours, as a way of payback. Needless to say, Mycroft nearly strangled him most of those nights.

“Can I see my room?” Dan pleaded, tugging on his mum’s hand.

“Yes,” Laura said, “come on.”
'Dan’s room’ was considerably smaller than the master, but that didn’t keep the four year-old ran around and circles the moment he entered the room. He ran over to the window and began jumping up and down.

“This is where my bed will go!” He exclaimed. He ran over to the close and opened it. “It’s big! I can fit inside.”

He closed the doors to prove his point and giggled.

“You won’t fit inside when we put all your stuff in there,” Jason said as he threw the door open. “Do you like the room, then?”

“Yeah!” Dan said with a bright grin before turning to Sherlock. “Is this where you and Uncle Myc lived?”

Nodding, Sherlock explained:

“We didn’t live in this exact flat, but it was in this building. This room looks almost exactly like my old room.”

It was actually extremely similar to his old room. Sure it was simply a small, square, empty room but he could clearly remember lying in his twin-sized bed (a queen could barely even fit) and just wondering…how did it come to this?

He was certain Mycroft lay in bed across the hall wondering the same thing each night.

In fact, their time in this flat building was actually a rather quiet time. The two brothers hardly talked, hardly saw each other even. Sherlock mostly lay around the flat feeling sorry for himself and Mycroft mostly worked. His brother cooked every now and then when he realised Sherlock hadn’t eaten in a couple of days, and they might have shared the occasional meal, but that was the closest they ever came to bonding.

He wasn’t exactly sure how he felt about his sister’s family moving into the same flat, but he knew it was practical. It was an affordable, safe, roomy flat: why shouldn’t they move in?

“We could sign a year lease,” Jason said. “I’ve been thinking maybe wait to see how the job pans out before buying a place anyway.”

“Yeah,” Laura said. She smiled as she turned to her husband, and their hands clasped together as they shared a kiss.

“Eww!” Dan said, covering his eyes.

The adults in the room laughed, and Jason gave his wife a quick hug.

“Let’s sleep on it. I think that’s enough houses for today for you guys. Everyone ready to go back?” Jason asked.

They all nodded; Laura’s mobile rang again. She glanced at it and her face paled at the number.

“Yeah, let’s go,” Laura muttered before leading everyone outside.

The ride back to Mycroft’s was completely silent. Dan fell asleep against Sherlock’s shoulder, Laura looked out the window, refusing to meet anyone’s eyes, while Jason kept his hand on her knee as he watched her, clearly worried. As soon as they got back to the house Jason pulled him
aside while Laura carried Dan to his bedroom.

“Sherlock,” Jason said, lowering his voice even though there was no one else even near the foyer.
“I’m sorry to have to ask you this, but I need to know. What do you know about your father?”

Sherlock stopped breathing for a moment as he stared at him. That was the last thing he expected Jason to ask. He shrugged his shoulders innocently as he struggled to find the words to say. Finally he settled for:

“Not much, honestly. He left when I was two. I know that he wasn’t the greatest father to neither me and Mycroft nor Laura. I know he’s been to prison. I know he did drugs. And that’s…that’s about it.”

“Here’s the thing,” Jason said, glancing down to the floor nervously before looking up to meet his eyes. “Your father’s out of prison, and he’s been stalking Laura.”

Eyes going wide, Sherlock’s heart began pounding and his insides turned cold.

“What?” He demanded, crossing his arms.

“He keeps calling her,” Jason explains, “she tried blocking his number but he just keeps changing it. He texts her too. Somehow he found her email and he’s been sending her messages. He even found her on Facebook. He’s demanding to see her, demanding to see Dan, and it’s just making her really uncomfortable. She doesn’t want him to be a part of her life, and neither do I. I hate to ask more favours from you and your brother, but you two seem to have a way of…taking people out of the picture. I just want this to end for her. It’s been going on for a couple of weeks now. She just keeps saying it’s no big deal, and she’s made me promise not to tell anyone but I couldn’t keep this a secret any longer. I’m worried about her safety and the safety of our son.”

His hands balled into fists, and he resisted the urge to punch the wall. Why was he hearing this from Jason? Why hadn’t Laura come to him for help? Didn’t she trust him? And what were his father’s intentions? To scare her? Blackmail her? Hurt her?

Squeezing his eyes closed tightly, Sherlock brought a hand to his face and gently massaged his forehead.

“We’ll take care of it,” Sherlock promised, his voice broken and small.

Jason nodded in thanks and placed a hand on his arm before disappearing down the corridor.

Sherlock felt like collapsing.

With shaking hands he took out his mobile to send a message to Mycroft.

_Father is out of prison._

He waited a few moments, expecting an immediate answer, but there was none. He remembered John’s confession that Mycroft had been drunk the night before and Sherlock scowled at his brother’s cowardice. How was he out getting wasted when their father had just been released from prison? Wasn’t it Mycroft’s job to know these things? Isn’t this why he kept such close surveillance on them all? Wouldn’t he keep surveillance on him from the moment he got out of prison?

_He’s stalking Laura. Phoning her. Emailing her. Finding her online._
Growing impatient, Sherlock finally phoned his brother. When he got his voicemail he growled:

“For fuck’s sake just answer me!”

He hung up, breathing hard. Falling back against the wall, Sherlock closed his eyes and rested his head back, trying to calm himself down. He remembered then that there was still a copper in the house, and he knew he’d have to ask Greg for help.

From the smells of curried chicken and vegetables he could tell that Greg was cooking dinner. He wasn’t surprised; Greg was a nervous cooker. Whenever he had a particularly trying case or trial he cooked five course meals. Mycroft was the same way but with baking, making the two of them an excellent pair in the kitchen. But considering the wine glass sitting next to Greg and the mobile sitting beside the glass, Sherlock had a feeling tonight he was cooking because he was worried about his fiancé.

“Greg?” Sherlock announced, unsure of how else to begin.

“Hey,” Greg replied simply, his voice uncharacteristically hollow. “No word from John or Mycroft?”

“Not since last night,” Sherlock admitted, “but I’m sure they’re okay.”

“Yeah, I just wish he’d bloody answer my texts.”

“Me too.”

He knew Greg assumed he was talking about John, and he paused for a moment, not quite sure how to go about asking him for help. He knew Greg would always be willing to help him, no matter the problem, but being Mycroft’s fiancé this was personal for him too. He wasn’t sure if Greg would even be willing to make that kind of intrusion into his partner’s life.

But at this point he didn’t know who else to turn to, and the way his sister seemed so bothered made him think the matter was worse than she was letting on. Even Jason might not know how serious the stalking is.

“My father’s out of prison,” Sherlock finally blurted out, “and he’s stalking Laura. Calls, emails, texts. Jason’s just told me; she made him promise to keep it a secret. He’s wondering if we can do anything to make him go away.”

Greg froze for a moment, one hands rested on the countertop, before he turned to him. All worries about Mycroft seemed to fade away from him for a moment as his usual ‘copper face’ appeared. Nodding, Greg replied:

“Yes, I’ll see what I can do. And I’m sure when Mycroft’s back in civilisation he’ll be all over it.”

“I don’t want him near her,” Sherlock said quietly, “and I especially don’t want him near Dan. He was an abusive addict once, and he could be again.”

Greg nodded and replied, in a small voice:

“Done. I’ll make sure he’s taken care of. I’ll protect your family Sherlock. I’ll protect our family.”

Right. Family. They were proper family now.
“Thanks,” he muttered.

“We’re practically brothers now, you know,” Greg said with a grin as he poured Sherlock a drink.

The corners of Sherlock’s lips turned up in a small grin as he teased:

“You don’t have to keep reminding me.”

“Point is,” Greg said, sliding the glass of wine over to him, “I’m here for you. I like to think I’ve always been there for you, but you can talk to me about anything.”

He passed over a green pepper for Sherlock to begin peeling, and Sherlock helped without protest. Truth be told, Greg had always felt like family to him. He’d never admit it, but there were times when it felt like the DCI was the only family he had. Back when he was on the streets, when he was too much of a coward to turn to his own brother for help, he clung to Greg’s kindness. Sherlock had never had a friend who had genuinely cared for him like Greg did. He didn’t think friends acted like that.

He knew that when Greg said *anything* he meant it.

“Why do you think he’d stalk Laura?” Sherlock asked quietly. “He lost his chance to have a family the moment he hurt him. Why does he think things have changed?”

With a shrug, Greg offered:

“I know it’s not what you want to hear, but sometimes prison *does* change people,” Greg said. “Or at least they think they’ve changed. Sometimes ex-cons don’t realise that the people they’ve hurt, the people’s whose lives they’ve destroyed don’t want anything to do with them.”

“You think he wants forgiveness?”

The copper cringed and admitted:

“Or he could just be a creep.”

That sounded more like the truth to Sherlock.

“Do you know if Mycroft keeps tabs on him?” Sherlock asks. “I thought that if he was out of prison Mycroft would do everything he could to make sure he stayed away from Laura.”

For a moment Greg stayed quiet, and Sherlock had the feeling his friend was comfortable with talking about Mycroft’s power over their security.

“To be honest, he just doesn’t want anything to do with him,” Greg confessed, “I’m sure he keeps some sort of tabs on him, but I wouldn’t be surprised if he appointed someone else to do the work for him. Honestly…he’s not too comfortable talking about your father at all.”

Sherlock nodded, understanding. He hadn’t exactly felt too comfortable talking to John about his father either, but perhaps he didn’t appreciate just how much Mycroft was traumatised by his childhood.

“He’s out of prison and living in New York,” Sherlock announced, “just like…like a normal person. We’ll be there next month, in the same state. What if…what if we met him? What do you think he’d say? Christ, do you think he’d even care? He never even bothered to phone me. Not on my birthday, not on Christmas, not ever.”
“Are you jealous that he’s stalking her instead of you?”

Maybe Greg a valid question, but Sherlock downed the rest of the wine just to keep from getting angry.

“No,” he said, fighting to keep calm. “No, I just want to know what made him stay with them and not us?”

Their eyes met, and Sherlock wondered if Greg was regretting offering to talk to him. He wasn’t sure what made him want to pour his soul out at that moment, but he reached for the wine and poured another glass.

If he brother could get drunk then so could he.

“I was left by my wife, yeah?” Greg said. “Afterwards I kept tabs on her. I shouldn’t have, but I did. She’s kept up with her relationship with the gym teacher. They’ve just announced their bloody engagement on Facebook, for Christ’s sake. And I just think…what did she find in him that she didn’t find to me? I’ve got a better job than him, I’m better looking, I…fuck, that’s a lie, he’s totally better looking than me.”

Sherlock let out a laugh before sipping more of the wine. He passed the green pepper back to Greg and watched as he continued cooking.

“No, you’re way hotter than he was,” Sherlock announced. He froze, and his face turned red when he realised he actually said that out loud. He never thought of Greg in any kind of romantic way, but of course he’d noticed how good looking he was…he just never meant to admit it!

“Thanks for that,” Greg smirked as he poured himself another glass. “He was charming, though, in his own creepy way.”

“Maybe.”

Sherlock poured himself some more wine as he watched his friend continue to cook.

“I don’t know why people choose other people,” Greg finally muttered, “but honestly…I wouldn’t complain that he didn’t choose you.”

Their eyes met again, and he understood what his friend was implying. Even though it was hard growing up without a dad at least he had a mum who loved him and took care of him. Even as traumatising as it was to lose her, his childhood would have probably been a lot more hellish if his father had stuck around. He was sure, deep down, that Mycroft was probably grateful their father left when he did. They just both wished their father ended up living his life alone and miserable instead of screwing up some other family’s lives too.

“I’m not complaining,” Sherlock whispered. He finished his glass and reached for the bottle to pour another, but Greg stopped him. He knew his friend worried about his addictive personality, but he was fine with drinking. Really. “I’m okay.”

His friend just raised an eyebrow and stored the bottle away.

It was probably for the best.

He probably wasn’t okay.

“What if I want to see him?” Sherlock asked quietly.
Greg stole a glance toward him.

“What if I want to ask him questions?” He went on.

His mate paused before he replied:

“What kind of questions?”

“Like…why? How could you, you fucking bastard?”

He was handed a zucchini to peel as Greg contemplated his questions.

“I’ve had a lot of victim’s family say things along those lines,” Greg admitted. “They want to visit them in prison and just demand why. But these psychopaths, they just don’t think like us. You shouldn’t try to wrap your head around a reason why because frankly, you probably don’t want to know why. You should just be proud of the man you’ve become. You your own person Sherlock; you’re not him.”

“He’s a drug addict,” he muttered.

“I know,” his friend said, his sympathetic eyes flashing toward him, “but you are not him. You’re a good man. I’m proud to call you my friend, and I’m proud to call you family.”

A small smile formed on Sherlock’s face.

“Yeah,” Sherlock said, “big brother.”

He reached for the bottle of wine again, hopeful that Greg might be nicer about letting him have another glass, but his friend held it out of reach.

“And my first duty as big brother is to keep you from getting wasted,” Greg announced.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock just continued helping with the dinner prep and decided to not mention that his fiancé was probably hungover at this very moment.

Chapter End Notes

Why was Mycroft drunk? Where will Laura decide to live? Will Sherlock decide to find his father in New York? Answers to everything in time! Next up we’ll check back in to Baskerville! Thanks for reading! I appreciate your feedback!
Doctor Watson Returns

Chapter Notes

This chapter is full of doctor!John, but please keep in mind the trigger warnings for this case of rape and trauma. Oh, and remember, me? Not actually a doctor.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After telling Mycroft the truth the government official simply stormed out of the room, leaving John alone with his distressed patient. Sam was still breathing hard, trying to overcome the grief of her nightmare, and having to confess her trauma had obviously made her even more anxious.

“Don’t think badly of him,” Sam said quietly as she wringed her hands together. “He deals with anger in his own ways. I remember it well: one minute he would be holding my hand, telling me it would be okay, and one minute he would lock himself in a room for hours at a time. He needs time to process. If he doesn’t cool off first he’ll end up on the phone ordering executions.”

Their eyes met, and she was clearly panicking that she let that tidbit slip out.

“Not that he actually does that,” she added. “Did he tell you about, you know…us? It’s okay if he did.”

John hesitated; he really wasn’t sure that it was okay that Mycroft told him about his patient’s miscarriage without her permission. Considering how delicate this case was for Sam, he wanted to make sure there was a strong level of trust between them.

“Sam,” John began. On instinct he wanted to reach out and grab her hand, but he didn’t want to overstep any boundaries. “Your secret’s safe with me. I’m so sorry for what happened to you and Mycroft. No one deserves what you’ve been through. There was one thing I learned from Mycroft’s story though, and it’s that you are incredibly strong.”

“Thank you,” Sam whispered, offering him a small, grateful, smile. She blinked, rubbed her eyes, and looked around the room as though she were getting her bearings. “What time is it?”

Glancing at his watch, John was shocked to find it was already half seven.

“Seven-thirty at night,” John replied. “Are you hungry? I can see about getting you some soup, or maybe some toast.”

A pained look fell across Sam’s face, like she would have loved nothing more than to eat but was afraid to.

“I was so hungry when I was held captive,” she admitted softly as she hugged her arms around her body. She looked down at the bruised legs spread out before her and shook her head absent-mindedly, like she hardly recognised herself. “But now I feel like if I eat I’ll be sick.”

“Maybe some rice?” John suggested. “Something nice and bland.”

“No!” Sam exclaimed, her voice so full of fear that John’s heart skipped a beat. “Sorry, it’s just rice is all they fed me. It wasn’t very much of it at a time. They’d give me a few spoonfuls and
then they’d stop…they used my own hunger against me.”

A pit formed in John’s stomach. He remembered soldiers telling him similar stories after being captured. The thought sickened and angered him so much he wanted to storm after Mycroft and help him get revenge.

“You’ve got to eat,” John encouraged. “After a trauma it’s natural to be afraid to let yourself get back into routine, even with something as mundane as eating. You’re safe now; you’re free. You need to relate food to something good again. It’s okay to take care of yourself.”

To his surprise Sam reached out for his hand and squeezed it.

“Thank you,” she said. “Dr Watson-”

“Please,” he said, shaking his head, “you can call me John.”

“John,” Sam corrected. She stared at him for a moment, as though determining how much she could really trust him. “I feel sorta numb, you know…”

She pointed below her hips, and he nodded, understanding.

“I can’t decide if it’s in my mind or not,” she admitted, “and my legs they’re really sore.”

He swallowed, nervous to ask but he knew he needed to re-examine her.

“Do you mind if I-?”

“No,” Sam said, shaking her head. “You’re a doctor, I trust you.”

Neither of them talked as he examined her. When he reached her beneath her hips and pressed gently she flinched but still claimed she couldn’t feel anything- which indicated to him that maybe her numbness was psychological. He didn’t want to tell her out right that because he was afraid she would feel guilty.

“It’s all in my head, isn’t it?” Sam asked, as though sensing his guilt.

“It’s okay,” John replied sincerely. “I’ve been there, trust me, and whatever you’re feeling-physically and mentally- you shouldn’t be ashamed of. There’s no right or wrong.”

John subconsciously glanced down to his injured leg and asked:

“Can I tell you a secret?”

She nodded, eagerly. Of course- she was a government agent, she loved secrets. And she seemed to want his trust.

“I was shot a couple of weeks ago,” he admitted, “and I had my first physical therapy session a couple of days ago and I royally blew it. I managed like two steps and I just collapsed. I couldn’t go on. It happens to the best of us, but I know- and you should know too- that you should never feel bad about it. My therapist told me that it’s not about how quickly you get there- it’s that you get there at all. And he was absolutely right. We’ll get there, both of us.”

A small peered from the corner of her lips as she replied:

“Should I be worried that my doctor is going through physical therapy for a gunshot wound?” She asked.
She said it as a joke, but John knew it was a totally valid question.

“Maybe that’s why Mycroft wanted me to help you,” he suggested.

“We can help each other.”

He nodded in agreement.

After redressing the wounds that had become infected and giving her a higher dose of antibiotics, her fever finally went down at least enough to where he was comfortable with leaving her sleeping on her own. Once he was certain Sam was asleep he got a cup of water from the sink and took his own meds before wheeling himself out of the room. It was time he found Mycroft- and time he found somewhere to sleep.

Surprisingly, he didn’t have to travel far to find Mycroft. He found the government official sitting just outside his patient’s room, in a plastic chair that hadn’t been there earlier. His suit jacket was draped against the back of the seat, his sleeves were rolled up to his forearms, and a large wineglass sat in his hands. A bottle of pinot noir rested beside him on the floor. Assuming Mycroft had opened the bottle that night, he was already two glasses into it.

“I don’t remember Baskerville being known from its wine,” John teased, a pitiful attempt to break the ice.

A half-hearted smirk rose from Mycroft’s lips before he confirmed:

“I keep a small collection in my office…for emergencies.”

“I call any time you have to visit this place an ‘emergency’.”

“Exactly.”

John let out a laugh.

“So…” he said, looking around as he considered Mycroft’s words. “You have an office here, then?”

His friend nodded toward a door across the corridor. It was white and unmarked; John actually hadn’t noticed it before because it nearly blended in with the walls. Wordlessly, Mycroft got up from the chair and led him to the office. He unlocked the door and pushed it open to reveal an office that was practically empty. Save for a desk and chair, desk lamp, and wardrobe, there was nothing. No personal items, no paintings or pictures on the wall, no diplomas or even any markings as to whose office it belonged to.

“Every now and then I must spend a day or weekend up here,” Mycroft explained. “Usually after a good half hour I need somewhere to lock myself up to make decisions.”

He opened up the wardrobe to reveal it was empty save for a few changes of clothes and a wine cooler.

“Or hoard wine,” John said as he stared in awe at Mycroft’s collection.

“This is nothing compared to the collection I keep in my main office,” Mycroft admitted. “It’s not just for me, though, it’s good for…special meetings.”
“And by that you mean getting people drunk and swaying their votes.”

The comment earned him a wink, and somehow John wasn’t surprised by the confession.

“Would you like a glass?” Mycroft offered as he picked out a bottle of merlot and stored the pinot that was open.

“Currently practising medicine, remember?” He pointed out. “Besides, I just took my meds.”

Mycroft nodded absent-mindedly, as though he hadn’t quite been paying attention.

“Many of my agents have experienced torture,” Mycroft announced suddenly. His eyes were distant, dark, as he poured himself another glass. His hands were steady, trained at pouring even if he might be a bit buzzed himself. “It’s something that everyone secretly fears when they enter into service. They understand the violence and risks that come with the job. But Sam, it was like she prepared for it. She was born for this job.

She has walked out of some experiences most people could never dream of going through, and in the end she would simply go back to her desk and resume business as usual. Sam is strong; she’s one of the strongest people I know. But there’s nothing that could have prepared her for this. Has she…has she said anything about what exactly they did to her?”

The doctor shook his head. It wasn’t just that there was strict confidentiality between he and Sam, but she really hadn’t told him anything specific.

“I’m not sure I really want to know,” Mycroft admitted. Drawing in a deep breath, he sniffed at the wine before tipping back the glass and letting it run down his throat. He shuddered, as though the alcohol was really starting to hit him. “When we were together we were so close. She was someone I could trust, someone I could talk to about anything. I truly cared for her. I will never understand how men can do such a thing to their fellow humans. It doesn’t matter what religious or cultural background you are from, rape is an unimaginable act. It should be unimaginable. I can’t imagine what men like that are thinking. Do they not think of their own relatives, perhaps their sisters or mothers? How could they ever do that to someone, knowing that is someone’s loved one? Knowing that person is human?”

“I know,” John whispered. “Every time I meet a rape victim I think the same thing. I’ve helped date rape victims too, and those cases are some of the most mind-blowing. How anyone can do that to someone they know, sometimes someone they even claimed to have loved once. I have to try to not think about the whys while I’m treating patients.”

Sinking down to his desk chair, Mycroft gazed at his glass for a long moment before taking another sip. Mentally, John was keeping a check of how much and how fast Mycroft was drinking. He didn’t know his boyfriend’s brother to be a particularly heavy drinker, but anyone could accidently get carried away with alcohol under these circumstances. He decided maybe it was best better to just be upfront.

“If you need to get pissed, it’s okay.”

He felt a bit better acknowledging Mycroft clearly intended to get drunk, but he was only offered a faint smile.

“I’ll get someone to bring in a couple of cots, and we can stay the night in my office,” Mycroft announced, ignoring him. “I know it’s not the most comfortable of arrangements, but I’m sure you prefer to be close to your patient.”
John nodded. It was ideal to be as close to Sam as possible in case she woke up in pain or panic again. Another long moment of silence fell between them. Mycroft finished his glass and poured another, but he hesitated for a few moments before drinking it. Even then he only took a sip and winced, like the alcohol was becoming too strong for him. Yet he sipped on, and the more he drank the more he seemed comfortable with the strength of the wine.

He began to wonder what Mycroft was thinking of doing about Sam’s situation. She was his agent, but surely he couldn’t expect her to go back into the field so soon after this. Not to mention all that she witnessed, all she must have heard, it would be a risk to keep her in London were there to still be people out there connected to her kidnapping. If they learned she was still alive, they may want to make sure she never got the chance to tell what all really happened and who was behind it.

“Are you going to put her into some sort of witness protection?”

Letting out a long sigh, Mycroft finished off his glass and leaned forward, resting his fingertips to his chin.

“It will be up to her,” he replied. “I think she will want to return to the service. If she insists on it I will see that she has some desk work; I don’t want her to go back into the field too soon. Then again, I don’t know what’s going on in her mind right now. Perhaps she will decide she’d rather live out the rest of her life in peace, in safety.”

“I wouldn’t blame her if she did decide to retire,” John confessed.

“Neither would I. She deserves a nice retirement. She once told me she always wanted to move to…well, I suppose I shouldn’t tell you.”

John let out a hollow laugh; in reality Mycroft had probably told him far too much already.

“Can I ask you something personal, John?”

He nodded, eager to gain Mycroft’s trust. They were practically family, right? He was already starting to see Mycroft as more human than just the man behind the curtain, but he wanted to start seeing him as, well, a brother in law.

“You and Sherlock seem to have a really open relationship. You two can share anything, yes?”

“Yes…”

He wasn’t quite sure where this was going. Was Mycroft actually about to ask him for relationship advice?

“If this happened to either someone you or Sherlock knew you would be able to tell each other everything,” Mycroft began. “Between Gregory and I things are different. There is a significant amount of secrecy involved in both of our jobs- more so in mine, I suppose. Quite honestly when he proposed to me I thought: how are we ever going to be married? How are we ever going to establish the level of trust required in a marriage? I wish I could tell him everything. There are days when I come home to him and I just want to tell him every single thing there is to know about me. But I can’t, because of my job. Because of some contract I signed when I was half your age. Some days I wonder what I was thinking. Some days I wonder why I chose this career path. Some days I wonder if, deep down, I was thinking it would be a good excuse to not have to get close to anyone. Some days I just hate it.”

John just stayed quiet. He felt for Mycroft, for his desperation to have a normal relationship. He didn’t know what he would do without the openness of his and Sherlock’s relationship. On any
given night he could curl up next to his lover, pour out his soul, and there would be no consequences. He couldn’t imagine what it must be like to have to box all of that up.

But what Mycroft needed most right now was encouragement. John wasn’t sure if the elder Holmes was just going through a career-crisis or a mid-life crisis, but he obviously needed a friend.

“You took the job because you knew you were the best man for it,” John said. “You know you’re the person most capable of making the kinds of decisions you make on a day-to-day basis. You like being in control because it means that you- and only you- are in control of your future and the future of this country. Could you really sit back and let someone else take over?”

There was a twinkle in the elder Holmes’ eye, and John had his answer. Deep down, there was no way Mycroft could hand the government over to anyone else.

“I’m sorry to have you see me like this,” Mycroft confessed. “I’m a bit of a mess.”

*A bit?* John thought, bemused. Mycroft’s face was pale and he was beginning to sweat. His hands shook slightly as he finished off his glass, but he downed the drink in one swallow.

“Can I tell you a secret, John?” He asked quietly as he stared into the wine glass. “Deep down I want the quiet life at home. I want to live the married life. I want to watch Dan grow up. I want to be able to cook dinner for my husband every night and go on trips on the weekends. We’ve been planning to visit southern France, you know. We’ve talked about going over a weekend for nearly two years now but something always comes up.”

“You should go after the civil partnership is official,” John suggested. “You know, as a sort of honeymoon.”

The government official’s lips peered up, and a bit more colour settled in his cheeks.

“I’m sure Gregory would love that. His family is from France. Not many of his relatives are still living, but he has always been interested in his heritage. And I’ve always enjoyed a good French wine.”

He nodded toward the bottle and reached for more, but John stopped him.

“Maybe you should pace yourself,” he suggested. “Do you have any water?”

Letting out a long sigh, Mycroft pointed to the wardrobe. John found a case of water hidden behind the wine cooler and took one out for Mycroft and one for himself.

“You’ll think yourself in the morning,” John said, and explained: “Alcohol dehydrates you; that’s what makes you sick in the morning.”

“Thanks, Doctor.”

There was a hint of sarcasm in his voice, and John felt stupid, realising it was a pretty obvious piece of advice that Mycroft would surely know.

“When will she be ready to be discharged?” Mycroft asked.

He stopped to really consider how Sam did that day.

“Her blood pressure is stable, and her fluids are better,” he began, “she hasn’t been able to keep food down, though, and a couple of wounds became infected. I think the wounds should improve
overnight as the antibiotics kick in, but she has a fever and I want to make sure that goes down and stays down. Her broken ribs will need to be redressed periodically. I’m also concerned about making sure she’s stable mentally. I want to make sure she feels safe.”

Mycroft finished off his bottle of water and John handed him another. The move earned him a glare, but he didn’t want to have to explain to his friend the DCI why his fiancé came home with a massive hangover.

“I’m arranging protection for her, should she want to take it,” Mycroft said, in a voice that said she would probably have to take it rather she wanted it or not. “But when all has been set, there will probably be a short time frame of when I can get her to the location.”

John knew this was a place where he had no room to argue; Mycroft was going to move with or without his consent. Obviously the government official just felt better having that consent.

“I think she should be wherever the safest place for her is,” he offered.

“Good,” Mycroft sighed before taking another sip of wine.

The night ended up being one of the longest he could remember having in a while. He felt strangely like he was back in the barracks again as their cots were brought into the room. John settled into his, trying to relax, while Mycroft worked his way toward the bottom of his bottle of wine. Two more drinks and an hour later, and his face was full of shame, like he was already regretting drinking so much alcohol. The doctor handed him over another bottle of water and instructed him to drink it all before going to sleep. While Mycroft downed the water he wheeled himself down the hall, distancing himself from the office so he’d have enough privacy to give Sherlock a call. He had noticed a missed call from him, and he didn’t want his boyfriend worrying something had happened to him.

Hearing Sherlock’s voice brought a genuine smile on his face. His shoulders relaxed, his chest felt less tight, and by the time they hung up John felt maybe he could get some sleep.

He was wrong.

He slept for a solid hour before being plagued with dreams of the war. He woke up with a stifled shout and looked over to Mycroft in a panic, hoping he hadn’t woken him up. The eldest Holmes sibling was sound asleep in his drunken slumber. With a heavy sigh he rolled back over and spent the night staring at the ceiling.

Throughout the night he could have sworn he heard sounds of gunshots or cries of fallen shoulders, but he shook himself out of it, telling himself being back in a military environment was getting to him. When morning finally came around he found plates of toast, fruit, and eggs waiting on the desk— but Mycroft was nowhere to be seen. His stomach growled at the sight of food, and he took a moment to gobble down the cold eggs. He took some of the fruit and toast to Sam’s room, hoping she’d feel like eating. He was afraid he would be waking her too early (it was only six), but he was surprised to find she was lying awake, curled up in the fetal position, and gazing into the distance.

“I wish they had windows here,” she muttered.

“Do you think you can eat?” John asked.

“Actually, yes,” Sam admitted. There was a hint of guilt in her voice, like she felt bad for having to ask for something.
“There are some eggs left, if you’d like.”
Sam waved her hand at him in disgust.

“Too much cholesterol,” she pointed out.

He was certain his cheeks reddened in embarrassment; he probably ate far too many eggs than any doctor should.

“You need the protein,” he argued.

Their eyes met, and they stared each other down for a moment like children waiting to see who would blink first.

“Fine,” she finally sighed.

He finished off his own toast and fruit while she ate. They stayed silent, neither wanting to comment on the horrible night they had.

“How do you feel?” John asked after Sam finished eating.

She shrugged.

“Dunno yet,” she admitted. “Sort of nauseous. I’m not in as much pain as yesterday, though. My head feels better. But I just don’t feel like myself.”

“I know the feeling,” John nodded. He didn’t feel right trying to say that to a victim of rape, but he wanted her to feel like she wasn’t alone. “I was an army doctor for years in Afghanistan, until one day I got shot. All at once it felt like my life was over. I was fighting for life in some foreign army hospital- under the care of the same staff that usually took orders from me. It felt like I was galaxies away from home, and I just felt so alone. What was worse, I knew my career was over. I would be discharged and sent home to start over again.”

“So you’ve been shot twice now?” Sam asked, her eyes going wide.

“Yeah.”

He didn’t want to tell her that he felt like he had cheated death in Afghanistan or that he was certain he’d have panic attacks if he tried to work on another murder investigation, but she did seem to understand what she was getting at.

“You’re not alone,” he reiterated softly. “I may not know personally what you’re going through, but I’ve been through my fair share of trauma. I’ve helped people who have been through rape and trauma. Medically, I think you will be ready to go home once your fever levels out and your infection completely clears, but I want to make sure you are getting the best care and support.”

“Thank you,” Sam said. Her smile was returning again, and her face seemed so much brighter with much better colour than it had the day before. “Really, thank you for everything. I’ve never felt so comfortable working with a doctor.”

“It’s no problem, really,” John said.

He had to keep himself from smiling with pride. It did feel really good to be treating a patient again, and he had missed that feeling doctor get when they really make a difference to their patient’s health. It made him feel so…needed. Wanted. Useful.
Maybe, he thought, just maybe I should look into practising medicine again.

His focus for the day was to just try to get her mind off what she was going through. He couldn’t imagine how terrifying it must be to be stuck in this tiny room, with no windows and no one to help but some strange doctor in a wheelchair to talk to. This was why hospital rooms had tellys, he thought, to ease the tension. But there was no television in sight, nor board game or even a laptop. Although…there was the mobile lying on Sam’s bedside table.

“Is that your private mobile?” He asked, pointing to the phone.

Sam picked the phone up and stared at it, confused.

“Yes,” she replied, hesitant. “I asked Mycroft for it, and he fetched it from my flat.”

“Here,” he said, smiling as he motioned for her to give him the phone. She stared at him for a moment, uncertain if she should trust him— it was as though he were asking for her to confess her deepest, darkest, secret. At last she handed him the mobile, and he downloaded the quiz app he had been playing for the past few weeks onto it. “I’ve been erm, utilizing my mobile while on bed rest. Turns out some of these apps aren’t half bad. The quiz ones are quite addicting, and if you’re anything like Mycroft I’m sure you rather enjoy bragging about your knowledge of history and political trivia.”

“I do enjoy that,” Sam admitted, “but I have a secret passion…pop music.”

John raised an eyebrow in surprise.

“Pop music?” He repeated. “Like…Michael Jackson?”

Sam giggled.

“Like…Lady Gaga.”

Her cheeks turned red as John burst out laughing. It was the very last thing he expected her to say, but there was somehow he felt relieved.

“Please don’t tell Mycroft,” she pleaded. “You have no idea how many symphonies he took me to when we dated. For someone who’s job is so concerned with current affairs he knows very little of current pop culture affairs. But I love it!”

“Your secret’s safe with me,” he said, crossing his hand over his heart. “I’m just glad to be able to talk modern music with someone. When I mention modern music to my boyfriend he thinks I mean early 20th century. He’s a brilliant violinist, but he wouldn’t know Lady Gaga if she walked up to our door and said she had a case for us.”

They both laughed, and Sam loaded the app and they synced their accounts so they could play pop music trivia. They spent that morning playing games and simply relaxing. Every now and then he would check her vitals, and he was pleased to see they remained in good shape. As he listened to her heart once more Sam stared at her mobile, and after a long pause she confessed:

“I went online last night, and I ended up reading all these stories from other rape victims. I found everything from forums, to short stories, to blogs. It was really encouraging.”

“Realising that you’re not alone is a really big step,” John said. “It’s really good to be able to see how other victims have been able to get help.”
“At first I thought I wanted to go back to work,” Sam went on, “assuming I still have a job. But I’m honestly not sure if I’m ready. I’m honestly not sure if I really want to. I’m...tired. I’m exhausted, mentally and physically. I’ve been doing this job for half of my bloody life, and I just think it’s time for a change. I don’t know exactly what that’s going to be, but I know Mycroft is going to offer me witness protection. I think I might take it. I was afraid, at first, at the thought of starting over, but I think I’m ready for the challenge.”

He couldn’t have been prouder of her.

They ended up being at Baskerville another three days while Sam recovered. Mycroft brought them both changes of clothes and their laptops; he was pleased to see that Sam shared a similar taste in movies. He was grateful to finally have someone to watch all those science fiction films on Netflix with- someone who wouldn’t make fun of him, that was. He could see how Mycroft fell in love with her when they were younger. Sam had such a great personality, and even though she was obviously still in pain she tried to smile through it instead of feeling sorry for herself. She seemed happy to have the company, and John didn’t argue with staying by her side even when she didn’t constantly need medical attention.

At the end of the third day they both took wheelchairs outside so they could finally get some fresh air.

“It’s beautiful out here,” Sam committed as she gazed out at the moor. “Beautiful and sad.”

“Those were my first thoughts,” John said. He stopped himself short, deciding she didn’t need to know about the Hound. “It’s so beautiful out here for the secrets this place holds.”

“Tell me about it,” Sam snorted. “Coming out to Baskerville used to make my blood turn cold. I think Mycroft quite enjoyed it for the longest time. He liked to find out all the government secrets that he could, seeing how all these top secret experiments were done and being in control over it. But honestly, he doesn’t have as much control over this sector as he thinks he does. I probably shouldn’t be telling you all this.”

There seemed to be a lot of that going around lately, but John didn’t mind. It was nice to be on the receiving end of all these secrets for a change. Sherlock usually would give in and tell him exactly what was going on with his brother’s job, but it was nice to be trusted enough to be told upfront.

“Don’t worry about it,” he offered.

For a moment they simply let their eyes absorb in the scenery. The sky was a dull shade of blue-grey. The wind was picking up ever so slightly. The moor looked dead- and yet it had such a life of its own.

“That will be the hardest part, I think,” Sam admitted quietly, “giving up the control. Giving up the things you know and the people you know. I think Mycroft would go mental if he didn’t have control over the world every day.”

“Having control isn’t everything.” They both jumped at the sound of Mycroft’s voice. Mycroft approached them with a firm smile on his face, as though he as amused that they were standing around gossiping about him. Better he was amused than angry, he supposed.

“Oh yeah?” Sam challenged. “When was the last time someone made a decision for you?”

“Just this morning,” Mycroft said, in a mocking tone. “I asked my assistant if she preferred the
navy tie or charcoal tie. She said the navy.”

Sam’s nose scrunched up in disapproval.

“You should have gone with charcoal,” she commented.

“Thank you; I do miss your fashion criticisms.”

He turned to John and rolled his eyes.

“You and your three piece suits,” Sam sighed. “I don’t know how your fiancé takes it.”

Mycroft simply shrugs.

“His closet is also all suits,” Mycroft explained.

“Men are boring,” she shot.

John found himself laughing again. It was nice to see Mycroft act so…human. Somehow it was reassuring to know that at one time there was someone besides Greg who could make him laugh.

“How much did you hear me say?” Sam asked. Her eyes diverted to the ground, and John realised she was worried Mycroft overheard her talking about leaving the Service.

In response Mycroft simply lifted his arms to her shoulders and gazed into her eyes. For a moment John felt out of place, like he was getting a glimpse into a flashback he had no business seeing. But he wasn’t told to leave, and it felt it would be too awkward to excuse himself. Instead of speaking Sam wrapped her arms around Mycroft’s waist, forcing him into a hug.

“I don’t know how anyone could ever hurt you,” Mycroft murmured.

“Comes with the job,” Sam whispered, her voice so hollow and quiet John knew she didn’t believe herself.

“No,” Mycroft said, shaking his head as they broke apart. “It shouldn’t. I never should have put you in that situation. I’m sorry.”

“I’ve told you, don’t be,” Sam insisted. “There’s no one to blame but the men who hurt me.”

Mycroft gazed at her this eyes full of admiration. John had the feeling he was underestimating how strong their relationship was. These two were partners- partners at work, partners in crime, and even at one time romantic partners. Then it hit him what he was witnessing: two great friends saying goodbye.

“You’re going to suggest that I go into witness protection,” Sam announced.

The government official offered a stiff nod.

“Regardless of the outcome of our jobs, I can offer it. I can’t force you to take it, but it would be the best option to ensure your safety. And if you truly want to start over, it would be the best option to leave this life behind.”

Glancing back toward Baskerville, Sam’s eyes seem to notice something, and John saw that she was looking at a black sedan that seemed to be waiting for her.

“Is that my ride?” She asked.
“If you would like to take it.”

A sad smile crossed her face, and Sam drew in a deep breath, like she was trying to keep herself from breaking down. John stiffened when she turned to him.

“Am I ready to go, Doctor?”

It was about a day earlier than he had planned on sending her home. On the other hand her infection had drastically improved with the new antibiotic, and as long as she stuck to the dosage she should continue healing fine. He felt her forehead, just to be sure, and was satisfied when it still appeared that her temperature was still down. She needed to take careful care of her broken ribs, but he it wasn’t as though he could keep her in hospital for another few weeks. Her other cuts were healing nicely, and even some of her bruises were starting to fade. If Mycroft needed her to go, she was strong physically to go. John knew she could take care of herself. He just hated to see her go off on her own, with no medical professional to turn to if any more complications returned. Not to mention he usually liked to follow up his medical care with a referral to a trusted therapist or group therapy program.

“Believe it or not I actually employee several doctors who specialise in taking care of injured agents and witnesses who must go into protection,” Mycroft reassured him, as though reading his mind. “And I can make sure to refer her to the best psychological help- if she wants it.”

With a small, grateful, smile, Sam nodded.

“I’d appreciate that,” she said quietly.

“Then I don’t see why not,” John said with a shrug. “I wish you the best. It’s been an honour.”

He stuck out a hand, and she shook on it. She wheeled herself close enough to him to be able to throw her arms around him, and he hugged her back.

“Thank you so much,” Sam whispered into his ear. “You’re a brilliant doctor. I couldn’t have gotten through these past few days without the support you’ve given me. It will be hard, adjusting to a new life while trying to come to terms with what happened, but you’ve given me the strength to know I can do it.”

His blush grew, and he felt his cheeks burning hot.

“You’re very strong,” he replied as they broke apart. “And personally, I think you’re making the right decision. Go do something amazing with the rest of your life. You deserve it. Be safe, and take care of yourself.”

“I will,” Sam promised. She looked around the gloomy, windy, cool state of the moor and let out a laugh. “Preferably somewhere tropical with, you know, sun.”

She winked at Mycroft, and his lips turned up in a knowing smile. Pulling Mycroft back down to her level, she gave him a quick peck on the cheek before murmuring:

“You should really consider what we talked about.”

He simply placed his hand over hers and squeezed it.

“So, I really must go now?” Sam said with a sigh.

Mycroft nodded.
“I’m afraid so, if we are going to do this.”

The way Mycroft said it made John think that he wasn’t just whisking Sam away to a tropical island to live out retirement. Maybe he wasn’t being told as much as he thought he was.

But from the glimmer of sadness in Mycroft’s eyes, he had a feeling the two were being truthful about their goodbyes.

“Thank you for everything,” Sam said to her friend. “And good luck.”

Mycroft only nodded and swallowed, nervously. He said nothing as she wheeled herself toward the car. John stayed silent, out of respect, until Sam was safely helped into the car by the driver. When at last the roar of the engine could no longer be heard he turned back to Mycroft who looked positively…relieved.

“It will be good for her,” John announced.

“I know,” Mycroft replied curtly. “Unfortunately, I’ve just lost the best employee I’ve ever had. Besides Anthea, of course.”

What he was leaving out was that he losing one of his best friends as well.

“But she will be safe,” Mycroft went on, “and I thank you, John for all your help.”

He withdrew something from his pocket, and John was furious when he saw it was a chequebook.

“No,” John insisted, shaking his head. “No, like I said, it was my honour.”

“Please,” Mycroft said, handing him a cheque that was worth more than he made at times in a week as a practising doctor. He felt more than uncomfortable about taking money from Mycroft, but it was no secret that he and Sherlock could use it.

Plus Sherlock probably would have snuck the money out of his brother’s bank account at some point anyway.

“Thanks,” he muttered, carefully pocketing the cheque inside his jacket. “I can tell she was a fantastic agent.”

“And even more fantastic of a person,” Mycroft offered. His eyes raised to the moor before them, endless and mysterious. With a sigh, he positioned himself beside John’s hair. “Come, John. I’m sure Sherlock’s anxious to see you. Oh, and here-“

He reached into his pocket again and pulled out a plain, black, flip phone.

“Sam will be well looked after, but just in case I’m issuing you this mobile to communicate with her. Only she has this number. I’m afraid I can’t give you hers, but rest assured that unless she phones you it is good indication that she is okay.”

It did ease him to have at least some sort of communication with his patient. He pocketed the mobile with a quiet ‘thanks’ and let Mycroft roll him back to where a second car had pulled up. As they settled into the backseat John took one last look at Baskerville as it faded away. As proud as he was of his work over the past few days, he truly hoped he’d never be called back there for a case again.

Unfortunately his wish wouldn’t come true.
I really enjoyed writing doctor!John, I think he was really in his element here. This segment started as a way to introduce more background to Mycroft's character, but it ended up being a great way to give John that push into having confidence again. What did you think about Sam and Mycroft? Thanks for reading! I appreciate all feedback!
I realised I should probably add a trigger warning about divorce, since that has a big role in the story and will for Sherlock as he further delves into his past. I'll add a tag about it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sherlock didn’t remember anything about his father. It seemed like Mycroft didn’t either because whenever he asked him about their dad all he got was “I don’t know, Sherlock”. Then his eleven year-old brother would storm off and lock himself in his room.

Why did everyone act like one day his father just disappeared? Mummy never mentioned him. Neither did Gran. But somewhere he had a father, and he wanted to know who he was. He was five, he was old enough to know!

So one Sunday afternoon he found Mummy sitting in her favourite spot in the back of the house, in the room he heard people call ‘the sunroom’. He didn’t get why because it was never too sunny there. She was reading, but she didn’t seem to mind when he climbed onto her lap.

“What you reading Mummy?” He asked.

“It’s called Our Mutual Friend,” she replied.

By the time he was twelve, Our Mutual Friend would become one of his favourites. Not that he would ever admit that he read Dickens.

“Can I ask you a question?” He said as he settled into her arms.

“Go for it.”

She kissed him on the top of the head before setting her book aside. She took a sip of her tea. His stomach growled, begging for some juice, but he forced himself to ignore it. He had a mission.

“Where is my daddy?”

There was a long moment of silence following his question. He felt her arms stiffen around him, and for a split second he felt guilty for asking. But then he reminded himself: I deserve to know! I want to know why I have a Mummy but not a Daddy.

“We’ve talked about this before, love,” his mum replied quietly, running her hands through his curls to soothe him. “Some families only have mummies, some families only have daddies, and some have both. Our family just has a mummy.”

“But whyyyyy?”

Mummy let out a long sigh, and he couldn’t help but to feel a bit angry. Why was she getting frustrated with him? He just wanted to know!
“Me and your dad love you and Mycroft very much,” she said, “but sometimes people grow apart even after they have children. It can become very hard to raise a family, so we decided it was best if I raised you and Mycroft myself.”

He blinked. That made no sense at all!

“But Daddy wanted to have me, right?” He demanded. “But he doesn’t want to raise me.”

She held him tighter, and he bit his lip to fight back the tears that wanted to come.

“Mycroft doesn’t seem to like Daddy,” he pointed out. “You don’t seem to like him. Was he a bad person?”

“People change, Sher,” his mum said softly. “When Daddy and I fell in love he was really nice and sweet. We did both want to have kids, but sometimes there’s a difference between wanting something and being able to handle something.”

He pouted, and she finally seemed to understand that he wasn’t buying her story. Picking him up, she turned him around to face him. Her fingers rested beneath his chin, forcing him to look up at her.

“You’re very smart, Sherlock,” she announced. “So can I be honest with you?”

He nodded eagerly. He liked it when people realised he was smart. He liked it when people realised he could be treated like he was older.

“Your father changed a lot after you two was born,” she finally confessed. “It became hard for us to get along, and that was no way to raise a family. He left us, but I’m glad for it because it means I get you all to myself.”

It was more than he had ever been told before. His lip quivered as he wondered how any daddy could ever want to leave his family, but at least it sounded sort of like it could be truth. But he still didn’t understand why no one seemed to want him to know about his father.

“But what if I want to meet him?” Sherlock asked. “I’m half Daddy and half you. I want to know my other half.”

A sad smile crossed his mum’s face as she pulled him to her chest and wrapped her arms around him. He buried his head in her shoulders and fought back tears. She never answered him when he asked about meeting his father. No one ever gave him straight answers. As he grew older he lost interest in learning about his father; if his father didn’t care about him, then why should Sherlock care?

“Uncle Sirlock!” It took Sherlock a moment to snap himself out of the past.

His body seemed to relax as his four year-old nephew climbed up on the armchair to join him by the fireplace. Holding Dan in his arms, Sherlock just sat there for a moment, considering that his nephew must be going through the same confusion he went through when he was a kid. Dan’s father left him too, and surely he was getting to the age now where he was curious enough to ask Laura questions.

“Hey Dan,” he said, forcing himself to put on a smile.

“Mommy told me you sound different ‘cause you’re from England,” Dan announced.
Sherlock let out a giggle; he probably did sound pretty funny to an American kid.

“Yes,” he nodded, “it’s called an ‘accent’. Your accent is based on where you’re from. You have an American accent. Accents can even be different based on what region you’re from. That’s why someone who’s from the northern part of America might sound different than someone from the south.”

Dan squirmed in his lap and his face scrunched up, like he was really trying to break down what Sherlock just said.

“So when I move to England will I have a new accent?”

He said it like ‘ak-kent’, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to let out a laugh. But then he stopped to think- Dan was really begging to develop his speaking and language skills. When he learned to write in words and sentences he would learn British spellings. But had he already learn to speak well enough that his American accent would stay his main accent?

He decided that would be an interesting question for John, but he knew Dan wanted an answer now.

“You might,” he replied simply, deciding that would be enough to satisfy him.

It was. Dan giggled and exclaimed:

“So I might talk weird like you and Uncle Myc and Greg and John!”

“It’s not weird,” Sherlock insisted. “It’s just different.”

And please, for the love of god, don’t go telling all your new British mates they speak ‘weird’, he thought.

Nevertheless, Dan kept giggling and squirmed until he could slide away from his lap and run off to play. He closed his eyes and sighed, wishing he had half the energy that his nephew did. Since John had been away he really did feel like half of himself was missing. He wished his boyfriend was here so he could confess about his father and hopefully John would tell him what he should do.

But in the past few days he’d only received a couple of calls from his partner, none of which gave Sherlock any hint as to where he was or when he would return.

By some miracle at that very moment he heard the distinct sound of the front door opening. It was a small pop of the lock and crack of the door that he had learned to recognise from no matter where he was in the house. He could tell simply by the way the door stayed open for a long moment- long enough to wheel someone through the door- that John and his brother had finally returned. He jumped up, finally feeling that energy Dan contained, and practically dashed toward the foyer.

And there he was.

A bright smile spread across Sherlock’s face at the sight of his boyfriend. Though John looked utterly knackered, and Mycroft looked just as exhausted, his boyfriend smiled back at him.

“Sorry that I kept him,” Mycroft apologised, “but John’s help has been extraordinary over these past few days.”

“Again, it’s nothing,” John said, sounding a bit bashful, like he and Mycroft had been going around
in circles about this for hours and he still didn’t want to admit that he did good work.

“I’m sure you were brilliant at whatever it was you were doing,” Sherlock offered.

He and his lover gazed at each other another moment before Sherlock closed the space between them and leaned down to hug him.

“How have you been feeling?” Sherlock asked him softly.

John held onto him for a long moment, and it comforted him to know that his boyfriend seemed to miss him just as much as Sherlock missed him.

“Not too bad,” John sighed before they broke apart.

Once he heard Mycroft’s footsteps disappear he stole a kiss to John’s lips. A small gasp escaped his lover as their lips and tongues danced together. When at last they broke apart Sherlock was breathless- and a bit dizzy. Nonetheless he wasn’t about to complain; instead he wheeled John back to their room where he could get settled in. He watched quietly as John had unpacked his things, and he resisted the urge to interrogate him about where he had been. But from the exhaustion- and even a hint of sadness- in his eyes Sherlock could tell these past few days hadn’t been easy for John either so he decided to be respectful and not push him for an answer.

“I’ve missed you,” Sherlock announced, feeling the room was too silent.

Looking up at him, John studied him for a moment before a tired smile crossed his face.

“God you have no idea how much I’ve missed you,” John replied.

He had wondered if it would take them a moment to get the feel of being together again, but as they approached each other it was like they had never been apart. Sherlock made to sit down on the edge of the bed so that he was on John’s level, but his boyfriend shook his head.

“Come here,” John whispered, holding out his hands.

Stepping forward, Sherlock took his hands, and he was shocked when John lifted himself from the wheelchair. He wavered a bit but Sherlock caught him. Hands rested on either side of his waist, John found his balance as Sherlock held onto his shoulders.

“I’m so proud of you,” Sherlock breathed before kissing him tenderly. For a moment their lips danced; Sherlock drank in John’s warmth, his hands gently roaming round to his back so he could hold him. When they broke apart they simply stood there, both not really sure what to say since John couldn’t talk about where he’d been. He decided there was one easy way to break the ice: “Have you eaten?”

Licking his lips, John shook his head.

“Mycroft offered to stop and eat somewhere…but that would have required eating at a restaurant with your brother.”

Sherlock let out a laugh.

“Probably for the best,” he teased. “Come on, we have leftovers.”

Though John was strong enough to stand on his own, he still needed the chair to get to the kitchen. As he got out the leftover caeser salad, ham, and potatoes he couldn’t help but to notice John
watching his every move. It made his skin prickle a bit and heat rise in his body. His boyfriend was equally as curious as to what he had been up to these past few days.

“Did Greg cook this?” John asked as Sherlock sat the salad in front of him before heating up the leftovers.

“Yes,” he replied with a smirk. “He’s been stress-cooking. We had chocolate-chip pancakes this morning. He pre-made chicken soup for us to eat for lunch. Yesterday it was French toast for breakfast and homemade pizza. Day before it was steak- surprisingly good steak- though Dan didn’t approve.”

“Sounds delicious to me,” John said.

“With the way they cook I think both Greg and Mycroft have put on at least a stone since they started seeing each other.”

He flashed another smile toward his boyfriend and took the plate out of the microwave.

“Thank god,” John said as he dug into the salad, following it closely with forkfuls of ham. “You have no idea how much I’ve missed real food.”

“Real food?” Sherlock said, raising an eyebrow. As opposed to what? He thought. Hospital food? Military food? Why can’t I know?!

“Are there any leftover pancakes?” John asked through a mouthful of potatoes.

“No, Dan made sure of it,” he snorted.

“Shame.”

For a few moments the room was only full of the sound of his partner stuffing his face with food. He finished the plate in a record time and passed it back toward Sherlock so he could get him seconds.

“It was nice, playing doctor again,” John announced suddenly. Sherlock sat the food down in front of him, and this time instead of digging in he just stared at it, like he doubted himself for wanting more. “It made me miss practising medicine.”

John returned to his food, clearly as a distraction from Sherlock’s stare.

“You want to be a doctor again?” He asked.

A small smile peered from the corners of John’s lips.

“I am a doctor, Sherlock,” John pointed. “I just miss being a practising doctor. I think I want to see patients again. I dunno… I might even look into opening up my own practise. You know, be a GP.”

Scrunching up his nose in disproval, Sherlock couldn’t bring himself to feel John’s amusement.

“You’re picking taking care of kids with runny noses over solving cases with me?”

His boyfriend blushed.

“I can still work cases!” He protested.
“Sure, and I’ll make sure to inform all the criminals of London that they can only commit crimes after five and on the weekends,” he shot.

That came out a bit more hotly than he intended, and the impact of his words showed on John’s face.

“I’m sorry,” Sherlock murmured, grabbing his lover’s hand. He let his fingers brush against John’s for a moment before continuing: “If you want to go back to practising medicine then I fully support you. I’ll miss you, but I support you. I want you to be happy. You’re a bloody brilliant doctor, and honestly it’s selfish of me to restrict you to only working on cases. You have the ability to save lives, and that’s what you should be doing.”

“Thanks,” John whispered. He swallowed, looking as though he were trying not to become overwhelmed with emotions. “It would be after I get out of the chair, obviously. We’re talking spring at the earliest. I’d have to find a location, get a business loan. I’d even have to hire an employee or two. I’ll at least need a receptionist and a nurse.”

“Laura,” Sherlock said suddenly. Their eyes met at his brilliant epiphany. “She’s worked as a secretary for loads of places! She’s got tons of office experience and a great personality.”

“True…” John said; Sherlock was pleased he seemed to sincerely be considering the idea. Then his eyes darkened, revealing doubt. “Do you really think I can do it?”

“Please, John,” Sherlock snorted. “You worked as an army doctor! You could run a medical practise in your sleep.”

A smile crossed his boyfriend’s face before he leaned forward to give him a soft kiss on the lips.

John wanted to go to bed early that night, and Sherlock didn’t hesitate to join him. As they lay together their eyes studied each other, tracing every detail of the other’s face. They didn’t speak; they simply drank each other in. His hand raised to cup Sherlock’s cheek before he kissed him gently. Sherlock’s hand found the back of his neck. John whimpered at the touch before letting his head fall to his lover’s shoulders.

“You okay?” John murmured into against his body.

Letting out a long sigh, Sherlock hesitated to reveal his secret to John. He knew whatever his boyfriend had been doing for the past few days it had been stressful and possibly even emotional, and Sherlock could tell it had taken quite the toll on him. He didn’t want to burden him with his problems.

“Come on,” John encouraged as he nuzzled his face against his neck. Sherlock felt his lips brush against his chin and he shivered. “I know when something’s bothering you.”

He brushed his fingers to and fro across John’s arm as he contemplated when he was going to say.

“My father’s out of prison,” he finally confessed. John lifted his head up, his eyes going wide. “He’s been stalking Laura.”

“Did you tell Mycroft?” John replied, sitting up.

“I texts but he didn’t answer,” Sherlock said. “I left a voicemail and he didn’t answer. I told Greg though, and he said he’d take care of it.”
“Good.”

John planted a kiss to his cheek and wrapped an arm around his chest.

“I looked him up,” Sherlock confessed in broken whisper. John’s grip around him tightened. A lump formed in his throat. “He has a job in a garage. He’s a mechanic.”

The warmth of his lover’s body comforted as John scooted closer. It was like he knew Sherlock needed his touch.

“You shouldn’t do this to yourself,” his boyfriend murmured.

“I know,” he sighed, “Greg said the same. But I can’t help it. He’s my father, John, and I know nothing about him. And he’s…stalking Laura and I guess I just want to know why. I shouldn’t want to know, but I do.”

A finger brushed across his lips and traced his jaw.

“I suppose it’s human nature to want to know about your parents,” John admitted, “but honestly Sherlock you probably don’t want to know the truth about him.”

“That’s what Greg said, and I know he’s right. Honestly I don’t know why I want to know about him all of a sudden. I’ve never cared about my father in my entire life. I suppose it’s just bothering me that soon I’ll be going to New York. I’ll be in the same state as him, and I know where he works. If I wanted to I could just go see him. I could demand answers.”

“You could get hurt,” John pointed out, “emotionally…physically, even.”

Sherlock hesitated; his father did have an abusive history when it came to his family. Why would Sherlock be an exception?

“Do you think he’s looked me up?” Sherlock blurted out.

The thought suddenly came to him: if he could Google his father, of course his father could Google him. And what would come up? Endless sources of information. Besides his website and John’s blog there were countless news articles about his cases. Mrs Hudson even told him someone had begun a Wikipedia article about him. His picture was everywhere; his address had apparently become famous.

“I’m all over the internet,” Sherlock pointed out. “I wonder what he thinks about his son being a world famous consulting detective.”

“World famous?” John snorted.

“Nationally famous, then,” he replied with a small grin.

“He doesn’t know what he gave up,” John said as he placed another kiss on his cheek.

“No, he probably does,” Sherlock admitted, so quietly he wasn’t sure he said it out loud until John’s hand brushed against his cheek ever so gently. “And he doesn’t care.”

His lover simply rolled over his body and gazed at him for a long moment.

“I love you,” John finally whispered.

Leaning down, he planted surprisingly strong, electrifying, kiss to his lips. Sherlock moaned and
ran his hands down the sides of his boyfriend’s body. Their eyes fluttered opened and they gazed at each other before John deepened the kiss by slipping his tongue into his mouth. He knew John wasn’t replying because there were no good answers to his questions. He knew if he looked any further into his father he probably would just get hurt.

As John reached for his zip and a familiar heat rose within him, he tried to convince himself he was okay with just letting it go.

Chapter End Notes

I think deep down, even Sherlock Holmes would want to know where he came from. What do you think? Thanks for reading! I appreciate all the feedback, and I'm so glad you all are still enjoying this!
John wanted to sleep most of the next day so Sherlock let him, but he was too restless to stay in bed himself. He wandered up to his old bedroom upstairs and locked himself inside with his violin to spend the morning composing. For hours he watched his bow glide up and down and his fingers dance across the fingerboard until the door opened. He didn’t even notice until he suddenly looked up to find Dan standing in front of him.

“Dan!” He said with a grinned. “What are you doing up here? This is my room, you know.”

His nephew only giggled as he climbed up on his old bed and began jumping up and down on the mattress. Dust flew up around them and Sherlock let out a cough before he continued playing.

“But you’re not reading any music,” Dan suddenly pointed out, as though Sherlock didn’t know there wasn’t music in front of him.

Sitting his violin carefully on his childhood desk, he reached up to catch Dan midair and lowered him so they both sat on the side of the bed.

“I create music, in my head,” he explained, tapping his finger to his skull.

“Wow,” Dan whispered. “It was pretty.”

“Thank you.”

“Uncle Sirlock?”

“Yeah.”

There was a long moment of silence, and for a moment Sherlock thought Dan was going to ask him something really serious.

“Can you make me a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?”

Sherlock burst out laughing. Dan stared up at him, confused, and Sherlock realised he must have been used to asking his parents for sandwiches all the time. His mum and dad probably never once laughed at him for asking.

“Sure.”

He led Dan downstairs to Mycroft’s kitchen. He turned on the light and headed toward the pantry while Dan seated himself onto a barstool. He found some peanut butter and different types of jam Laura bought.
“Grape or strawberry?” Sherlock asked.

“Strawberry!”

A smile slipped across Sherlock’s face; only a four year-old could get so excited about peanut butter and jelly.

“Crust on or off?” He asked next.

“Off!”

“Just how I like it,” Sherlock teased, “which is why John doesn’t like making me sandwiches.”

“Mommy cuts the sandwich in half,” Dan explained. “It makes it taste yummier.”

He wanted to explain to Dan how there was no possible way the way a sandwich was cut could make it taste yummier, but why ruin a kid’s love for peanut butter and jam? So he made the sandwich and cut it in half. The biggest grin was on Dan’s face when he placed the plate in front of him, like he had been waiting all morning for someone to make him this sandwich. While he was at it he made himself one as well before joining Dan at the kitchen island.

He noticed the sound of his brother’s footsteps approaching just before Mycroft entered the kitchen, carrying his briefcase and clutching a to-go cup of coffee.

“You’re home early,” Sherlock commented.

“Working from home for the rest of the day,” his brother replied. He turned his nose up at the sandwich he was eating. “What is that?”

Sherlock could only stare at him for a moment before he managed:

“Peanut butter and jam.”

He was proud of himself for not laughing in his face, especially when his brother raised a disapproving eyebrow.

“I’ve made roasted duck for the Prime Minister in this kitchen,” Mycroft shot, “and you used it to make peanut butter and jam.”

“Yup.”

With a sigh, his brother simply strode over to the fridge and reached for leftovers.

“Gregory’s coming home early too,” Mycroft said to Dan. “He thought you might want to play some football.”

“Yay!” Dan cried, pumping a fist in the air.

“He’s getting off work early to play football?” Sherlock said.

Shrugging, Mycroft lowered his voice and replied:

“Our family is only here a few more days. We just wanted to spend some time with them.”

A pang of sadness hit him at the realisation that his family’s visit was coming to an end, but he tried to remind himself he’d be spending the entire holidays in America with them. Not to mention
they were moving to London soon. He knew there should really be no reason he should feel so
depressed about seeing them go, but he hated the thought of them being out of sight for even a day.

“Gregory’s determined he’s going to coach a league next year,” Mycroft sighed. “I’m worried he’ll
throw his back out.”

Sherlock laughed at the thought of Greg trying to control a group of four year-olds running around
a pitch. He had to admit Greg wasn’t in the shape that he used to be in, but Sherlock had seen him
play and he was quite the footballer. Dan’s potential league could be in worse hands.

“Anyway, I’ll be in my office,” his brother announced. “Fingers crossed it stays a slow day.”

Dan crossed all fingers on both of his hands, and Mycroft let out a laugh before disappearing with
his leftovers.

“Ready Uncle Greg?” Dan called.

Sure enough, Greg came home a few hours early as promised and they set up the football goals out
front.

“Ready!” Greg cried from his position in front of the goal.

Sherlock grinned as he watched safely from the front porch. His sister sat beside him, her mobile in
her hands as she prepared to shoot a video. His nephew kicked the football as hard as he could, and
to Sherlock’s surprise it actually went above Greg’s hand and landed in the goal. Laura cheered,
and even Greg’s mouth fell agape in shock.

“That was really bloody good!” Greg exclaimed. He threw the ball back to Dan, who dribbled
forward until he kicked it to the goal. This time Greg stopped it, but as soon as he threw it back
again Dan kicked it into the goal. “Wow. You’re getting pretty good.”

“Thank you,” Dan replied innocently. A bright grin sat on his face, and Sherlock couldn’t have
been prouder of him. He could now see why parents wasted so much of their weekends at their
kid’s games.

“He really is getting good,” Sherlock said to Laura

“Yes he is,” she said, grinning as she saved her video. “He’s always running around the yard at
home. Jason tried to get him into baseball but Dan turned to soccer- I mean, football instead. Sorry,
I know I have to call it by the right name now.”

“I guess it’s too soon to wonder if he’d be interested in the violin?” Sherlock asked.

His sister just laughed.

“Do you really think he’d have the patience for it?”

He watched as Dan picked the football up and tried to bounce it off his head. He echoed her laugh,
understanding her meaning. Maybe it would be better to wait a few years before trying to get Dan
into playing music.

The door opened behind him, and Mycroft stepped out wearing…workout clothes? Sherlock closed
his eyes tight and shook his head, wondering if he was really dreaming, but when he opened them
his brother was still standing there in tracksuit bottoms and a running shirt.

“What?” Mycroft demanded.

Laura stifled another laugh. Sherlock teased:

“I just wasn’t aware you owned those kinds of clothes, brother dear.”

His brother rolled his eyes and put his hands on his hips, looking completely out of place and uncomfortable in the workout clothes.

“I’m going to go for a run,” Mycroft announced. He hesitated before continuing: “I was wondering if you would like to come with me, Sherlock.”

Sherlock just stared. What does one say to an older brother who had never so much as asked him to the pub for a drink, let alone to go for a run? The only thing he could think of was that something was wrong, very wrong, and Mycroft wanted to isolate him to tell him. In fact, his brother’s narrowing eyes seemed to warn him that he must come along, and Sherlock realised he was right.

“I’ll get changed,” he mumbled quietly.

The best he could do was a pair of tracksuit bottoms he’d brought with him from Baker Street and an old sweatshirt of Greg’s he’d found in a cupboard filled with coats. He despised having to wear someone else’s clothes- especially since it reminded him of going through withdrawal in Greg’s apartment and owning nothing to his name, not even a change of clothes.

“You look fine, stop scowling,” his brother shot as they began a slow jog.

“You don’t have slow days,” Sherlock commented once they were out of earshot of their family. “What’s going on?”

His brother hesitated, and for a long moment the only sound that filled the air was Mycroft’s heavy breathing. At last he let out a sigh and confessed:

“I was at a hearing today, regarding my job. I’ve been asked to step down from my position.”

Sherlock stopped. A million thoughts swirled in his head as the impact of what his brother said weighed down on him. Step down? Meaning…fired? His brother had been fired. Which meant…no more security, for starters. No more black cars. No more cameras. A year ago, the thought of no more surveillance would have made him ecstatic. But now he had John. He had Dan and a family that had been just kidnapped earlier that year.

Fired also meant no more paycheck. He knew what was in his brother’s bank account, and he knew it was enough to get him and Greg through for years were something to happen. Not to mention, there was always Greg’s paycheck. But (selfishly) he realised this would probably mean no more using his brother’s credit card whenever he pleased.

It would mean no more calling his brother and immediately having someone to get him out of trouble.

His own breathing became heavy; he hadn’t realised just how much they all relied on Mycroft’s job until just that moment. Judging by the pale, sickly, look on his face neither did his brother.

“What did you do?” Sherlock demanded, putting emphasis on each word.
He really didn’t think Mycroft would be let go simply because of budget cuts—his position and skills were far too valuable—which meant his brother must have made a horrible, unforgiveable mistake. And Mycroft Holmes didn’t do mistakes.

Instead of answering his brother simply picked up the pace. Sherlock drew in a deep breath, still convinced he might be dreaming, but nevertheless he chased after him.

“Talk to me!” He insisted. His brother still hesitated. He tried to think of something Mycroft could have done that was so unforgiveable that the Prime Minister wouldn’t even help him.

“I committed treason,” Mycroft finally confessed, his voice bitter.

Yes, that was a good example of an unforgivable act, but it still made no sense.

“You commit treason every day,” he pointed out. “It’s sort of your job, isn’t it? Do the things no one could know the British government was doing? Fix things in ways no one could ever know about?”

“Yes, in a sense,” Mycroft replied dryly, “but this time I committed treason without permission.”

Oh. Now that really made sense.

“Can you tell me what you did?” Sherlock asked.

Once again his brother stayed silent for a long moment, and Sherlock began feeling a bit sick to his stomach. Usually Mycroft trusted him with the secrets of his job. Sherlock knew pretty well what it was his brother did at work every day, and Mycroft had no problem asking for his help when he thought it would be useful. Rarely did his brother refuse to tell him something, but whatever this was, it must have been big. It must be something that Mycroft couldn’t even forgive himself for.

“Against the wishes of the government I sent an agent out to kill a known terrorist. She was captured and tortured.”

His brother stopped short, as though there were more he wasn’t saying. He wondered if that’s why Mycroft needed John’s help this week, for this injured agent.

“So…the government didn’t want this suspect taken out?”

“The government wanted to make deals,” Mycroft explained, “they traded for information and thought that was sufficient. They wanted to simply keep surveillance. I knew better, and I did was necessary to protect our country.”

“And yet you’re the one losing your job?” Sherlock demanded.

“Quite honestly with the tension that has existed between me and my superiors, it was really only a matter of time. I’ve seen this happen to others,” Mycroft admitted. “It always starts with bitterness between the heads of these security services. Their views begin to differ so much that it’s impossible to accomplish anything. The Prime Minister gets frustrated. Everyone gets involved, and the odd man out gets canned. These days it’s all about easy solutions. It’s all about keeping ourselves just safe enough without pissing off any enemies.”

For a few moments they just continued on a steady jog, their feet pounding into the ground along the way. Suddenly Mycroft sped up, going at a pace Sherlock didn’t know his brother was capable of running, and he found himself practically chasing him down the path. Eventually Mycroft stopped, collapsing against a tree and holding his hands to his knees as he tried to catch his breath.
“You’re not trying to run away, are you?” Sherlock teased.

Mycroft shook his head, breathing hard as he stood upright again.

“They can’t really just let you go, can they?” Sherlock asked. “You know too much. You’re not going to disappear in the middle of the night or anything, are you?”

His brother let out a hollow laugh.

“I don’t think anyone would have the guts to kill me, if that’s what you’re worried about,” Mycroft sneered. “Give them time, and they’ll realise what they just let go. In the meantime there are a number of independent projects I could oversee. There are local government offices who have been begging for my help for years. Although my career in intelligence may be at a standstill, my career in the government could live on, should I want it to.”

Should he want it to? Was his brother actually considering retirement? He had always been under the impression that his brother would work until he simply died one day. But now he did have a fiancé, and Mycroft’s life was changing in ways neither of them could have ever predicted.

“Are you thinking about retirement?” Sherlock asked.

The more he considered it, the more he thought about how utterly boring retiring would be. Sure it would be lovely to spend the rest of his days with John with not a care in the world…but as much as he loved his partner he would go mad with boredom after one week. He knew his brother was the same. Mycroft needed to always be busy. He needed to feel important.

“It’s a thought,” his brother admitted, his voice uncharacteristically quiet. “On one hand I’m not sure I can bare it. On the other, I’m not getting any younger. I’m about to enter into a civil partnership with a DCI. Both of us have been working high stress, high risk jobs for decades. I suppose my life just has more meaning now. I used to dedicate every waking hour of the day to work simply because I had nothing better to do. Now I come home and wish Gregory and I could just sit and talk to him. I wish we could get away for the weekends and properly celebrate holidays. None of that mattered to me before, and so I tried to climb as high up on the government ladder as I could to ensure my life had purpose. But my purpose is changing.”

“Retirement is boring,” Sherlock mumbled. He let out a sigh. “But I admire you, Mycroft. You’re growing up, right before our eyes.”

His brother rolled his eyes.

At that moment the skies opened up, and the overcast day that had been hanging over them finally turned into a downpour. His eyes met Mycroft’s, and they both let out a laugh.

“Remember when you used to pretend the garden was pirate ship?” Mycroft asked. “When it rained you pretended like you were trying to prevent a shipwreck. It was adorable.”

“I was five,” Sherlock protested through gritted teeth.

“It was adorable,” his brother said again. He looked up at the sky and ran his hands over his tired face. “Shall we return home? I wanted to break the news to you before I told everyone else. Gregory knows, but that’s it.”

Truth be told, Sherlock wasn’t ready to go back. The rain had always been oddly comforting to him. Storms were a different story, but a steady rainfall had always made him feel at ease in the world. He could handle it while everyone else ran from cover. He remembered coming down from
highs, hidden away in drug dens and listen to the pitter-patter of rainfall on the roof. Rain made 

him feel like he was connected to the rest of the world.

Now that he had Mycroft isolated from everyone, he thought it was as good of a time as any to 
bring up their father. His brother hadn’t mentioned anything even after the texts and voicemails 
Sherlock sent, and he was determined to know what Mycroft thought.

His brother made to move but Sherlock’s caught his arm. They were both soaking wet by now, and 
while Mycroft looked more than uncomfortable he didn’t care. They needed to talk.

“Father’s out of prison,” Sherlock announced, as though he hadn’t tried to talk to him about it a half 
a dozen times before. “Why didn’t you tell me? I know you knew.”

Closing his eyes briefly, Mycroft raised his hand to his forehead and pressed down hard, trying to 
relieve himself of tension.

“You shouldn’t be concerned about him, Sherlock. He can’t hurt you. He wants nothing to do with 
us and it should stay that way.”

Even though he had long since known that was true somehow those words stung. Their father 
didn’t want anything to do with them, and Mycroft was just okay with that.

“He’s just…out there, now,” Sherlock said, his voice echoing heavily against the rain. “We’ll be in 
New York; we could see him.”

“We can’t.”

His brother’s eyes were cold and hurt, and Sherlock knew he shouldn’t push this any further. But 
he couldn’t stop himself.

“He’s stalking Laura!” Sherlock exclaimed.

“Sherlock-”

“Why aren’t you bothered by this?!”

His voice boomed through the estate, and his body shook in the cold rain. They really should be 
getting inside.

“Because I’ve been hurt by him before, and I will not be hurt by him again!” Mycroft roared, so 
violent, so disgusted that Sherlock froze.

“Hurt by him?” He asked, his voice barely audible against the rain.

His brother absent-mindedly scratched at his back, and Sherlock knew he shouldn’t push this any further. But 
he couldn’t stop himself.

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“Sherlock-”

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“Hurt by him?” He asked, his voice barely audible against the rain.

His brother absent-mindedly scratched at his back, and Sherlock knew what was there: scars. Scars 
he had always assumed were mainly from torture sessions. Now he realised Mycroft wounds went 
much, much deeper than that, and he felt foolish for pressing his brother to talk about his father. 
He felt foolish for never realising just how bad the relationship between his brother and mother and 
their father was.

“Did he hit you?” Sherlock demanded quietly. His lip quivered, and his body felt frozen.

Mycroft went completely still.

“Mycroft!” He pleaded. “I need to know. I don’t know anything about him. I’m part him-”
“Don’t say that!”

“I am!” He screamed. “His fucking blood runs through my veins, and Laura’s, and yours! I know how he treated her and her mum. Did he treat you like that too? Did he treat Mum like that?”

His brother paled and refused to answer. Sherlock felt so angry, so confused and so betrayed that he felt like he could do nothing but take off running. He went into the woods, far away from Mycroft and his secrets. How could he have never known this about his own family? How could he have ever wanted to meet the man who had hurt his family? How could that man be a part of him? How could that man be out of prison, living in complete freedom?

Sherlock leapt over tree branches and dashed through brush until he stopped when he realised he wasn’t following a true path. He collapsed in the middle of all the brush, falling to his knees as his whole body went numb with grief. He now understood why his mother never spoke a single word of his father. He now understood how angry, how sickened, and how hurt she looked whenever he brought her up. He understood why Mycroft had spent most of his life pretending he didn’t have a father and he understood why his brother was so distant, so silent, after the two of them were left on their own.

Abuse. In his own home. In the very house his brother still lived in.

He had known the divorce was messy, but he had assumed it was because of the drugs or alcohol. And truthfully, it probably was because of the drugs. The drugs were what fueled his father, just as drugs had once fueled him. While had been able to control himself under the influence—mostly—he knew some people weren’t as capable. He’d seen abuse happen often on the streets between couples as fights that started out of nothing. He’d seen fights between dealers and buyers, between friends even. They were all random acts of violence that made little sense and were soon forgotten by cloudy minds. That was the sort of environment his brother grew up in, and it shook him to the bone to think of him and his mother living in such an unsecure environment day after day. It shook him to think that he had somehow escaped that, that he was so lucky as to not even remember.

He sat out in the woods until the sun began to set and the rain slowed to a drizzle; he had to use the light of his mobile to help guide his way back to the estate. When he stared at the front door he let out a shaky breath, thinking of all the times his father must have walked through, fuming and ready to reign terror down on anyone who remotely did anything wrong—anyone who even simply stepped in his way. Closing his eyes, Sherlock forced himself not to think about it as he pushed the door open.

The house seemed silent; he realised it must be well after dinner and Laura was probably trying to get Dan to take a bath. Jason was probably finishing up work. John was probably worried, and Sherlock knew he needed to let him know he was okay.

But there was something else he had to do first. He wandered into the sitting room and found Greg reading case notes.

“Anything exciting?” He asked.

The DCI looked up at him over his notes and froze.

“Bloody hell!” Greg exclaimed. “What happened to you?”

“ Took a walk. Where’s Mycroft?”

His friend hesitated for a moment before replying:
Second floor, end of the hall.”

He wouldn’t say what specific room and Sherlock knew why: he was pointing him in the direction of his mum’s old bedroom. She had apparently switched rooms after the divorce, and since her death Mycroft hadn’t touched the room. Her furniture was still there, the bed was still made. He had someone dust it, every now and then, but he left it exactly as it, as though he were hoping one day she might waltz through the door and want to sleep in it again.

He grabbed a towel out of a cupboard and wrapped it around himself before he slowly descended the stairs. He let his head rest on the door a moment before knocking.

When there was no protest he walked in, soaking wet clothes and all. His brother was actually in pyjamas: a sight rarely seen unless he was moments away from going to bed. Yet there his elder brother was in pyjamas, dressing gown, and all.

And a bottle of whiskey by his side. He took a swig of it as Sherlock walked over to him.

Mycroft was looking through a box of photographs, and as Sherlock stepped closer a pit fell in his stomach when he realised they were of their mum.

“You didn’t come after me,” Sherlock announced.

“I knew you needed time.”

It was an honest answer, and Sherlock appreciated it.

“I did,” he admitted. “I wanted to say I’m sorry. That was quite the confession, and I shouldn’t have run.”

“It’s alright,” his brother replied as he turned over a photograph. “Come here.”

Hesitating, Sherlock glanced down at his wet clothes, regretting that he hadn’t changed.

“This was right after you were born,” Mycroft explained, passing the photograph to him.

A smile slipped across his face at the younger version of his mum holding a baby version of himself.

“My hair!” He laughed, pointing at the black strands that stuck out of his tiny head. His little hands were balled into fists and his eyes were shut tightly, fighting tears. “I don’t look too happy.”

“If there’s one thing baby Sherlock loved to do it was cry,” Mycroft said, a ghost of a smile on his lips. “You used to wake us up at all hours of the night, and then you’d sleep all day. You had no sense of schedule whatsoever.”

“Isn’t that most babies?” He pointed out.

“Yes,” his brother admitted, “but you were my first experience with babies so naturally I thought you were weird and annoying.”

He picked up the next picture, and his eyes went wide at the sight of seven year-old Mycroft holding him.

“They let you hold me?” He shot. “That was brave of them.”

Kid-Mycroft didn’t look intimidated though- he did indeed just look annoyed. Sherlock let out a
laugh as he took in his brother’s scrawny frame, his outdated clothing and his bright fire-engine red hair.

“You were a nuisance to me,” Mycroft admitted. “For seven years I had Mummy and Father wrapped around my finger. Then you came along and life began all over again for them. Well, for Mummy at least. I began noticing a change in Father soon after you were born. He would be very short, when it came to dealing with your crying. It was as though he had forgotten it was what babies naturally do. He used to yell at Mummy, like she was supposed to have the magic cure. That’s when it started.”

Closing his eyes, Mycroft leaned back against the headboard.

“I never wanted you to know,” his brother continued quietly.

He took another swig of whiskey, and Sherlock reached for the bottle. Mycroft drug his hand across his mouth and let out a cough. Sherlock took a swallow of the alcohol and nearly threw up in his mouth.

“This stuff is horrible,” he commented, coughing himself.

“I know,” Mycroft sighed. “Gregory bought it.”

They both laughed; Sherlock knew his brother’s exquisite taste in liquor was no match for Greg’s preference of whatever was cheapest.

“You were drunk the other night,” Sherlock said, “John told me.”

His brother raised his hand to his head again and pressed against his forehead.

“Headache?” Sherlock asked.

With a sigh, Mycroft confessed:

“I know the drinking isn’t helping.”

“Sounds like it should be more for me then,” Sherlock said as he took another shot. “Why were you drunk?”

Almost absent-mindedly, Mycroft took out his mobile and glanced at it; he looked disappointed to realise there were no messages waiting for him.

“There’s a lot you don’t know about me, Sherlock,” his brother said. He slurred his words a bit, and Sherlock worried just how long he had been up here drinking. Was this becoming a habit? “My relationship with our father, my past romantic relationships. There’s so much you don’t know.”

“There’s still time to learn.”

His brother ran his hands over his face; now that he thought about it Mycroft looked like he hadn’t slept in days. He had wondered if the mission John was sent on was one that was personal to Mycroft, but now he knew. This agent Mycroft sent into battle and got hurt was someone close to him. Someone…someone he had a personal relationship with, judging by his comment. His brother was right: he very rarely spoke of his past relationships. For all Sherlock knew, Mycroft never had a single intimate relationship before Gregory. He knew that was a far-fetched idea; after all, his brother was in his forties. But clearly there was either no relationship worth mentioning…or something traumatic had happened with one of them.
“Did you have past relationships, Mye?” Sherlock asked. He looked over to his older brother, hoping to catch his eyes. “Did you have a relationship with the agent who got hurt?”

His brother froze before his eyes inched toward him, daring to look at him. They stared at each other, cold and unforgiving, and Sherlock had his answer.

“It was my first serious relationship,” Mycroft replied. He crossed his arms, hugging himself, as though he were suddenly very uncomfortable in his own body. “We worked together in the government. We became very close, very fast. We became intimate and I… I was very inexperienced. I thought I was in love I thought… I thought my life was finally in order. I had a job, a real proper job, and an important one at that. I had a girlfriend and a flat. But we became far too serious too quickly. We weren’t careful enough. We… she… she became pregnant.”

Sherlock’s blood ran cold. He took another shot; he shivered. He always assumed his brother’s coldness had to do with their upbringing, with their father and- hell, the abuse he put up with as a child. Not to mention the loss of their mother and having to take on the role of parent when he was still just a teenager- and having a brother who was a homeless addict.

He had never considered that it was something like this that made him turn against relationships.

“We were young,” Mycroft said, his voice small and stiff. “We were so young, and I had never been as scared in my life as I was at the moment she found out she was pregnant. Of course when Mummy died I was depressed, and when you became mine to take care of I was terrified. But the thought of having your own child… the thought of bringing someone into this world… god I was so scared I didn’t know what to do. For weeks we lived in denial. We went to the appointments and we followed the doctor’s orders, but we still couldn’t believe it. We were too young to be parents… we barely had enough money to pay for our flats and put food on the table. We had good jobs, yes, but we were still low on the ladder. We didn’t have the kind of savings needed to raise a child. Then one night I woke up to my partner screaming in the bathroom. She had a miscarriage.”

His brother swung his legs over the side of the bed and held his head in his hands, like he might be sick. Sherlock felt numb. Of all the people to go through a trauma like this, he would have never imagined Mycroft to have gone through such a thing. His brother was like this rock- this rock who would always be there, who was always strong, who always knew what to do. He couldn’t imagine his brother being so lost, so afraid.

“Mycroft, I-”

He stopped. He didn’t know what to say to that; what was there to say to that? What could he say to make the past okay?

Nothing.

That was the answer: nothing.

“I was sick,” Mycroft said suddenly. “I was physically sick to my stomach for days. For… weeks, really. Quite honestly years after I still had nightmares and… I’ve never fully been able to process what happened. We didn’t know what we had until we lost it. We were in so much denial, we were so scared, that we didn’t realise what we had. Afterward I saw people with their babies everywhere and all I could think of was that would have been me. I would have had a son or daughter. I was in shock for quite some time. I was numb. My partner and I separated. We couldn’t get through it. We still worked together, but our lives changed forever. I could never let myself love someone like that again. I could never risk another… I couldn’t risk another pregnancy. We were so careful, or at least we thought we were, and the idea that a single moment could change someone so much
terrified me. I was afraid of getting close to anyone.”

The confession made Sherlock wanted to punch anyone who dared to call his brother the Ice Man in the face. At the end of the day his brother was human, so human it was painful.

“You shouldn’t have had to go through that,” he said quietly. “No one should have to go through that.”

“Thank you.”

He wasn’t sure why he was being thanked.

“It wasn’t until I met Gregory that I allowed myself to fall for someone again,” Mycroft admitted. “I had a few affairs, yes, but it was all just release. I would regret it so much afterward that I again would swear off relationships.”

Sherlock flinched; he didn’t exactly like hearing his brother talk about physical release. But he didn’t have the heart to tell him to stop. Mycroft obviously needed to get this off his chest, and he was grateful to finally have a real understanding of the coldness behind his brother’s personality.

“The baby was supposed to be due on my birthday,” Mycroft admitted softly. He closed his eyes and drew in a deep breath; Sherlock closed the top on the whiskey and threw it to the floor, realising it was probably a bit too much for both of them right now. “I would have a twenty-one year old child right now if they lived.”

“Oh god,” Sherlock snorted. “Would you have given them some weird name? Would we have had a baby Sherrinford on our hands?”

Mycroft let out a laugh, and Sherlock was pleased to have raised his spirits for the moment.

“Emily, if it were a girl,” Mycroft said, without hesitation.


“Perhaps Thomas for a boy,” his brother said. He sounded a bit unsure, and Sherlock had a feeling if his brother had a child he’d secretly hoped it would be a girl. “Or Andrew.”

“A little Mycroft,” Sherlock said, shaking his head. “A little you bossing people around: I can see it.”

With a half-smile, Mycroft replied:

“I would have had to teach him or her to spy on you.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less,” Sherlock laughed. “And we would have had to teach them deductions.”

They fell silent. Sherlock had almost commented that Greg would be outnumbered but then he realised: his brother would have had an entirely different life. He himself would have gone down a different path.

“You wouldn’t have let me around a baby when I was high,” Sherlock said quietly.

“No,” his brother replied with a shake of his head, “no, I wouldn’t have.”

“I would have gotten clean quicker,” Sherlock said. “I really think I would have. We might have
“Yes,” Mycroft muttered. “Yes, that’s one part of all this I haven’t been able to come to terms with. I can’t bring myself to believe that I had to lose a child and end a relationship so badly in order to have the happy relationship I have now.”

“I would like to think I wouldn’t have had to nearly kill myself with drugs and live on the streets in order for you to meet the man you love now.”

They looked at each other, and Sherlock swallowed nervously, realising the can of worms he had just opened up.

“Do you believe in destiny, then?” Mycroft asked. “Do you believe that if John hadn’t gotten shot in the war and found himself looking for somewhere new to live that you would have still met?”

Biting his lip, Sherlock hesitated to admit that he hoped that were the case. He almost smiled, thinking of how successful John would have been in Afghanistan long-term. Perhaps one day after the war was over he would have been in need of a new flat- or perhaps he would have been called into observe on a case. Perhaps Sherlock would have walked into a hospital room and been lucky enough to meet him. But never in his life had he believed in such concepts of fate, and he knew Mycroft didn’t.

“I try not to think about it,” Mycroft finally confessed, saving him the trouble of having to answer. “Gregory believes that going through divorce and having his heart broken was worth meeting me. But I can’t think about life like that, not after all that has happened to us.”

His brother fell silent, and Sherlock placed a comforting hand on his shoulders.

“You shouldn’t,” Sherlock offered. “You could torture yourself trying to figure out the way the universe works. I’m just happy that you’ve found happiness. I suppose I’ve been rather blind to the way you grew up, to the responsibilities you had and the trials you faced. I’m sorry for that, but I’m glad I know now. I’m sorry I’ve made our relationship so difficult.”

“You’re not the only one who has made our relationship difficult,” Mycroft said. His lips termed up in a smirk. “I’m sure all my spying hasn’t help.”

“True. You never gave up on me, though. Even with all you were dealing with, it would have been so easy to just let me suffer the consequences of my own stupidity and deal with your loss. Instead you tried to save me. After all that, I can’t believe you were able to get to where you are today. You should be proud, really proud.”

“Yes, I am very proud of being fired.”

Scowling, Sherlock said:

“Like you said, they’ll realise what they’ve lost soon enough. Your talents will still be useful elsewhere. You can work with people who actually want your help, who will listen.”

“You know, I am actually looking forward to it,” Mycroft said. “I believe the government will find its way. There were analysts, decision makers, and negotiators long before me, and there will be long after me.”

“Everything will be okay.”

“Yes, I think so.”
Even as they said it they both sounded as though they were trying to convince themselves of it. In truth he wasn’t sure how Mycroft would handle watching the news and not having any control over what was happening.

There was a knock at the door, and they looked up to find Greg wandering into the room with his arms crossed.

“Are you two alright?” He asked, eyeing them both as though he didn’t trust them.

“Perfectly fine,” Mycroft replied as he sat up. He handed the box of photographs over to Sherlock. His brother swayed as he stood, and Greg rushed to help him keep his balance. “I’m fine, Gregory.”

Letting out a bark of laughter, Greg shot:

“You’re drunk! Again!”

“Am not.” His brother crossed his arms and tried to straighten himself up, as to prove his point.

“Can you do this?” Greg asked. He stretched his arm straight out in front of him and then brought his finger forward until it touched his nose. Mycroft tried to do the same, but instead of hitting his nose he nearly poked his eye out. “Come on, love, let’s get you to bed. I think I need to put a lock on the liquor cabinet for a while.”

He winked at Sherlock as he helped his partner walk back to their room. When they were gone Sherlock took a final look around the room. A smile crossed his face as he remembered watching his mother lay out clothes for a day of work or lounging on the bed talking on the phone. He remembered crawling into her bed during a stormy night or sleeping in here when he was sick. As he drew in a deep breath he could have sworn he caught a whiff of her perfume, and even though he knew it was just his imagination the phantom smell was still comforting.

Chapter End Notes

One of the whole reasons I wanted to start a grand Sherlock fic was to pull back all those layers of these characters- and Mycroft was the one I was most interested on working on. In the show they kind of play it out like Sherlock knows quite a bit about his brother, like he thinks he has him so figured out. But I think it's the opposite.

You'll get a break from the angst soon! After all, pretty soon they have a plane to catch! Thanks for reading, I would love to know what you thought.
“That’s good John, you’re doing really well!”

John let out a cry of pain as he forced his leg out further, harder, against his physical therapist’s hand.

“You're doing so good love,” Sherlock said from beside him. His hands were gripping John’s shoulders, partly to remind him he was there and partly to help keep him still.

“Just two more, you’re doing great!” His therapist echoed.

He was sick of the compliments, sick of the encouragement, and sick of the exercises. He was three weeks into physical therapy, and they were still staying with Mycroft. Laura and her family were safely in America to begin the process of selling their home, and he and Sherlock were due to fly out to New York in just seven days.

At least he could walk with a cane now. They were still staying on the main floor of Mycroft’s house, but he could walk to one end of the house to the other with the cane as long as someone was there to catch him when he lost his balance. He and Sherlock had begun taking walks around the garden, and he had hoped all the extra movement would help him be strong enough to handle the streets of New York. But as he struggled through another round of therapy exercises, he began to doubt himself.

“Jesus Christ,” he muttered to himself as he brought his knee to his chest and stretched out his leg for the tenth time. Ten was the magic number, and he knew his therapist would be delighted he had reached that many reps. He knew he should be proud, and he could see by the glee in his lover’s eyes that Sherlock was definitely proud. Instead each day he felt more tired and more frustrated.

“Great!” His therapist said with a grin. He grabbed hold of his foot, a bit too hard, and helped John push his leg back toward his chest. “Now this time push back toward me, and I’m going to help you lift your leg up and down.”

John banged his head against the floor and let out a groan. He didn’t like showing this kind of weakness around physical therapists, but he just felt like this should all be getting easier.

“We’re going to do five of these,” his therapist explained as John unwillingly stuck his leg back out, “then you’re good to go. Just five and you’re free of me for seventy-two hours. Here we go: one.”

Sherlock counted along with the therapist as John lifted his leg slowly from the floor to the air. Even with his therapist helping it felt like the force of the universe was fighting him. He could feel the sweat dripping from his forehead and clinging to his t-shirt. His boyfriend’s hand ran down his arm and a burst of excitement ran through his body. Trying to get his mind off of the pain, John
imagined instead being in bed with Sherlock. He imagined being able to roll on top of him again and take him hard and fast. He imagined Sherlock’s face as he finally took him, and a smile slipped across his lips.

Before he knew it he heard his doctor announce ‘five!’ , and John closed his eyes and let out another groan of pain.

“Well done, John, really!” His therapist complimented. “I’ll see you on Monday, but please feel free to phone me if you need anything at all.”

As soon as the therapist left the office Sherlock settled down on the floor next to him and rolled over so they were facing each other.

“What were you smiling about?” Sherlock demanded as he ran a finger across John’s chest.

“What?” Sherlock demanded as they broke apart long enough to catch their breath.

John grinned as he gazed up to Sherlock’s eyes, feeling years younger than he actually was.

“You taste like marmite,” he teased.

Sherlock’s nose scrunched up, and for a moment he thought his boyfriend was going to dash out of the room to go brush his teeth. Instead he descended upon John’s body, his lips closing in around a particular sensitive spot on his neck.

Suddenly someone cleared their throat, and John’s heart leapt in surprise. He looked over to the doorway and his face turned red at the sight of Greg and Mycroft staring at them with bemused faces.

“The therapist literally left two minutes ago!” Mycroft said, rolling his eyes. He turned to his fiancé. “Now I’m not so sure we should—”

“No, we’re going,” Greg interrupted. John and Sherlock stared at them, confused, as they waited for the DCI to explain: “We’re going to the South of France for the weekend.”

Frowning, Sherlock jumped up and grabbed a bottle of water. He handed it to John, as he chugged the water down he realised how dehydrated he was. Physical therapy really was exhausting him; just pushing himself back to a sitting position made it feel like his whole body was on fire.

Maybe sex will have to wait after all, he thought, for now I just want to sleep.

“Don’t we have a plane to catch next week?” Sherlock pointed out.

“Yes,” Mycroft replied. “We’re about to spend a month in America with you lot so we thought we’d take a little holiday to prepare for our holiday.”

John playfully punched Sherlock in the shoulder.

“Why didn’t we think of that?!” He hissed.
“Haven’t we spent most of the year on holiday?”

He stole a quick kiss to Sherlock’s lips, making his partner blush.

“Yes, and it’s been good,” he admitted. He turned back to Greg and Mycroft. “A month? Greg, I thought you were going to have to travel back and forth.”

“Yeah, but I’ve been saving up my leave,” Greg explained. “Besides, Mycroft’s been promising to take me to France for ages so I figured I’d let him before the government snatches him up for a new job.”

“We’ll bring you back some wine,” Mycroft promise. He crossed the room and dropped a keychain full of house keys into John’s hand, along with a security card. “I’m leaving you in charge.”

“Why?” Sherlock whined. “I’m next in line! I should be in charge when you’re not here!”

Grinning, John shot:

“But I’m the oldest!”

“And the most responsible,” Mycroft muttered under his breath. “If he gets to be too much just shut him up behind the trapdoor in the bookcase.”

John laughed, though truthfully he tried to forget the Holmes’ estate was really that creepy.

“Please don’t let him burn my house down,” Mycroft pleaded.

“I won’t,” John promised. “Have a great holiday, you two really deserve it.”

“Yeah, you do,” Sherlock agreed. “Safe travels.”

He shook his brother’s hand before shaking Greg’s, and John smiled at each of them before the couple left them alone again. They waited a full moment before turning to each other.

“We have the house to ourselves,” his boyfriend said with a wicked grin on his face.

“Too bad I can only stay on the ground floor,” John sighed.


He knew he could trust Sherlock so John stuck out his hands and let his boyfriend lift him to his feet. He let out a grunt of pain but to his surprise standing up really wasn’t too hard. Closing his eyes, John drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly to calm his anxiety. He did feel a bit lightheaded, and he was grateful when Sherlock simply led him to the nearby sofa.

“Sit,” his boyfriend demanded, and John obeyed.

He was surprised when Sherlock sat behind him, but when cold hands fell on his neck he understood. A soft moan escaped him as Sherlock began gently massaging his neck, throwing in a few kisses to his skin for good measure.

“I really am proud of you,” Sherlock murmured into his ear. His tongue dashed out to his ear and John shuddered. “Take your shirt off.”
John didn’t hesitate to obey. As the cool air hit his bare skin he shuddered, but he was grateful of being freed of the sweaty cotton.

“Now I have you to myself for the whole weekend,” his boyfriend went on, his low voice going straight to his cock. “And I plan to reward you for your good work.”

Suddenly all signs of exhaustion exploded into waves of adrenaline. He wanted Sherlock to take him, right here and there and…well, any other surface they could find. As much as he loved being a part of a family again he missed having real alone time with his lover. He missed having privacy and knowing Sherlock could make him scream and no one would be around to hear…

His partner’s fingers began digging to his shoulder blades and working their way down his arms and back.

“That feels good,” he moaned.

“Lay down,” his lover whispered.

Closing his eyes, John lowered himself into the leather cushions. He let out a shaky breath and tried to make himself relax. Sherlock’s fingers continued pressing deeply into his shoulders before lowering to his back. Expertly, he interchanged the presses with hitting the side of his hand lightly against his spine. He rubbed circles with his elbow and planted kisses in all the right places. John knew full well what his lover’s intentions were…and he knew this was neither the time nor place.

“Sherlock,” he mumbled against the sofa.

“Yes?”

“I’m completely covered with sweat,” John said. “And we’re on your brother’s sofa.”

There was a pause before Sherlock planted a kiss to his shoulder.

“Both good points,” his boyfriend confessed.

John let out a soft groan and rolled himself over so that he was facing his partner.

“Hi,” John said with a goofy grin spread across his face.

“Hi,” Sherlock replied, dragging a finger across his cheek.

“How about a bath?”

A long sigh escaped John as he lowered himself down into the bubbly hot water. Sherlock was already settled next to him with a glass of Merlot in hand. He had printed out the first chapter of A Study in Pink for Sherlock to read, and he watched carefully as his boyfriend sat his wine on the edge of the tub and turned to the pages. John ran his hand through Sherlock’s curls and leaned his head against his shoulder.

Half-way through the first page Sherlock snorted, and John knew exactly what he was scoffing at.

“My eyes were not full of lust!” His boyfriend snapped.

With a laugh, John planted a kiss to the nape of his neck before replying:

“Yes they were!” John protested. “You were undressing her with your eyes.”
“Was not,” Sherlock mumbled, blushing madly as he continued reading. “You misspelled ‘appearance’.”

John let out a chuckle and made a mental note to fix the mistake.

“Baskerville is off to the editor,” John said. “It’s hard to believe I’m one story down. I’m really doing it: I’m an author.”

His boyfriend leaned over to steal a kiss; he pulled back and grinned at John.

“It helps that you’ve already written blogs about it.”

“Shut up.” John teased, throwing a playful slap to Sherlock’s arm. “Writing is difficult—even more difficult when you’re on a contract writing for millions of readers.”

“Millions?”

John’s grin broadened.

“I can dream,” he said.

“Yeah, you’re dreaming of them making a Hollywood movie of us,” Sherlock said. His hand reached underneath the water and gently squeezed John’s leg. After another few moments of reading Sherlock breathed into his ear: “This is really brilliant.”

He planted kisses along John’s jawbone and nibbled at his neck.

“You’re supposed to be checking for spelling errors.”

“Very romantic.”

They shared a laugh before Sherlock’s lip attacked his neck once more, sucking in a spot just below where the neckline of his jumpers would show. He moaned as his lover’s breath ghosted across his skin; reaching over, he took the papers from Sherlock’s hand and sat them on the floor beside the bath. The two sank deeper into the water, their arms entangled around each other as their kiss deepened. Suddenly Sherlock’s eyes met him again, and he pulled back just slightly.

“I wish I had known then that you had feelings for me,” Sherlock whispered.

Licking his lips, John nodded and their foreheads touched.

“I wish I had known then that you had feelings for me,” John countered. He let out a dry laugh. “I wish we both hadn’t been so…”


“Blind,” John offered, and they stared at each other. “We wasted so much time.”

A hand fell on his cheek again, and they stared at each other. “We wasted so much time.”

They shared a brief kiss before Sherlock breathed:

“It’s been a great year and a terrible year all at the same time.”

John nodded in agreement.

“I know what you mean.”
They didn’t say anything else as their lips met again and his tongue slipped into Sherlock’s mouth. Their bath ended up more of a soak than a wash, but neither complained as Sherlock’s fingers dug into his back and John’s hand slipped beneath the water to grab his boyfriend’s cock. His lover moaned into his mouth as John tilted Sherlock’s head to suck a mark into his neck to match his own.

Drawing in a deep breath, John nipped at Sherlock’s ear before whispering:

“How about we go to bed?”

With a shiver his lover nodded and helped him get out of the bath. Wrapped in a towel and Sherlock’s arms, John hobbled to the bed until they both fell unceremoniously into it. Sherlock reached into the bedside table for lube before joining him on the bed. They gazed at each other for a moment and John swallowed nervously, knowing what Sherlock was thinking. His lover ran his hands down his arms, comforting him, and John shuddered.

“I want to,” John admitted, “I think I’m up to it.”

“If it gets too much, just tell me,” Sherlock said. “Promise me that, okay?”

He let out a shaky breath and nodded.

“I promise.”

“We'll go slow,” Sherlock offered as he popped open the lube; John oddly felt like he was a patient who was about to go through an operation. “If it’s too much, just say so. I can always just…”

Sherlock brushed his finger over his hole, and John felt so sensitive there he immediately let out a groan. His nerves were getting the best of him, his legs were already aching, and his cock was already hard.

“That’s good,” John said, closing his eyes as he threw his head back. “That’s what I want.”

His boyfriend lubed up a finger and pressed it against his hole again.

“What?” Sherlock asked innocently. “This?”

He pressed his finger in ever so gently, and John’s entire body tensed at the pressure. John could only nod frantically as he closed his eyes and tried to relax. Sherlock’s finger pushed in a little further, and his other hand gripped tightly against the thigh of his injured leg a little too tightly.

“Sherlock…” John whispered. He reached forward, grabbed Sherlock’s hand, and placed it on his other leg.

“Sorry,” Sherlock replied quietly, embarrassed. He leaned over John’s body to kiss him. “God you’re gorgeous.”

Peeling his eyes open, a smile fell across his face as he studied his lover’s pale face, the curls that fell nearly to his shoulders now, and his eyes that glowed as his body let go.

And Sherlock was calling him the gorgeous one.

“You’re just trying to make me feel bad because I’m old,” John grinned.

Without warning Sherlock slipped in a second finger.
"Fuck," he breathed as Sherlock pushed further into him, hitting him just at the right spot.

Sherlock hummed as he planted a kiss just below one of his nipples.

"More," John whispered, and his partner obeyed by adding another finger. "Oh god."

John grabbed his cock and began pumping, but Sherlock grabbed his hand and put it aside. Bending forward, Sherlock lips enclosed around the head of his cock and another groan escaped him.

"Bloody hell," John moaned as his hand found the back of Sherlock's head. Gently he pushed him down on his cock, encouraging him to take him in deeper. Between the finger penetrating him and the lips around his cock the warmth, the adrenaline, and the excitement all became too much. "Oh God! I'm going to cum."

But Sherlock didn't pull off. John let out a cry as he shot of spurts of cum down his lover's throat and Sherlock swallowed expertly as he fingered him hard.

"Fuck!" John exclaimed as he came one last time, his back arching into the mattress as he did.

Breathing hard, John threw his head back, closed his eyes, and held onto his orgasmic high as long as possible. He opened his eyes when he felt the bed shift and he realised Sherlock was climbing up his body.

"Come here," John whispered, placing his hands on Sherlock's arms as his lover settled over his body.

Sherlock wrapped his hands around his cock and pumped hard, grunting as he came on his chest.

"John," his partner whispered before collapsing on top of him.

John couldn't help but to let out a laugh.

"You know you have to get off of me," he teased.

With a groan of protest Sherlock obeyed, snuggling up close to him and wrapping an arm around him instead. Their eyes found each other and they smiled; he ran a hand through his lover's curls.

"That was amazing," John said quietly. "Thank you."

"You're amazing," Sherlock breathed before kissing him.

They let out a mutual sigh as they broke apart.

For the rest of the night John listened to Sherlock play his violin for hours on end as he wrote, continuing his tale of *A Study in Pink* and smiling to himself when he thought of how clueless they were back then. For every bump in the road they hit they always found their way back, and John wished they had known then just how strong they really were.

Chapter End Notes

So what will these two be up to during a weekend alone at the Holmes estate? Should
be fun! I hope you enjoyed the chapter, I appreciate your feedback! You guys are the best!
“Do you remember the notes?”

“It’s six bloody notes Sherlock. I think I can manage that.”

Nevertheless, Sherlock felt his boyfriend’s body stiffen under his touch as he helped him raise the bow and place it properly by the bridge. His lover drew in a deep breath, and Sherlock scooted closer to his him. He could feel John’s nerves, sense his desire to impress. At last John’s arm moved…and the sound was something akin to a dying animal. He couldn’t help but to chuckle, and John scowled.

“What was it again?” John sighed.

Sherlock planted a soft kiss to his neck to tell him it was okay.

“With me,” he murmured.

He felt John shudder as he placed his hands over his boyfriend’s hands.

“One, two three,” Sherlock instructed.

And together they began playing “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star”. John smiled as the tune slowly became recognisable to him, and they managed to make it all the way through the song before they burst into giggles.

“Be honest, how old were you when you learned that?” John asked.

Blushing, Sherlock admitted:

“About four.”

His boyfriend laughed again as he handed him back the violin. He took a look around the grand ballroom they stood in; the room was tucked in the back of the house and stopped being of use decades ago. Yet there was still a grand piano in the corner and chairs stacked around the walls from the dinner parties his grandparents used to throw.

John placed his mobile on the music stand and threw him a lopsided grin. He pulled up a voice recorder app, pressed play, and Sherlock was surprised when the sounds of a song he had been working on for hours echoed through the room.

“You recorded me?” Sherlock asked, flattered.

“Come here,” John said, taking Sherlock’s hands in his. He placed one set of hands on Sherlock’s hip and the other on his shoulders. “I may be a bit wobbly, but we’re in a ballroom. We should
dance.”

Sherlock let out a shudder, trying to rid himself of his nerves. He could already feel his palms sweating and his feet shaking. Nevertheless when John took a slow, careful, step forward, Sherlock took a step back. The song Sherlock had been writing was a waltz; he hadn’t written a waltz in ages, and secretly he had thought that John would like it.

He was pleased to see that he was right.

They weren’t exactly keeping up with the pace of the music, but it still felt good to be swaying in a slow waltz with his lover. It felt good to see John’s face light up again.

“Okay, okay,” John said, laughing again as he pressed pause on the app, “I think that’s about the most dancing I can do tonight.”

“You were wonderful,” Sherlock announced before he grabbed John’s shoulders and pulled him into a deep kiss. Their faces were red and their breathing heavy when they pulled a part, and they both grinned.

“We should get back to the trip planning,” John said. He pocketed his mobile as Sherlock packed up his violin, and then together they began to make their way back to the front of the house.

“You okay?” Sherlock asked when he noticed John grunt in pain.

“Yeah,” his boyfriend replied stiffly, an obvious lie. “I’m just so pissed this will get in the way of our holiday. I had been planning long walks in Central Park, you know.”

“I hear Central Park is popular for its carriage rides.”

Their eyes met, and Sherlock knew the comment meant a lot to John. They came to a rest in the living room and settled into the sofa, where John’s laptop was waiting for them. So far they had developed a pretty impressive spreadsheet of places they wanted to visited, things they wanted to do, and restaurants they wanted to try in New York.

“You know we won’t be in the city the whole time,” Sherlock pointed out. “I think we shouldn’t underestimate Laura when she says she lives in the middle over nowhere.”

“Yes, but you promised me at least a weekend,” John said, stealing a kiss to his cheek. “And I was thinking… I know it’s not really your thing, but I’d like to see a musical.”

Sherlock’s mouth opened, then closed, then opened again. He hesitated, no really sure where to start and not wanting to insult John.

“Not really…not really my thing?” Sherlock said. “Since when do you have any interest in musicals?!”

His boyfriend’s cheeks went red with embarrassment, and John refused to meet his eyes as he replied:

“Well it’s New York. It’s just what you do, you know? Like seeing Big Ben in London.”

He really wasn’t even sure how to answer that. From what he knew about John’s taste in music it mainly consisted of seventies and eighties rock bands and nothing even remotely close to musical theater.
“A mate was telling me about how good *Phantom of the Opera* was,” John explained. “It’s sort of a once in a lifetime opportunity to see it on Broadway, you know?”

“…no,” Sherlock replied. “I don’t know. I’ve never even heard of the bloody *Phantom of the Opera* and up until your mate talked to you I would wager you wouldn’t either. Come on, John! If we’re going to New York we need to experience history!”

With a sigh, his boyfriend quietly replied:

“Fine…fine.”

He tapped his fingers on the edge of the sofa and pulled his best disappointed face, all while throwing sad glances toward Sherlock. With a growl of frustration, Sherlock gave in, knowing he would never hear the end of it.

“Fine!” Sherlock sighed. “If you really want to see this stupid ghost opera so much I’ll go.”

John held his gaze a full moment before he burst out laughing.

“I knew it!” John exclaimed. Sherlock’s face turned hot with anger as he realised John had just been messing with him. “Greg didn’t think I could get you to agree to go to a musical. That was actually a lot easier than I thought it would be. I’m a bit disappointed in you. *Phantom of the Opera*. Do you even know me?”

His boyfriend held his hand to his mouth as he continued his giggling, and Sherlock balled up his fist and tried to tell himself not to feel hurt.

“Well that just shows you what I would do for love,” Sherlock pointed out. “Apparently all you are capable of doing is making jokes.”

Rolling his eyes, John replied:

“Oh come here, you.”

He pulled Sherlock in for another kiss, and as soon as their lips crashed together he remembered he could never be mad at John too long. When they broke apart he realised John was holding a pair of tickets in front of his face, and his eyes widened when he realised what they were for.

“I was buying them when Greg told me I should trick you into thinking I wanted to go to a musical,” John explained. “In all honestly *Phantom of the Opera* isn’t the worst thing ever, but I knew this would be more up your alley.”

The tickets were for box seats in the first tier for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Excitement flowed through him as the sound of an orchestra filling a symphony hall sounded in his mind. He imagined sitting next to John and holding his hand as his boyfriend realised just how magical live orchestras were.

…of course he knew in reality John would probably fall asleep after the second song.

But all the same, the gesture was so romantic and so thoughtful that Sherlock practically leaped on top of John, pinning him back against the sofa. His boyfriend saved his laptop just before it could fall to the floor and gently lowered it so it was out of their way. Soft moans filled the air as Sherlock’s tongue slipped into John’s mouth and their bodies rocked against each other. Their lips danced together for a few moments more until John pulled back, smiling.
“Guess you like it, then?”

“Guess so,” Sherlock teased before kissing him again.

John grabbed ahold of his curls just harsh enough to make him groaned and murmured into his ear:

“We’re supposed to be planning.”

Clearing his throat, it took a great amount of will to throw himself back against the sofa cushions.

“What else do you want to do in New York City, then?” Sherlock asked, running a finger down John’s cheek.

His boyfriend opened his laptop and stared at the list of ideas they were trying to narrow down.

“The Statue of Liberty,” John announced.

A pit of disappointment formed in Sherlock’s stomach.

“The Statue of Liberty?” He repeated, just to make sure he hadn’t misheard. John nodded. “John, we could see that on the internet.”

“We could hear a symphony on the internet!”

Sherlock’s mouth fell open, and he paused a full moment before he managed:

“That’s…that’s completely different!” He protested. “Live symphonies bring music to life! They put you in this place, in this moment that’s absolutely…magical.”

He knew that didn’t sound like him at all, and he was relieved when his boyfriend cracked a smile.

“That’s really lovely,” John commented, “but I could say the same about seeing the Statue of Liberty. Seeing it in person is different then seeing it on a computer screen.”

Sherlock knew he wouldn’t win with his argument- and he knew he shouldn’t. He knew it was his role as boyfriend to want to do as much as what John wanted to do as possible.

“Fine,” Sherlock sighed. He smirked, deciding he would try one last time to win his boyfriend over. “If you want to fly all the way to America to stand in line for hours to look at a statue for ten minutes with hundreds of other people, then that’s what we’ll do.”

To his disappointment, John simply leaned forward, kissed him, and flashed a smile.

“Thank you,” John said. “You know, we need to think of things to do with Dan. I was thinking maybe a zoo?”

Scrunching up his nose, he pointed out:

“We have a zoo here.”

“True…” John said with a sigh. “Laura suggested taking him to Times Square. She took him when he was younger, but he doesn’t remember. We should take him.”

He didn’t want to admit that Times Square, what with all its sights, sounds, smells, retail, and advertising, was one of the last places he wanted to visit…but he knew both Dan and John would really enjoy it.
“Put it on the list,” he offered.

The room fell silent as John typed in the latest of their ideas. Sherlock propped John’s feet up to his lap and began messaging them. He didn’t want to admit that it was hard to discuss what to do in New York without thinking about his father. He hadn’t told John about his conversations with Mycroft and the things he found out about his family. He hadn’t told him that despite finding out, he was still wondering what it would be like to meet his father. He hadn’t told him that he had found out the exact location of the garage his father worked at and the hours he was there.

“I think we should visit some pubs,” John mused, saving him from his thoughts.

“Yes, I hear all the four year-olds love pubs,” he teased.

John grinned at him.

“We can take Dan with us to the Statue of Liberty,” John offered, “and to Times Square. Then we can do a pub crawl another day. What do you think Greg and Mycroft have planned?”

He really didn’t want to have to think about his brother.

“Who knows.”

Once again John became distracted with organising his list. While Sherlock would have been okay with landing in America and planning the entire trip as they went John was insisting on planning out every detail beforehand. They had already mapped out every meal, every shop, every landmark they wanted to visit, and Sherlock wanted to remind him that the best adventures were built on being spontaneous.

He stopped messaging John’s feet and began tickling the backs of them. Neither he nor John was particularly ticklish, he knew there was one certain spot at the bottoms of his boyfriend’s feet, just above the heel, where he was most sensitive.

“Sherlock!” John shot, fighting a smile. Sherlock just tickled him even more. Bending forward, he planted a kiss to John’s foot and his lover blushed. “I hate you, you know.”

“I know,” Sherlock replied with a mischievous grin.

At last John sat the laptop aside, and Sherlock was finally free of the planning obsession.

“You, my love, are going to have a brilliant holiday in America,” Sherlock said, kissing his foot again.

“I know,” John said. He let out a giggle he just couldn’t control, and Sherlock’s grin widened. “I just haven’t been on a holiday like this in a really long time. In fact, between the war and university and being so focused on my career and grades…I’ve probably not been on a proper holiday since my family when to Australia when I was eighteen.”

He pictured a teenaged John on a beach in Australia, and a nice warmth flowed through him at the thought.

“You never told me you went to Australia,” Sherlock said.

“Yeah, well…” John blushed, and Sherlock had a feeling where this story was going. “It’s not exactly a holiday I’m proud of.”
If he knew John at all, he knew exactly why he wasn’t proud of his time in Australia, but he wanted to torture his lover a bit and make him tell the whole story.

“Go ahead,” he encouraged.

He gave John a break from the tickling so he could tell his story, but his boyfriend didn’t look any less embarrassed.

“There was sort of this girl that was staying at our resort,” John confessed. “We began hanging out, and it turns out she was just as tired of her family as I was of mine. We decided we would both lie and tell our families we were sick so we could stay inside with each other all day and I, well…I sorta jumped her.”

Sherlock let out a bark of laughter.

“You sorta jumped her?” He teased.

John’s face turned bright red, and it was with great effort that he was able to reply:

“She was French! She was gorgeous, well, gorgeous enough for my eighteen year old self to want to sleep with her.”

“We should have tracked her down when we were in France,” Sherlock said.

His boyfriend was suddenly very interested in studying his own fingernails as he admitted:

“She kicked me out of bed as soon as we were done.”

Sherlock laughed even harder, and John’s face turned even darker. To make him feel better, Sherlock scooted toward him and scooped him up in his arms so he could cradle his boyfriend’s body against his.

“Well I still love you despite your silly teenage affairs,” Sherlock said before stealing a kiss. “Any other ridiculous affairs you’d like to tell me about?”

Before John could answer Sherlock lowered his boyfriend so that they lay on top of each other on the sofa; a mirror image of their position yesterday before they…began playing catch-up on all the sex they hadn’t been having lately.

“Well,” John said; he swallowed nervously as Sherlock began lifting up his shirt and planting kisses across his abdomen. “There was this woman I worked with in the army, another doctor. She was my mentor for awhile.”

“An older woman?”

Sherlock sat up, a bit surprised. John looked like he wanted to melt into the floor.

“It was just…really quick, more of stress relief, really!” John said, babbling as he tried to explain himself. “I was really embarrassed. She actually transferred after. Some of the guys found out about it, and it earned me this nickname…”

He immediately clamped his mouth shut, obviously regretting confessing that.

“What?” Sherlock demanded. He began tickling John’s feet again. “Tell me!”

Continents Watson’.”

Sherlock burst out laughing so hard he nearly fell off the sofa. He seized his torturing of John’s feet and instead crawled over his body. Their lips brushed together in a soft, slow, kiss, and he began pulling John’s shirt up. His boyfriend helped him, pulling the shirt over his head.

“You know we can’t do this here,” John said. “Security cameras, remember? Mycroft probably bugged the place before he left.”

“He didn’t,” Sherlock said. He paused to suck at John’s neck, enjoying the moan that escaped his lover’s lips. “I turned off the security cameras and checked for bugs.”

John seemed to believe him. His body thrust up against his as Sherlock nibbled at his ear and ran his hand down the length of his chest.

“You know all those women were nothing compared to you,” John murmured quietly as he ran his hand through Sherlock’s hair.

He tugged gently at his curls, making Sherlock shudder, and his hand flew to John’s zipper. His boyfriend squirmed as he pulled his cock out and slowly ran his hands up and down the length of it.

“Oh, I know,” Sherlock whispered seductively as his lips brushed the head. Then, without warning he pushed his lover’s cock in between his lips.

“God!” John moaned, grabbing even harder at his hair.

He ran his hands over John’s chest until he found one of his nipples and squeezed it in his fingers. His lover’s hand fell over his, encouraging him. Suddenly Sherlock pulled off his cock, frantically rubbed it in his hands, and suggested:

“We’re alone here, John, and you’re all mine. Be as loud as you want.”

In one swift movement Sherlock leaned over again, taking John’s cock back into his mouth. His boyfriend cried out and began thrusting his hips up, forcing his cock deeper and deeper down Sherlock’s throat. Sherlock pressed his fingertips against John’s thighs, tightly enough to leave marks even under the trousers that still covered his skin. John circled his hips, thrusting harder.

“Christ I’m going to cum,” John warned just before shots of cum hit his tongue. The consulting detective swallowed expertly before he sat up and leaned over his boyfriend so they could share a kiss. When they broke apart, John whispered into his ear: “What about you?”

“This was about you,” Sherlock said as he ran a finger across John’s cheek.

There was a twinkle in his lover’s eye that sent shivers down his spine. He was admittedly hard, but he had enough control to be able to please John without giving in.

“Then you better watch your back,” John murmured, “because I’m going to pay you back before this afternoon is over.”

Sherlock’s eyes fluttered closed as his boyfriend planted a kiss to his cheek before he sat up and zipped his trousers back up.
That afternoon Sherlock cooked couscous with fish on the side. He had to admit he was enjoying having access to his brother’s updated kitchen, decked out with stainless steel and more gas burners than he could count. John was back at work on *A Study in Pink*, and for a solid hour the house was completely silent.

But as soon as dinner was ready and they desperately dug into the dish, he noticed John’s eyes kept flashing toward him in a rather mischievous way. He knew the reward John had promised was coming soon, but every time he had expected his lover to jump him in the middle of dinner John simply went back to eating, leaving Sherlock anxious.

“Enjoying the couscous?” Sherlock asked to ease the tension.

“Yes,” John said before popping another mouthful of food into his mouth. He swallowed and added: “Fish was a great choice.”

“It was also all Mycroft had,” Sherlock said as he pushed some of the couscous around with his fork. If he was completely honest he had become more aroused since John’s promise of a surprise attack. Cooking was a nice distraction, but his body was too full of anticipation and desperation to eat. “I should have known he wouldn’t have been nice enough to stock up his kitchen before he left.”

John ate another mouthful and rolled his eyes before pointing out:

“We’re also about to go on holiday for a month. There’s enough for a pasta dinner tomorrow, and some meals when Greg and Mycroft get back. How about we go out somewhere in London before we go to Baker Street to pack?”

His eyes lit up at the thought of being back in the city. As nice as the peace and quiet of the Holmes estate was, he missed the vibrant city. He missed Baker Street with its dust, its street noise, its…landlady. Smiling, he thought of Mrs Hudson wandering into the flat every morning with tea. As excited he was for their holiday he also yearned for normalcy.

“Sounds good,” he said. John smiled and Sherlock forced more food into his mouth.

After doing the washing up he and John retreated back to their bedroom. His boyfriend brought along his laptop (which seemed to be attached to his hip that day), and Sherlock was relieved when he placed it into its case instead of opening it. His heartbeat began to speed up a bit with anticipation as he watched his lover take off his watch, slip off socks, trousers, and shirt. When at last John finally turned back toward him Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat, but he was surprised his boyfriend appeared completely calm and collected.

“Right,” John announced. “Get on the bed then.”

The fact that his lover could be so demanding, so seductive, and yet so collected all at the same time instantly made him feel warm with arousal. He obeyed, getting on top of the duvet without undressing since John hadn’t said anything about removing his own clothes.

“I know I’ve been depriving you, and you’ve been so good, so patient,” John said as he slowly walked around the other side of the bed. Sherlock’s heart was beating out of control now, and his pupils were blown wide. “You are bloody amazing, and I wanted to reward you properly. I might not be ready to fuck you into the mattress just yet, but I thought I’d do the next best thing.”

He pulled out a wrapped box from the bedside table John had been keeping his things in. His lover handed the box to him and he promptly ripped it opened and threw the top aside. His body froze,
absolutely consumed with anticipation, with want, with need when he saw that a dildo was inside.

It had been some time since he and John had played with any toys. The dildo was new: it wasn’t one of the ones they had gotten from their sex club case earlier that year, which meant…

“Did you order a dildo and have it sent to my brother’s house?” He demanded.

John’s lips turned up in a smirk.

“Don’t worry, the company doesn’t put its real name on the shipping label,” John said.

“And if Mycroft had the box confiscated for searching?” He challenged.

He panicked at the thought of his brother finding a box with a sex toy inside it on his front steps with John’s name written on it.

“We would have told him it was a prank.”

John had it all figured out, and just imagining his lover carefully shopping on line for these kinds of toys made him even antsier.

“Do you like it?” John asked as he carefully climbed over his body. His boyfriend flinched and shifted his weight onto his good leg. “You look like you’re in one of those dreams where you’re walking around school with no clothes on.”

That was…basically what this felt like. He felt exposed, somehow, like hundreds of pairs of eyes were on him even though it was only he and John in the room. He had been put on the spot, taken completely off guard, and now he was about to be completely in the hands of his lover.

And god, as overwhelming as it was it couldn’t have been more endearing.

John took out a bottle of lube from the bedside table, and Sherlock’s body tensed. He rubbed the lube over the end of the dildo, and the consulting detective let out a shaky breath as he awaited his lover to join him in bed.

“Have you been watching porn again?” Sherlock teased. John only grinned as he carefully climbed onto bed. “Cause if you really wanted to I’d watch it with you.”

They shared a kiss, as their lips danced John unzipped his trousers.

“You would just mock it.”

“True.”

He threw his head back and suppressed a groan as John mouthed at his cock through his pants. Sherlock helped him take his clothes of the rest of the way; he lifted his shirt above his head and threw them to the floor. Suddenly John’s finger was prying between his lips and he sucked on it, obediently, knowing why his lover needed him to. A mere moment later the finger was gone, pressed instead against his arsehole. Sherlock gasped at the pressure and threw his head back once again against the pillows. John lubed up his fingers and pushed two in this time.

“That’s good,” he whispered as John’s fingers drove further inside him, brushing against his prostate and making him squirm.

“Roll over for me, love.”
His lover’s voice was a faded whisper in the still night air. The house felt enormous and intimidating at that moment, as Sherlock thought of the dozens of empty rooms and the ghosts of memories that lived in them. Closing his eyes, Sherlock pictured them at Baker Street; he longed to be able to make love in their bed again.

He pushed his arse in the air toward John, rocking back on his boyfriend’s fingers. At last his fingers slipped out; Sherlock let out a breath at the loss of pressure. He rested his head on his arms and tensed as he felt the tip of the dildo rub against his hole. He wished it were his lover, and not a plastic toy, breaching him, but he had to admit the pressure felt amazing. It wasn’t until the dildo pushed further into him, filling him up, that he realised how much he missed this. How much he needed it. Guilty as he felt, he pushed his arse back, trying to force the toy in further. John began pulling it out and pushing it back in ever so gently, and Sherlock let out another moan.

“I’m gonna have to be on my side for this,” John admitted. He could hear the pain and regret in his voice, and Sherlock hated it. “Is that okay?”

“Of course,” he breathed.

Rolling over, he moved so that his back was facing John. The angle was a bit awkward, but he didn’t care. All he needed was…

After applying a bit more lube, John pressed the toy back into him and he let out a soft cry.

“You can scream for me love,” John whispered into his ear. “We’re alone, remember?”

He shuddered at the encouragement, and just to please him Sherlock let out a cry that echoed through the room when the dildo finally brushed against his prostate.

“Fuck!” Sherlock exclaimed.

He swore he could feel John grinning against the skin of his neck.

“That’s it,” his boyfriend said.

A hand stretched around to his chest, and Sherlock moaned as John’s fingers played with one of his nipples. He rocked against John’s body, creating friction against the toy brushing against his most sensitive spot. At last his lover’s hand fell to his cock; Sherlock closed his eyes and rocked hard as John became pumping.

“You’re going to come hard for me,” John breathed into his ear.

“Oh fuck!” Sherlock cried out when his lover’s thumb brushed over the head of his cock. Fingers danced over his balls and he let out another cry. “John.”

It didn’t take much longer for the steady rhythm of the dildo pounding in and out of him, along with the hands teasing his cock, to make him come.

“Oh god!” His voice boomed throughout the bedroom, echoing into the hall as he came over his boyfriend’s hands. “Fuck. John. Oh god, John!”

He screamed his lover’s name one final time before he began breathing hard, trying to catch his breath. His heart pounded in his chest, and he broke out into a cold sweat as John gently pulled the dildo out of him.

“God I wish that were my cock instead,” John confessed.
Sherlock rolled over toward him and ran a finger down his cheek. Leaning forward, he planted a soft kiss against his boyfriend’s lips.

“Me too,” he replied quietly when they broke apart. He ran a hand down John’s chest to his hard cock. “That was amazing, thank you.”

They kissed again and slowly he began moving his hands up and down John’s cock. John moaned as he let out a cry and buried his head into Sherlock’s shoulder. He teased his balls and rubbed his thumb across the head before he began tugging hard, making John grunt and cry out.

“Oh fuck!” John exclaimed as he came only moments later.

Smiling, John’s hand fell over Sherlock’s hand and together they rubbed up and down his shaft, squeezing out the last of his come.

“Jesus,” John whispered before kissing him hard.

Sherlock reached for the tissues on the bedside table and began cleaning them up. When he was done they both rolled over and let out simultaneous sighs of pleasure.

“God that was brilliant,” Sherlock announced. He grinned as he tilted his head to kiss John once again. “Feel free to do that any time. Preferably with your cock…but this works too.”

“There’s more where that came from.”

He winked and Sherlock shuddered, wondering what else he had up his sleeve.

“Roll over again,” John said.

Obeying, Sherlock rolled over so his back could curl up against John’s body so they could spoon.

“I like being the big spoon,” Sherlock complained.

“I don’t care.”

He kissed Sherlock’s neck, and they both closed their eyes.

“You realise it’s only half-eight,” he teased.

“Yes,” John replied, “we’re old men.”

“You’re an old man.”

“And you’re pushing it.”

Sherlock only grinned before letting himself begin to drift away. Even when it was early he would never take the opportunity to be by his lover’s side for granted.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you’ve enjoyed this nice break from the angst! Up next...they go to America! Finally! This will be fun, I promise! I’ve been planning their journey to America for a LONG time, and I’m so excited to finally get to share it with you! I love your
feedback, and I hope you enjoy the upcoming story arch!
Flying

Chapter Notes

I tried, but I really couldn't write about them packing and flying on a plane without it turning into a bunch of fluff! I will try my very best to not jump the shark with this New York plot...then again, this is fanfiction! Can you really jump the shark in fanfiction? :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Right,” John announced, staring at the pile of clothes in the middle of their Baker Street living room.

“So…” Sherlock echoed. They turned to face each other. “How do you pack for a month-long holiday?”

John just scowled as he picked up one of Sherlock’s dress shirts and sniffed at it.

“This shirt’s not even clean!” He complained before throwing the shirt at his boyfriend.

Shrugging, Sherlock threw it back onto the pile.

“I can wash it there,” he pointed out.

With a roll of his eyes John threw his suitcase down on the floor and then Sherlock’s. Instead of eating out they had decided to order their favourite Chinese takeaway and eat at home. John had to admit it felt really good to be back at Baker Street. It took being away for so long to really realise how much this place had become his home; it just felt so right, being here with Sherlock. He took a seat on the sofa and let out a sigh as he let his body relax.

“Well you’re right about one thing,” John commented, “we can do laundry there…which is why we really need to take half of these clothes out of the pile. But it’s rude and gross to arrive at someone’s house for holiday with dirty clothes.”

“Fine,” Sherlock grumbled. His eyes narrowed in on John as the doctor took a bite out of his egg roll. “Aren’t you going to help?”

John waved a hand toward his leg.

“You do the bending and kneeling. I’ll help you decide what to pack.” Sherlock picked up a red collared shirt and threw it into the suitcase. “Not that…red’s not really your colour.”

His boyfriend’s mouth fell agape, and John had to bite back a laugh. He was certain at that moment that no one had ever told Sherlock he didn’t look good in something before.

“Blue looks better,” John explained. Sherlock threw a navy and sky blue shirt into the pile for laundry. “And purple.”

He winked at his boyfriend; Sherlock knew purple was the colour he liked best on him.

Downstairs a door open in shut, and their eyes lit up as they looked at each other again.
“Mrs Hudson!” They cried together.

When their landlady ascended the stairs and poked her head into the flat the two of them beamed. To say she looked shocked was an understatement.

“Oh boys!” She cried, rushing over to them so she could give them both hugs. She fell onto the sofa next to John and gently patted his injured leg. “How’s the leg?”

Shrugging, John admitted:

“Good days and bad, but I’m getting there.”

With a bright smile Mrs Hudson replied:

“Of course you are, dear. I hope this one’s not giving you too much trouble.”

She glared at Sherlock, who glared right back at her.

“He’s been amazing, actually,” John said. He reached out for Sherlock’s hand and kissed it. His boyfriend blushed. “We just came back to do some packing for our holiday.”

“Oh that’s right!” Mrs Hudson exclaimed. “You two are going to have so much fun in New York. When I was about ten years younger than you, Sherlock, my best mate convinced me to move to New York City to…well, I suppose you don’t really care about that.”

She waved her hand at them, trying to pretend like it was nothing, and John stifled a laugh. It was no secret that Mrs Hudson was an...exotic dancer...back in her younger days.

“I’m sure it will be brilliant,” he chimed in. “Sherlock has promised me plenty of time in the city.”

“It’s a very romantic city,” she said, winking at Sherlock.

The consulting detective was clearly getting annoyed with being talked about. Clearing his throat, he announced:

“Right, well Mrs Hudson, not to be rude but-”

“Oh love, I know you’re busy.”

She hugged them both again before descending the stairs.

“I feel a bit bad,” John admitted. “We’ve left her alone for a few weeks already.”

Sherlock scrunched up his nose as he picked out a few shades of grey and black and threw them in with the suitcase pile.

“There!” John said, holding out his hand. “That’s plenty.”

His lover looked down at the small pile and then back up at him, utterly confused.

“That’s only like...ten shirts!”

“Yes, and like you pointed out your sister owns a washer and dryer. It’s fine. Don’t over pack; we don’t want to spend our entire bloody budget on airline baggage fees.”

In protest Sherlock simply kicked the remainder of his shirts over to the other side of the room,
knowing it would piss John off to see him throwing his laundry around like a child.

And it did piss him off. Really.

But it was also adorable.

“What about your jumpers, then?” Sherlock shot. “You must have fifty sitting here!”

John opened his mouth but stopped, realising Sherlock brought up a good point.

“No,” Sherlock said, throwing one of his Christmas jumpers over his shoulder. He moved onto the yellow and green ones next. “No, no, no…love, I’m taking you shopping when we get to New York.”

He opened his mouth again but quickly realised he had absolutely no problem with that.

“Sounds good to me.”

After a couple of hours they had managed to get their luggage down to a large suitcase each and carry-ons. Once the packing was done it felt like no time before John was boarding a plane to America with Sherlock, Mycroft, and Greg. Though they were in first class Sherlock still managed to find something to complain about everything, and John was grateful when Greg revealed he had brought along a whole briefcase full of cases for Sherlock to look at were he to get bored while traveling.

Which didn’t take long.

“John!” Sherlock whined from beside him. He let out a long sigh, hoping to show Sherlock that he was not amused. “Johnnnn!”

Apparently Sherlock didn’t care how annoyed he was.

“What?” John demanded. They stared at each other, and his boyfriend looked so innocent that he felt bad about getting frustrated with him. Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath and calmly repeated: “What?”

Sherlock stared at him for a full moment before asking:

“Can we switch seats?”

John threw his hands up in the air in frustration and shut his laptop. Clearly he wasn’t going to get any real work done on this flight.

“You said you didn’t want the window seat,” John pointed out. “You said the window seat was dull.”

His boyfriend simply shrugged.

“I just thought it would be nice for both of us to have a turn,” he said. “I wanted you to have a turn first.”

“Right,” John said with a chuckle. “How nice of you to let me have a whole…bloody hell it’s only been an hour! Besides they don’t exactly let you switch seats on airlines. I bought this seat so it’s mine.”
“Fine.”

The consulting detective actually crossed his arms and pouted like a child. To prove how disappointed he was Sherlock gave the seat in front of him—Greg’s seat— a kick for good measure.

“Oi!” The DCI exclaimed. He turned to Mycroft and muttered: “I told you we should have switched to a different flight.”

Mycroft only smirked, and once again John was left to deal with Sherlock on his own.

“Look,” John said, lowering his voice as he turned to Sherlock to meet his eyes. “I know flying is boring, but it will be worth it. Just keep working on those cold cases.”

“I’ve solved all of them already.”

Greg’s head whipped around at the announcement, and his mouth fell open in shock. He beat John to it when he shot:

“How the hell have you already solved twenty cases?!”

Shrugging, Sherlock simply replied:

“They were all just so…elementary.”

John met Greg’s eyes, and the DCI just shrugged—his way of admitting he didn’t have a clue what Sherlock meant either.

“Give me that!” Greg snapped, jerking the stack of case files out of Sherlock’s hands. His jaw fell open again as he read over page after page of Sherlock’s notes. “I don’t believe it.”

“Did those really sit in filing cabinets for ten years?” Sherlock asked with a smirk.

“Sherlock!” Mycroft warned under his breath.

Beside him Sherlock closed his eyes, leaned his head on his shoulder, and for a moment he thought maybe his lover had tired himself out.

But then a mere moment later there was another whine of “John!” and he shoved his computer in Sherlock’s lap.

“Here,” he said. “Read through everything I’ve written so far on A Study in Pink and edit it. I’m going to sleep.”

He took out his headphones to listen to some music. His lover didn’t seem too excited about his new assignment, but nevertheless he opened the laptop and got to work. It was enough to keep him busy for a couple of more hours, and John found himself surprisingly rested when he was nudged awake three hours into their flight. Sherlock passed the computer back over to him, but instead of finding an edited version of A Study in Pink there was a whole new story in the word processor.

“What is this?” John asked.

“I decided to write a story.”

He stared at his partner for a moment, wondering if air travel had made him completely lose his mind. His eyes scanned the document he was reading in disbelief; midway through he couldn’t help but to burst out laughing.
“'Dr Watson was rather taken with Miss Adler. He gazed after her, eyes full of lust. One might even say he was undressing her with his eyes…’ Sherlock, what is this?!’”

His boyfriend sat back in his seat with a satisfied smirk on his face.

“My version of the story.”

“But it’s…fiction! It’s…fanfiction!”

The look of confusion on Sherlock’s face was akin to how he looked when John once tried to explain to him how the solar system worked. He decided it wasn’t even worth it to try to explain. Instead he continued reading about Sherlock’s story of his own ‘crush’ on Irene Adler.

“I was not smitten with her,” he mumbled.

“I dunno John,” Greg called from the seat in front of them. “I remember your eyes being pretty full of lust.”

He quickly deleted the document, but beside him Sherlock just laughed.

“At least I didn’t show up in Buckingham palace dressed in a sheet!” John shot.

His boyfriend just kept laughing.

John wasn’t sure he had ever been happier to be on land than when they arrived in New York City. But as they claimed their baggage and walked through the hectic airport he quickly changed from feeling relieved to feeling overwhelmed. All around him there were just so many…Americans. There were American accents, American adverts, American food and candy on display in the shops, and American football on the telly.

And he could have sworn people were staring at them, like they knew they didn’t belong.

“John, people are staring at us,” Sherlock muttered into his ear, echoing his paranoia.

He glanced to his other side where Mycroft stood straight and tall in his three piece suit, walking through the crowds like he owned the place. That’s when he decided:

“I think they’re staring at Mycroft.”

Sherlock snorted. Mycroft, oblivious to their teasing, began shifting through texts on his mobile.

“Laura says she’s parked in a car park,” he announced. “Should be this way…”

They walked in circles three times before Mycroft finally found the right exit.

“I thought you’d been through JFK loads of times,” Greg mumbled.

With an innocent shrug, Mycroft replied:

“I was always with my team. I never had to find my way around on my own.”

There was no mistaking Laura in the car park. It turned out Laura drove a forest green SUV- he
was quite surprised at how nice her car was as she waved them over. Though it had only been a few weeks since they last saw the youngest Holmes sibling, Laura’s long dark brown locks seem to have grown even further past her shoulders. She immediately threw her arms around Sherlock before turning to her older brother, then to Greg and finally John.

“It’s good to see you again,” John greeted with a grin on his face.

“It’s good to see you standing!” She replied.

He glanced down at his cane, feeling a bit embarrassed. Maybe that’s what some of those looks were about, he realised, they were wondering what a middle aged man was doing limping around with a cane.

“Mostly standing,” he offered.

“Well come on, then,” she said as she hit the key to open the trunk. They piled their bags in before taking their seats inside the car.

The drive out of the airport was…maddening.

“It’s like we haven’t bloody moved,” Greg complained twenty minutes into standstill traffic.

“That’s because we haven’t,” Laura sighed. “This is why you never, ever, drive in the city.”

She threw a glance back toward them and flashed an innocent smile.

“Unless you’re picking up your loving family from the airport, of course,” she offered.

Next to him Sherlock let out a loud yawn, and John couldn’t help but to smile when he realised his loving, yet hyperactive, boyfriend had finally tired himself out.

“Tired, love?” John asked.

Nodding, Sherlock leaned his head against John’s shoulder and let his heavy eyelids finally close.

“Well it is nearly one AM back in London,” Laura pointed out. “It’s going be a rough drive so feel free to nap…”

But Sherlock was already out. John poked his head, trying to make sure his partner really was asleep. The consulting detective didn’t make a sound when he tried to move him.

“Yup, he’s out,” John announced.

“Finally,” Mycroft sighed from the front seat. He settled back into his seat, wrapped his arms around himself, and closed his own eyes. “Time for some peace and quiet.”

“Amen,” Greg muttered to his left.

The DCI leaned his head against the window, and soon the two of them were out as well. John found himself yawning, and even though he had napped on the plane he was drawn to sleep to.

Might as well, he told himself.

He leaned his head against Sherlock’s and pulled the coat covering his partner’s body over so that it would cover him as well. Before long he too was out, allowing himself to give into the jet lag.
Chapter End Notes

IThis trip won't be all goofy fluffiness of them running around New York. Trust me this plays a big role in the story! Like I've said I've been planning their New York trip since...since...a REALLY long time! I hope you enjoy it! This story arch will have plenty to offer, I promise: fluff and silliness, love, smut, family, mystery, angst...and surprises. Lots of surprises! ;)

So...what do you think so far?

Thanks so much for all of your feedback and kudos! I get the biggest smile on my face with each review and kudo I see in my inbox!
“Boys, we’re here,” Laura sang.

Sherlock lifted his head from the car window and rubbed his eyes. As he looked around at the dark, wooded lot they were parked in it took him a moment to remember where he was.

“Welcome to Schenectady,” his sister announced. She turned around to grin at them in the dark before kicking her door open.

They all yawned in response before following her lead and getting out of the car. It felt good to stand and stretch; Sherlock was surprised to look at his mobile and see how late it was.

“We should have just flown into Albany,” Mycroft muttered as he sleepily grabbed his suitcase out of the trunk.

“It was a lot cheaper to fly you all of you into JFK,” Laura replied. She threw a glance toward Sherlock and added: “And you would have had to deal with a layover…and would you really want to go through that with this one?”

“Hey!” Sherlock complained as he grabbed his own luggage.

The others smiled as they headed down the driveway toward the house. There wasn’t much to see in the dark, but Sherlock could already tell his sister’s house was much more massive than he thought. It was two stories with dozens of windows around the front and a classic American wrap-around porch. A smile crossed his own face as he passed the tree that hoisted up the swing Dan once drew him a picture of.

“I moved to New York City the moment I turned eighteen,” his sister told them. “Of course I was all kinds of stupid about it. I had a shitty closet-sized apartment that I paid a fortune for. I was working two jobs and barely making ends meet. I was going out with the wrong kinds of guys…one of whom is Dan’s father. After I had Dan I knew I needed to get my life together. I moved up here, found a better apartment, and eventually met Jason at a bar of all places. This is actually his house. I know it’s not much to see in the dark but it’s really beautiful out here. I never turned back after living here…to this day I’ve never once regretted moving out of the city.”

“It’s rather nice to live outside of everything,” Mycroft commented.

“Yes,” Laura replied with a sad smile. “It is.”

As soon as she pushed the front door open Dan’s voice boomed throughout the house:

“They’re here! They’re here!”

Before they could even step inside Dan appeared in the doorway and practically jumped up in Sherlock’s arms.

“Hey Dan,” he greeted.

“Come see my room!” Dan pleaded as he took Sherlock by the arm and dragged him inside.
“Dan, sweetie, they’ve had a long day,” Laura said, pulling her son away from them. “They probably just want to eat and sleep.”

“Oh I’m up for some room-seeing,” Mycroft said with a grin, practically showing off how well he adjusted to travelling.

While he rarely even left London his brother was used to these long fights and changes in time zones. Sherlock didn’t want to admit it, but the day had completely exhausted him in a way that running around solving cases never had. Maybe it was the jet lag…or maybe it was the dream he had in the car about arriving at Laura’s house and finding his father was there. No matter how hard he tried to not thinking about it, he knew the knowledge that his father was only a couple of hours away was going to weigh on his shoulders the entire holiday.

Looking around, Sherlock tried to take his mind off his father once again by taking in the room they stood in. Laura’s home almost had a rustic feel, like he was on holiday camping. The living room had a high ceiling with exposed beams running across it, making the house feel even larger than it looked on the outside. The furniture was all leather, and it all matched: the sofa, the armchairs, even the tables had all obviously been carefully selected. There was a big HDTV that was playing a children’s show on silent. Children’s toys littered the room- a fight he knew his sister took every day with Dan, considering they had a separate play area. The kitchen was off to the side, and the smell of chicken and rice hit him as they were near it.

“Smells delicious!” Greg announced as they entered the kitchen.

“Have you eaten?” Jason asked, shaking the DCI’s hand.

Mycroft shook his hand next and replied:

“We ate on the plane earlier, although I’m not sure that was food.”

“Dan, why don’t we show them around after they eat?” Jason suggested. He turned to them and explained: “We ate earlier but saved you guys some. Come on.”

“I’m bloody starving,” John admitted as they took their seats around the table.

Sherlock felt like he was in a surreal dream as he watched his sister and her husband dish out their meal using utensils and plates he had never seen before. When he was brought a glass of water he was surprised how differently it tasted than London water. Even the air felt different. It felt…clearer, somehow.

His eyes found the pictures on the refrigerator door: pictures of Dan, of his schoolwork and artwork. There were black and white pictures on the dining room wall of what looked like Jason’s ancestors. The kitchen appliances were all new and stainless, and bright hardwood floors shone throughout the downstairs area. Laura’s home was so open, so welcoming. He was happy knowing Dan had grown up in such a beautiful, safe, home…and he felt a bit embarrassed when he thought of how nice his brother and sister’s homes were compared to his and John’s tiny Baker Street abode. It was something he had never felt ashamed of before, but he couldn’t but to think: he was well into his thirties and in a serious relationship. Shouldn’t he be wanting…more? But then again John had never complained, and he felt more comfortable and safer living in their cozy flat than anywhere else he had ever lived in after moving away from home.

“Here you go,” Laura announced as she helped her husband hand out their plates. She even brought them tea and explained: “I was prepared.”
“Ah, thank you,” Mycroft said. His lips curled up into an impressed smile as she passed around cups of tea.

“How was the flight?” Jason asked.

In unison, everyone turned to Sherlock, who in turn glared at them all.

“Someone isn’t a fan of flying,” John complained.

“Sorry if I don’t like being stuck in a big tube in the sky all day long,” Sherlock mumbled. “Flying is boring.”

“If it makes you feel any better, Sherlock, I loathe flying,” Jason offered.

“Thank you,” Sherlock replied, and then added- just for good measure: “Flying is stupid.”

“I like airplanes!” Dan exclaimed, moving his arms through the air like a plane. The consulting detective couldn’t help but to giggle at the innocence of his nephew and decided to stop complaining.

For the next few moments they ate, stuffing the warm food down their mouths as quickly as possible. Sherlock began feeling anxious the longer they sat at the table; he wanted to get up and explore. He did want to see all the rooms of the house- including Dan’s rooms. He wanted to explore the grounds and the city.

And yet…his body was crying out for sleep.

As though reading his mind, Dan let out a yawn and he rubbed at his eyes. Sherlock smiled at the sight of his nephew, decked out in dinosaur pyjamas and ready to go to sleep. He imagined Dan was up way after his usual bedtime, but he guessed he begged his mum to stay up until company arrived.

“Ready for bed, sweetheart?” Laura asked.

Reluctantly, Dan nodded.

“I’ll put him to bed,” Sherlock offered, jumping up.

“Are you sure?” Laura asked, throwing a glance toward his half-empty dinner plate.

“Of course!” He replied. “I’ll finish eating after. Let’s go, Dan.”

He took his nephew’s hand and let the little boy lead him back through the living room and up the stairs. From the corner of his eye he caught rows and rows of pictures of Dan, Dan and Laura, and many more with all three of them. There were photos of Dan as a baby, and seeing his nephew that little made him smile. Laura had sent him a few candid shots she still had saved digitally, but these photos were more staged shots of Dan at Christmas time, in front of the tree. Or on his birthday. Or just out at the park. Dan was an adorable baby…and he was being quite adorable now as he pulled Sherlock down the hall and into a bedroom.

Dan’s bedroom was a picture-perfect version of a kid’s room. He had a small twin-sized bed; Sherlock recognised the themed sheets were from those Star Wars films John liked so much. There were a couple of dressers pushed against the wall, on top of which stood toy action figures. Stickers of planets and spaceships were plastered over the wall…and Sherlock grinned when he noticed a bulletin board full of pictures of Dan’s trips to London. There were drawings of the Big Ben and
London Eye. There was a copy of his favourite picture of him and Dan, where they were both wearing deerstalkers. A football sat at the foot of Dan’s bed. A small child’s desk sat against the opposite wall. Dan flipped on his lamp, jumped into bed and handed Sherlock a Dr Seuss book.

“Can you read me a story?” Dan asked, batting puppy-dog eyes at him.

“Of course,” Sherlock replied with a smile.

He climbed into bed next to Dan and placed an arm around him before opening the book. As he began reading it became obvious how tired Dan really was. It didn’t take long before his nephew began to nod off, and his head fell against Sherlock’s shoulder. Five pages into the story he was fast asleep.

“Goodnight, Dan,” Sherlock whispered.

He planted a gentle kiss to the top of his nephew’s head before slipping out the bed and returning to the kitchen table. Only John and Laura were left, and his boyfriend looked like he could fall asleep sitting at the table if he was left there any longer.

“Tired?” Sherlock smirked, kissing the top of John’s head before sitting down to finish his dinner.

“Exhausted,” John mumbled. His head finally fell into his hands.

“Did Dan give you any trouble?” Laura asked. “He’s been bouncing off the walls all day in excitement. All he’s talked about since we left London has been you guys coming to visit.”

“No, he was fine,” he smiled.

The room fell silent as he finished eating and Laura finished cleaning up. When he was done he nudged John, whose head jerked up in confusion.

“Come on, I’ll show you to your room,” Laura offered. “Greg and Mycroft are staying upstairs, down the hall from us. You’ll be in the downstairs guest room, but you may want to keep the door locked. Dan has a bad habit of barging in unannounced.”

Their guest room turned out to be a small, but cozy, room in the back of the house. It was just big enough for a king size bed and a dresser with a telly on it, but it looked comfortable enough for the two of them. In fact upon seeing the bed all ready for them, John simply fell into it and rolled under the covers.

“I guess he approves,” his sister laughed.

“It’s perfect,” he replied before giving her a quick hug. “Thank you.”

“I’m just so glad you’re here.”

She gave him a squeeze before letting go and saying goodnight. As soon as the door shut his body began to shut down. He fell into bed beside John, and within moments they were both fast asleep, still in the clothes they had been travelling in.

“Wake up Uncle Sirlock wake up!”

Sherlock let out a few inaudible grumbles and wrapped his arms tightly around his pillow in protest of the four year old jumping on the bed. Apparently Laura wasn’t exaggerating when she
warned them about locking their doors so Dan wouldn’t barge in.

“John!” Dan whined next; the mattress shifted, he assumed his nephew was trying to shake John awake. “Sirlock! Wake up!”

He found himself being shaken awake next, and he knew there was no getting out of this.

“Fine,” Sherlock mumbled. “I’m up, I’m up!”

He rolled over and kissed John’s cheek to wake him up.

“Well we’ve lost this battle,” John sighed as he rolled over too. He glanced at the clock and rubbed his hands over his face. “Jesus it’s already ten. The jet lag’s worse than I thought it would be. I can’t believe I slept for twelve straight hours…I can’t believe you slept for twelve straight hours.”

Sherlock shook his head and rubbed his eyes before throwing his legs over the side of the bed.

“Uncle Myc is making pancakes!” Dan announced happily. “Mommy says we’re going to the park today.”

While his nephew had a bright grin on his face Sherlock was still too out of it to feel excited. The park? Did Laura know her brothers at all?

“We’ll be right there,” Sherlock said. “Why don’t you go tell them we’re awake?”

Dan nodded excitedly, jumped off the bed and rushed out the door. Beside him John collapsed back into the mattress.

“Come on,” Sherlock whined, poking John’s ribs. “You can’t make me go eat breakfast with Mycroft alone.”

It took some time to get moving, and they were still in their dressing gowns when they trudged into the kitchen. Unsurprisingly, Mycroft and Greg were already dressed as they finished getting breakfast ready.

“It’s nice to see you actually sleep for a change,” Greg commented to Sherlock with a grin as he poured them tea. “Of course this one was up at four in the bloody morning, as usual.”

He nudged Mycroft’s arm; his brother didn’t look amused at being called out.

“I can’t for the life of me sleep past four AM,” Mycroft admitted. “Too many early morning work hours, I suppose.”

“He hasn’t been getting much sleep at all, lately,” Greg added under his breath.

Everyone looked at him, and the DCI looked a bit embarrassed, like he didn’t mean to say that out loud.

“Mycroft?” Laura asked, concerned.

“I’m just having a hard time getting used to not working,” their brother explained. “I wake up in the middle of the night expecting a call about an emergency meeting or terrorist threat.”

“He keeps waking up and grabbing his mobile, like he’s expecting a call from work” Greg said. “It was cute at first…but now I’m getting a bit worried.”
Greg turned to his partner and met his eyes. Mycroft took his hands and let out a sigh.

“I’m fine,” the eldest Holmes insisted. “I’m just going through an adjustment period, that’s all.”

The detective stole a kiss to his lips and Mycroft quickly broke away, embarrassed.


After breakfast John went off to take a bath while Dan dragged Greg outside to play football. Sherlock stayed behind in the kitchen with Laura and Mycroft, who began drifting off as soon as everyone else left the room. He was probably the only one who was sharp enough to notice but he could see how drawn Mycroft’s eyes seemed, how his face seemed sunken and his posture more slumped forward than usual.

“God you are tired,” Sherlock muttered.

“Losing a job is really stressful,” Laura pointed out. “Anyone would lose sleep after being let go…let alone someone in your position, Mycroft. If I were you I wouldn’t know what to do with myself.”

A long moment of silence passed as Mycroft looked like he was contemplating how to reply to that. His hands sat folded on the table, perfectly still in a trained pose.

“I don’t know what to do with myself,” their brother quietly confessed. Sherlock had never seen him look more defeated than at that moment. He realised then how much Mycroft truly was affected by losing his job: although his brother may pretend like he was okay with moving forward or might convince himself a change of pace would be good for him, it was all too obvious at that moment that he actually missed his job. “Yes, being unemployed will probably work wonders on my stress levels, but I can’t say it will bode well for England. I want to be…in charge. I didn’t feel good about the way things were going when I was still working, but I especially don’t feel good about the way things go now that I’m not a part of the decision making.”

Laura crossed the room carrying a cup of coffee and gave Mycroft’s shoulders a squeeze before sitting down.

“Well like you said before, England did fine before you and will do fine after you,” she replied.

“I suppose so.”

His brother didn’t sound too convinced, and Sherlock found himself at a loss for words. Usually Mycroft was the one building up his self-esteem and telling him everything would be okay. Not the other way around.

Laura placed a hand on Mycroft’s arm, and the eldest Holmes sibling turned to meet his younger sister’s eyes.

“There are so many opportunities out there for you,” she told him quietly. “You’ll still have your say. In fact if you took a job with say…the UN? You’ll have a huge say in things. Your former employers will realise what they let go, and better yet, they’ll listen to you again. They’ll respect you again once they see others respecting you.”

After a long pause his brother finally sighed:
“I suppose so.”

With a small smile, Laura returned to her coffee. Sherlock threw a glance around the kitchen and dining room, which overlooked the main living area. He noticed boxes stacked against the wall that he didn’t remember noticing last night, and he realised for the first time how hard it must be for his sister to leave the home she had raised her son in.

“How’s the packing going?” Sherlock asked, nodding toward the boxes.

Sighing dramatically, Laura confessed:

“Awful. Dan doesn’t seem to understand that we’re just packing things away to move them. He thinks we’re packing things away to get rid of them so he’s not letting me pack anything of his. All the boxes you see are just things of mine and Jason’s.”

“He probably doesn’t fully comprehend what’s happening,” Mycroft commented. “I can’t imagine what a shock it will be when he realises that he’s in London to stay and won’t be returning to New York.”

“Yes,” Laura agreed with a said smile. “I’m worried about that. Then again when he’s older he probably won’t remember much of New York. I’m kind of sad about that…I hate he won’t remember too much of his American life. He’ll grow up a Londoner.”

“Oh the shame,” Sherlock teased.

His sister smile widened, and he chuckled, pleased to have lightened the mood for at least the moment. A mobile buzzed, and Laura’s took hers out to check a text.

“Jason says he’ll meet us at the park,” she announced. “He had some work to catch up on this morning, but he managed to get a half day off.”

He and Mycroft exchanged glances, and he knew his brother had the same reservations about spending the entire day at a park that he did.

“So…” Sherlock began. “When you say park…”

It turned out when Laura said park she meant mountain, and by mountain she meant the Catskills. Though it was a good two hour drive out of their way, Laura didn’t seem to mind going further away to get to where she wanted to go.

“Is this an American thing?” Sherlock complained. “Driving for hours every day?”

Laughing, Laura replied:

“If you just stay in your town all the time you’ll miss out on the beauty of it all. Each state in America is so unique. You really have to travel to experience everything your state has to offer. Life is just so dull here if you stay home all the time.”

Honestly he couldn’t argue with that. Ideally he would have spent his life travelling Europe, experiencing the music and cultures of all the different countries. Instead he spent his life on the street of London, learning the city inside out. And while at times it seemed like the world was at his doorstep, travelling so far reminded him of all he was missing out on.
“Do you like the mountains, Dan?” Greg asked.

Dan shrugged, indifferent.

“I like to swim!” He announced.

“It’s a bit cold for swimming,” Laura grinned, “but I wanted you guys to really get to experience all the different things New York has to offer. Everyone just thinks of New York City when they think of New York: you know, Times Square, the Statue of Liberty, Broadway. But there’s so much more to New York than that, and so many people are completely oblivious to it.”

“It’s beautiful out here,” Mycroft said as he gazed out the window. “You can still see some of the foliage.”

“The foliage is beautiful up here,” his sister sighed. “It’s one of the things I’ll really miss about living here.”

Sherlock remained silent for the rest of the ride. He simply held John’s hand, keeping his thoughts to himself as they road through the countryside. He had to admit this wasn’t anything like what he expected Laura’s home-state to be like. She was right: he had mainly though of the city and all of its tourism. He, like everyone else, he often forgot about the hundreds of miles located above New York City.

Before he knew it Laura turned off to a side road. After driving a few minutes more she pulled over to a car park beside a gorgeous lake. Red-orange trees glowed in the reflection of the water, and his sister’s face shone just as brightly as she turned off the engine.

“I’ve been to the Catskills more times than I can count,” she admitted. “So I just had to bring you guys here.”

“Wow,” John simply announced. His jaw fell open as he pushed the car door open and led Sherlock outside.

“This reminds me of camping with my parents,” Greg confessed as he too climbed out of the car.

“I wanna go camping!” Dan exclaimed.

He took off running toward the lake, but Laura caught him. “Remember what I said: no running off.”

“No running off,” Dan repeated. He grinned and grabbed Sherlock’s hand. “Come on, Uncle Sirlock!”

He wasn’t exactly sure what they were supposed to do all day on a rather cool day by the lake, but his nephew seemed to find endless entertainment in running around in circles and throwing rocks into the water.

“He loves it out here,” Laura explained. “I think he imagines he’s at the beach or something.”

“Have you ever taught him fishing?” Greg asked. Laura shook her head. “Ah, you should, he’d love it. I would definitely take him out fishing sometime.”

Mycroft did a double take, shook his head in disbelief, and replied:

“I didn’t know you liked to fish.”
The DCI blushed as he explained:

“My grandfather loved to fish. He took me out some when I was a lad. I did a little fishing in uni and in my early days at the Yard for stress relief. I can teach you, if you’d like.”

The sparkle in Mycroft’s eyes revealed that yes, he would very much love to fish with his partner, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk. He actually liked seeing his brother caught so off guard, so in love, so…human.

“It’s so relaxing out here,” John commented as he and Sherlock sat in chairs Laura had brought along for them. “I wish we could get out to the countryside more back home.”

Sherlock frowned in confusion.

“You’ve never said anything about wanting to go to the countryside.”

John shrugged.

“I never realised how much I might like it.”

Reaching over, Sherlock grabbed his lover’s hand and squeezed it.

Before them Dan ran back and forth along the lakeside, waving his arms about like he was pretending to be a plane. Greg and Mycroft stood by the lake, holding each other, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to wonder where their relationship stood. They were clearly happy—very happy, considering Greg’s proposal of a civil partnership. But when he tried to imagine the two living day to day, cuddling and joking and doing all the things he and John did, he just found it hard to picture. He tried to picture Greg actually teaching Mycroft how to fish…and he had to bite back a laugh.

Thirty minutes later Jason pulled up and suggested they all went on a hike. John thought he could manage a small one, and Sherlock found himself in line at the back of the group with his partner.

“Now this is a life I could live,” John admitted as they moved through the wooded area. Laura’s family had clearly been here many times; the trail they picked was absolutely perfect for their level of hiking. Sherlock knew John needed something flat and not too exhausting, so they picked a short loop nearby the lake. They were never too far from the car at any point, and yet at any point there were pine trees and all sorts of plants that made him feel like they were in the middle of nowhere.

“Hiking, fishing.”

“Keep dreaming, love,” Sherlock teased, “because the first time you had to go without Chinese carryout or telly you would go running back to the city.”

“True,” John replied with a grin.

He wrapped an arm around his lover’s body to give him something to lean on, and John seemed grateful for the support.

“Do you remember how to spot poison ivy, Dan?” Jason called.

Dan was leading the group, followed closely by his mum, who was watching his every step.

“Three leaves let it be!” Dan announced proudly.

“That’s right,” Jason said with a grin. His wife wrapped an arm around him and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smile and admire the perfect life his sister seemed to live.
Next to him John grimaced and clutched his cane, a sign his leg was beginning to act up. He grabbed his boyfriend’s arm before he could tumble into the brush and called to the others:

“We’re going to stay back here.”

The announcement earned them some worried looks, but nonetheless the others nodded and continued walking. Sherlock helped John hobble off the trail until they were back by the lake. He grabbed the chairs they had been lounging in earlier so they could take a break.

“Thanks,” John sighed as he settled down and began massaging his leg. “I don’t know what I was thinking, trying to hike.”

He rubbed his hands in gentle circles against John’s back and kissed his cheek.

“You were brilliant,” he offered. “You just didn’t need to over-do it.”

John threw him a small, grateful, smile before letting out a frustrating sigh and leaning back against the chair.

“When I was in Afghanistan there were times when we just walked for hours and hours,” John recalled. “If someone got injured and we couldn’t get a vehicle or helicopter there I would hike to the soldier with some of the lads to rescue them. It just seems like I was so much stronger then than I am now. Now I’m just all…puffy and worn out.”

“You are not puffy!” he protested.

To prove his point John patted at his stomach. Sherlock wasn’t being daft, he knew John had gained some extra weight, but he didn’t think it was anything for the doctor to get so self-conscious about.

“I’m out of shape,” John complained. “I’m not eating like I should be. I want to be better, healthier, but I just keep getting injured! It was bad enough having a bad shoulder, but now I have a bad leg too. I’d love to be able to work out again, to go on hikes and walks. I…I want to be able to run around London with you again.”

His partner bit his lip and diverted his eyes to the ground. Sherlock John's knee and rubbed his thumb in gentle circles around it. He had to admit he had been worried about what John’s role in helping him solve cases would be like. He knew John wouldn’t be able to join him on cases or stakeouts that might require a quick getaway. Selfishly, part of him was afraid to even bring John in on the action in fear of him getting hurt again.

“I love you,” Sherlock felt the need to whisper. His lips turned up in a goofy grin as he teased: “Even if I have to wheel you away from the bad guys.”

The joke seemed to lift John’s spirits at least a bit, and they shared a deep kiss. Once they parted Sherlock decided a change of subject was in order as he gazed out at the lake.

“You know, I can picture you fishing,” Sherlock teased. A sheepish grin crossed his lover’s face. “Well…I can picture you attempting to fish.”

He flashed a grin at John, who laughed.

“That would probably be truth,” John admitted. “I would be the person to catch a boot instead of a fish. Camping would be nice, though. Lying together under the stars just sounds so…romantic.”
His eyes twinkled as he looked over at Sherlock and a nice warmth boiled under his skin. Suddenly he wanted nothing more than to go camping with John.

“We should try it,” he blurted out. John looked surprised, but he nodded, trying to convince himself he wasn’t crazy. “I’m sure we could get some camping gear somewhere- though you know me I would be okay with just a sleeping bag under the stars.”

“Really?” John pressed. He nodded again, and his boyfriend grinned. “Sounds brilliant!”

Holding hands, they both turned to gaze out to the lake. John snapped a few photos with his mobile- Sherlock assumed they would go on the blog- and he took a photo of the two of them as well. It would show up as John’s new profile picture on Facebook within the next few hours. Sherlock took in the peace and quiet while it lasted, for he knew it wouldn’t be long before the family returned from their hike and it would be non-stop energy from Dan until bedtime. When he thought back to the summer they had and all the adventure, stress, and trauma they endured he didn’t mind being asked to simply sit in the woods for an autumn afternoon. Though in all honesty it did make him feel a bit…old.

“John?” he announced, his voice abruptly breaking through the still afternoon air. His boyfriend looked at him, confused and wondering what was wrong. “Isn’t this what people do when they’re retired?”

His boyfriend let out a surprised laugh, and a brilliant smile crossed John’s face.

“I suppose so, yeah,” John admitted. They shared a smile before turning back to the lake. “What do you think you’ll do when you retire? I mean, I know you think retirement is boring and dull and all, but say you did retire, what would you do?”

He resisted the urge to point out to John that the very fact that he was expected to do something during retirement defeated the purpose of retiring in the first place. He decided to actually give the question a moment’s thought, since one day he really would get old and wouldn’t be able to run around London anymore. He’d heard of people having retirement jobs and retirement hobbies- they all seemed to be things people wanted to do during their working years but didn’t get to because reality got in the way.

“I enjoyed studying bees in uni,” Sherlock confessed. “During the short time I was there, of course. Organic chemistry was my focus, but I was really fascinated with bees.”

“Bees?” John repeated, making a face.

“Yes,” Sherlock replied. “Bees. I think I’d like a nice cottage in the countryside and my own private beehives.”

“Beehives,” John sighed. “I’m going to be ‘The Beeman’s husband’.”

Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat at John’s wording, and his lover’s eyes lit up in terror as he realised what he said. Sure they had brought up marriage before- they had even had their promises and pre-proposals. But John just sound so sure of himself, so sure it would happen. He wasn’t sure if he should feel flattered, loved, or terrified. All of the above emotions were rushing through his head, threatening to swallow him whole. He felt John squeeze his hand and he held on absent-mindedly. He tried to picture him and John living out their married life in a cottage, surrounded by bees while his lover wrote and he played music. It was a very nice thought…a very real thought.

“Sherlock?” John asked carefully before raising his hand and kissing it. Looking down at the
fingers of his left hand, Sherlock pictured a wedding band on it. He knew how important marriage was to John—hell, that much was obvious from how desperate his boyfriend used to be to find a lover. He knew that was his lover’s ideal future: marriage, a house, perhaps even a family. He pictured a ring on his finger and he smiled, knowing how happy John would be if that future became a possibility. “Is everything okay?”

Gently, Sherlock’s lips brushed against their knuckles in a soft kiss.

“Yes,” he replied. “Everything is perfect.”
"A grand adventure is about to being" - Winnie the Pooh

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“John!”

All he heard was Sherlock’s cry before he hit the ground. His leg was on fire from the pain, and yet at the same time everything below his waist felt dead and lifeless. He couldn’t move. John only saw blood, lots of it, and his vision was soon clouded with red.

He woke up with a jolt, and it took John a few moments of heavy breathing to collect himself and tell himself it was only a dream. Looking over to Sherlock, he was relieved to see his lover was still asleep. He needed some air- or at least to use the loo- and ever so carefully he slipped out of bed, grabbed his cane, and opened the bedroom door.

Right away he noticed that the living room light was on, which meant someone else was up. There was also a light shining beneath the door of Laura’s downstairs guest bathroom, and as he limped closer to it he recognised the distinctive sounds of someone vomiting. He hesitated before knocking on the door- if someone had come downstairs to use the bathroom then they clearly did not want to be bothered. But whoever it was sounded like they weren’t feeling very well at all, and as a doctor he couldn’t just ignore that and go back to bed. Gently, he knocked on the door and called out:

“Is everything okay?”

There was a long pause, the sound of toilet tissue being unrolled and the sink rolling, and then finally footsteps drew closer and the door opened.

He was surprised when Laura peered through the cracked door at him. Her eyes were red and puffy, her hair was an utter mess, and her face was a sickly pale. Without saying a word she pulled him into the bathroom and shut the door behind him.

“Sorry,” she muttered, glancing at his cane, obviously worried she hurt him.

“It’s okay,” he quickly replied before studying her. “Are you okay?”

“No.”

She collapsed over the sink and let out a sob as she grasped her hair in her hands. John placed a hand on the small of her back and waited until she was comfortable enough to tell him what was going on. When she looked up at him, meeting his eyes and silently begging him for trust, what she said was nothing close to what he expected:

“John, I’m pregnant.”

For a moment he just stared at her, and John couldn’t help but to wonder if he was still dreaming. He wasn’t sure which startled him more- her confession or how upset Laura seemed about it. Her
hands were shaking, and the counter was the only thing holding her upright. Suddenly she grasped her arms around her stomach and fell to the floor just in time to reach the toilet and be sick again. She let out a groan as she pulled her hair out of the way. A small smile peered from her lips as she turned to him.

“I’m sorry you have to see me like this,” she offered quietly.

He shook his head, still too stunned to really find words.

“It’s fine,” he replied. He felt obligated to say something about her confession, so he forced himself to go on: “You…you’re pregnant.”

“Yeah,” Laura sighed as she flushed the sick away and scooted herself back against the wall. “Jason knows but no one else does. We haven’t decided how to tell Dan yet. We just went to the doctor a couple of weeks ago to confirm and…god everything has just happened so fast!”

Tears were falling freely from her eyes now, and she was trying desperately to swipe them away with her hands.

“We didn’t plan for this,” she admitted quietly. “It’s been hard enough just planning our move, finding a new school for Dan in London, and buying a house. Jason’s been working so much with his new promotion, and I know it’s not his fault and he hates being away too…but I feel like I’m being pulled in a hundred directions. And now a baby is on the way? I just…I can’t. I feel like I can’t do this.”

While Laura might have felt utterly and completely alone at that moment, it was a story John had heard a hundred times before from patients. He had met countless terrified mothers who didn’t think they were ready for parenthood—some who didn’t even think they were capable of it. But nine months later when they met their little boy or girl for the first time, all that changed and fear turned into love. With a firm smile planted on his face he held out his hands and instructed:

“Come here.”

Reluctantly, Laura wiped away her last tear and offered him a small smile as took his hands and stood up.

“Sorry,” she said. “I’m such a mess.”

John shook his head.

“You’re in shock,” he offered. “Absolute shock and it’s okay. It’s okay to be scared. I’m sure you were scared when you found out you were pregnant with Dan and now you’re a brilliant mother!”

“Thank you,” she whispered. “I was scared when I found out I was pregnant the first time. It was a different kind of scared, though. Back then I was so alone. I had absolutely nothing, and I knew absolutely nothing about parenting. Now it’s like…I know what I’m in for, and I’m terrified that I won’t be able to handle it all. There’s just so much going on right now. My head’s just so full of…stuff. There’s so much to do, so much to plan. I need like…five of me to handle all of this!”

He couldn’t help but to chuckle as he realised how Sherlock-like she sounded right now.

“Well,” he announced, placing his hands on her shoulders. “You’re not alone this time. You have an amazing husband, a son who’s going to love being a big brother, two brothers of your own, and me and Greg.”
“I better have a girl,” Laura muttered under her breath with a playful smile on her face. “That’s far too many men.”

They shared a hug, and he let her rest her head on his shoulder for a moment.

“I know I can do this,” she said—though it sounded like she was still trying to convince herself. “It’s just so much, so fast. And it doesn’t help that I’ve been puking my guts out.”

“Has your doctor prescribed anything for morning sickness?” He asked. She nodded. “If you’d like I can take a look at your records, charts, prescriptions, anything. Just ask.”

“Thanks, that means a lot,” she said with a smile. “I’ll talk to Jason about it because if you don’t mind, we might like you to come with us to some of these appointments. It’s a lot of information to take in, and sometimes I get home and it’s just so confusing to comprehend it all.”

He laughed; he heard that a lot from patients over the years, and it was something that helped him improved his own bedside manner.

“Of course,” he said. “Anything you need, just let me know. And your secret is safe with me.”

John winked at her, and he could tell how appreciative she was.

“I guess I should try to get some sleep,” Laura said, “and I should probably let you use the bathroom since that’s what you came in here to do.”

In all honesty he had completely forgotten about needing the loo. He had even forgotten that it was the middle of the night and they were in a house full of people. He wasn’t sure how he was going to keep this a secret from Sherlock, but it felt good to have someone entrust such a huge secret in him.

Laura made toward the door, but when she opened it they came face to face with no other than a dressing gown clad, sleepy-headed, Sherlock. His hair was a mess and his eyes were half-open, but his boyfriend seemed to perk up immediately upon finding John in the bathroom with Laura. John swallowed nervously, realising how wrong this must seem.

“Hi,” Sherlock greeted awkwardly.

“Hi…” John replied, not sure what to say.

The consulting detective looked between the two of them, trying to figure their secret out.

“What are you doing?” Sherlock finally asked.

“We…” he began, but he stopped. This was Sherlock Holmes, after all, not just any stupid lie would do.

“He was helping me with the plumbing!” Laura blurted out. John fought the urge to shake his head in disappointment; instead he just forced a smile across his face and nodded in agreement. “I couldn’t sleep so I came down here to read. I had to use the restroom and the toilet was backed up. John heard me because he got up to use the bathroom too, and he’s been helping me fix it.”

His boyfriend’s eyes narrowed and shifted over to him, and it was all too obvious he didn’t believe him for a second. Nevertheless, John played along.

“Yeah. We didn’t want to wake up so we closed the door. Got the toilet fixed though, it was just a
“Yeah,” Laura echoed. “Stupid me, not being able to use a plunger correctly.”

It couldn’t have been a more awkward moment, and Sherlock certainly wasn’t willing to help them out.

“John you’ve never been able to fix plumbing,” he pointed out. “In fact you once had to have Mrs Hudson come up to help us with our toilet.”

“Right…” John said, remembering that embarrassing incident all too clearly. “Well, I learned a thing or two from her. Anyway, all is fixed.”

Casually, he pushed passed Sherlock and Laura followed him out. His lover didn’t say anything as his sister left, but once they were alone he pinned John against the wall and whispered into his ear:

“I know you’re up to something.”

With a wicked grin his tongue quickly traced around a particular sensitive spot just behind his ear. He shuddered and let his eyes fall to a close as Sherlock slipped into the loo.

And naturally, as soon as he got back into bed he really did have to use the toilet again.

Chapter End Notes

Did I mention there will be some surprises coming up? Well...surprise!

Thanks for reading!
If only mum could see us now, Sherlock thought as he chopped up a tomato while Mycroft finished the pasta sauce. There were so many years when they couldn’t bear in the same room, let alone talk to each other. Now they were on holiday together…it was all a bit bizarre.

Laura had gone to pick Dan up from school, Jason was at work, Greg was on a phone call with the Yard, and John was writing. Sherlock almost didn’t know what to say to Mycroft. He felt like he owed him years of conversation, and yet they cooked in silence. When he finished with the tomato, Mycroft instructed:

“Put them just here,” he said, motioning to a pot.

For a moment he watched as Mycroft expertly chopped up vegetables for a salad. Suddenly the knife he was using inched just a bit too close to his finger- close enough to cut the skin. His brother hissed and grabbed his hand as blood began to spurt out of the cut.

“Come here,” Sherlock instructed, leading his older brother over to the sink.

Mycroft hissed as cool water ran over the wound, and he closed his eyes as Sherlock wrapped his finger tightly with a towel.

“Raise your hand over your heart.” Sherlock said, raising Mycroft’s hand up so it was level with his head. “It will help slow the bleeding.”

“Have you been learning from John?” Mycroft teased, even as he winced in pain.

Sherlock grimaced.

“I’ve learned from experience, actually,” he admitted. “Cuts and bruises come with the territory of being a consulting detective.”

“Luckily John is there to make sure you actually take care of yourself,” Mycroft commented.

Yes, that too.

“Everything okay?” John’s voice called.

His boyfriend limped down the hall and into the kitchen. His eyes grew wide at the sight of Mycroft’s bleeding hand, and immediately he grabbed the elder Holmes’ wrist and demanded:

“How long has it been bleeding?”

“That hurts!” Mycroft whined as he jerked his wrist back and replaced it over his heart. “It’s only been a couple of minutes. I cut myself cutting vegetables. I must say, that is a first for me, but I am perfectly fine. I can manage a little cut.”

Nevertheless he let John glance at the wound, just so the doctor could be certain all was well.

“Yeah, I think you’ll live,” John smirked. He looked over at the lettuce that was now spotted with some of Mycroft’s blood. “But perhaps we should toss some of that lettuce.”
The front door opened, and Greg entered the house, returning from the phone call he took outside. When he saw his partner with a bleeding finger raised above his heart, his face lit up with fury.

“What happened?” Greg demanded as he rushed to Mycroft’s side.

Rolling his eyes, his brother shot:

“For god’s sake I am perfectly fine! It’s just a little cut.”

“Just a little cut,” Greg muttered under his breath. He took the wounded finger in his hands and raised it to his lips to kiss it. “Stupid knife.”

“It’s fine,” Mycroft insisted. He glanced beneath the now-bloody towel and replied: “See, it’s nearly stopped bleeding already. Sherlock, would you mind starting over on the salads for me?”

As he turned back to the food preparation Greg seated himself at the table to check emails, Mycroft scoured the local paper, and John stood over his shoulder.

“Do you mind?” Sherlock said with a smirk.

“Just making sure you too don’t nearly chop off your finger too,” his boyfriend teased.

Thankfully all the drama had calmed down by the time Laura returned home with Dan, who was practically bouncing up and down as he told them all about everything he did in school. Sherlock couldn’t help but to wonder if he was always that excited about school or if he was just excited to have the attention of his uncles.

“And then we drew Thanksgiving!” Dan announced. The Brits at the table all blinked in confusion, and he explained: “Cause it’s almost Thanksgiving! We learned about Indians, and pil-gims,” his nephew went on. “We coloured pictures!”

Dan sat down at the kitchen table and began digging around his backpack. Sure enough, he withdrew a few pages that he had coloured in at school. Sherlock had to bite his lip to keep from laughing at the pictures of Indians and Pilgrims sitting around and enjoying corn together. But while he was amused, his brother looked furious.

“Let me see,” Mycroft said, probably a bit more hotly than he meant. Even Laura was fighting off laughter as the former minor government official stared wide-eyed at the innocent colouring books. “This how they’re teaching you about the history of America?”

The four-year old nodded, oblivious as to why everyone thought this was so funny.

“Mycroft,” Laura warned.

“You were four and half once, Myc,” Greg laughed. “Surely you remember colouring in school?”

“Like I have room in my brain to store those memories,” Mycroft muttered.

Sherlock laughed because he couldn’t help but to agree with his brother.

“Are you learning any maths yet in school?” Greg asked. “Maths was my best subject.

He and his brother snorted at the same time, earning each of them a glare from Greg.
“What?” The DCI shot. “It really was!”

“I can count backwards!” Dan announced proudly. “Twenty, nineteen, eighteen, seventeen, sixteen, fifteen, fourteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one!”

At ‘one’ Dan jumped up and down and clapped his hands, like that was something he learned to do in school.

“That was brilliant!” Greg said, giving him a high five.

“I can do long division in my head,” Sherlock bragged.

“No one cares, love,” John said, patting his arm.

“Why don’t you go wash up?” Laura suggested to her son.

His nephew was out of the room in a flash, and Laura threw them all a grateful smile for playing along.

“It’s amazing to think we were all that young,” Mycroft sighed.

Greg stood behind his partner and began gently massaging his shoulders.

“Yeah, I’d like to see some of those pictures you coloured in school, Myc,” he grinned.

“You know, I think Mum saved some of those…” Sherlock chimed in.

“Don’t you dare!” Mycroft shot, cutting him off.

The pasta was officially ready so Sherlock turned off the stove, and John helped him dished out the meal onto plates.

“So speaking of Thanksgiving,” Laura began once they were all seated; everyone but Dan groaned on cue. “It’s probably time we decide on our menu.”

“It’s still a bloody week away!” Mycroft pointed out.

“Yes, and Thanksgiving grocery shopping is a complete nightmare,” Laura said. “Anyway, I was thinking it would be fun if we all chipped and each cooked a dish. Greg, I thought maybe you’d want to tackle the turkey with Jason-”

Mycroft snorted.

“What?” Greg demanded. “I can cook a turkey!”

“Should I remind you of the great Christmas catastrophe of 2009?” Mycroft said.

“That was duck, it was different,” Greg muttered.

Sherlock’s brother simply smiled as he popped a forkful of salad into his mouth. He tried to imagine Greg and Mycroft having a proper Christmas dinner together…and completely ruining it. He was actually a bit jealous that he hadn’t heard this story before- and that he hadn’t been a part of it.

“I can bake the desserts,” Mycroft offered.
“I’m sure you can,” Sherlock teased under his breath. His brother rolled his eyes, and he quickly added: “John and I can do…”

He stole a quick glance to his partner, who simply shrugged.

“The beans, or something,” he finished.

“No beans!” Dan whined.

“Yes, beans,” Laura argued. “I’ll put you two down for vegetables. I was thinking beans, sweet potatoes-“

“And mac and cheese!” Dan cheered, pumping his fist into the air.

“This dinner makes no sense,” Mycroft muttered. He looked at his nephew’s plate and frowned. “Dan, you haven’t even touched your salad.”

The four-year old grimaced and pushed the salad plate away from him.

“Salad is grossss!” He sang.

“It is not gross,” Laura told him. She threw an apologetic look toward her brothers. “Sorry, he’s going through a picky eating phase.”

“He must get that from Sherlock,” John commented under his breath.

The consulting detective looked down at his own salad, which he realised he hadn’t touched, and the rest of the family laughed.

“This is going to be a really great Thanksgiving,” Laura announced, as though she was trying to reassure herself. “Honestly I haven’t had a decent Thanksgiving in…in…well, never. Growing up it was…well, you can imagine. Jason and I had a small dinner the first Thanksgiving we were together, but Dan was only three then and we just didn’t see going through so much trouble. But this…this will be good. I know it’s not really your kind of holiday-“

“That’s putting it nicely,” Greg said.

Rolling her eyes, Laura continued:

“Anyway, back to the menu. I’ll make the cranberry sauce and stuffing.”

“What about me?” Dan asked. Everyone looked at him, wondering if he was serious. When the kid just stared back at them, Laura blinked, clearly trying to think quickly.

At last, his sister sighed:

“You and I can make mac and cheese.”

“Yay!” Dan exclaimed.

“But only if you eat your salad tonight,” she added.

“No!!!!”

Sherlock chuckled, but nonetheless Dan reluctantly dug his fork into the plate of vegetables in front of him.
The rest of the week went by quicker than any of them could have imagined. With Jason working overtime and Dan in pre-school, the rest of the family stayed closed to home and spent their days relaxing and catching up.

The night before the big dinner Sherlock found himself unable to sleep. He wasn’t sure if he was feeding off Laura’s stress, but he kept waking up every hour until he finally trudged out of bed and into the living room, hoping for a distraction. He found one when he found his brother in the kitchen, baking pies at two in the morning. For a moment he stood back, watching as his brother carefully popped a pie into the oven. Mycroft completely didn’t even seem to notice him as he returned to the counter to work on a second pie.

“Mycroft…you’re not sleep-baking, are you?” Sherlock asked slowly.

His brother sighed and grabbed onto the countertops as he closed his eyes and took a moment to collect himself.

“No, I’m not,” Mycroft finally replied. He sounded absolutely…exhausted. Exhausted and pissed. “I’m at least attempting to feel useful.”

Ah, that made sense. He had noticed how often Mycroft had been volunteering to help out lately, rather it be by cooking dinner, doing laundry, or even playing games with Dan. His brother was distracting himself. After years of being a focal point of the British Secret Service- and the British government itself- Mycroft was now simply a…a what? A boyfriend? Brother? Uncle? But Sherlock knew that wasn’t enough for him. He needed to feel important, he needed to feel needed.

“Mycroft,” Sherlock began slowly. “No one blames you for what happened. No one thinks anything less of you.”

“That’s just swell,” Mycroft shot in a bitter tone that sent a shiver down Sherlock’s spine. “But I expect more of myself. I can’t just…sit around the house. I can’t just-“

“Stand by and watch someone else run the country?” Sherlock offered.

His brother froze, and he knew he was right. With a sigh Mycroft stepped back from the counter, leaving the dessert ingredients beside as he finally turned to Sherlock. The consulting detective blinked in surprise when he saw how truly drained his brother appeared. Mycroft looked worse than ever, with bags under his eyes and more wrinkles on his forehead than usual. He couldn’t seem to hold himself up straight; his body shook ever so slightly.

“You really need sleep,” Sherlock muttered.

“Come with me,” Mycroft said instead.

He was surprised when his brother ushered him out the back door and into the cool night air. Shivering, Sherlock wrapped his dressing gown tighter around himself and watched in concern as his brother withdrew a cigarette and lighter from his pyjama pocket.

“I thought you quit,” Sherlock accused.

He was ignored as Mycroft lit the cigarette and let out another unsteady breath.

“Greg would kill you if he knew you were smoking again,” Sherlock pointed out. “He worked so hard to quit himself.”
“I know,” Mycroft muttered. “I don’t exactly make it a habit.”

“That sounds familiar.”

The two brothers stared at each other, and Sherlock’s blood turned cold. He used to tell Mycroft the exact same thing when he got high: I’m not an addict. I can stop when I want to.

His brother angrily let out a puff of smoke and put the cigarette out.

“And last I checked those aren’t prescribed for insomnia,” Sherlock added coldly.

He had to make himself calm down so he gazed out into his sister’s garden. The moon shone brilliantly above them, and hundreds of stars twinkled amongst the moonlight. Sherlock couldn’t help but to admit:

“I’ve never seen anything like it. Even at home- at your place - it seems like the light from the city is always there.”

Mycroft remained silent for a moment as he too gazed up at the night sky. Sherlock was just about to give in to the fact that he wasn’t going to get through to him when his brother quietly began:

“I can’t count the number of cities I’ve seen this same sky from. Every time you feel like you’re so far from home, like everything is so different. But it’s not. It’s always the exact same. No matter the country it’s always the same problems, the same politics. Things never change, they just get worse.”

“Well,” Sherlock said, not exactly sure what he could add to that. “That was rather depressing.”

“The world is depressing,” Mycroft muttered. He took a seat on the porch swing that sat on Laura’s back patio, and Sherlock followed. Simultaneously, they both let out sighs and raised their fingertips to their chins. “I can’t even begin to comprehend the things I did, the things I ordered to be done. And every time I told myself it was for the greater good, but look at where we are. I didn’t solve anything. Each day we might have avoided terrorism, but the threat is still out there. It doesn’t matter who is in power. The world won’t change; the world will only find ways to get more dangerous.”

“You haven’t been watching American telly, have you?” Sherlock said, his lips turning up in a smirk.

“Gregory doesn’t let me watch the news,” his brother confessed.

_Probably for the best_, Sherlock thought to himself.

Mycroft let out another sigh, his breath dancing across the cool night air, and finally admitted what was really going on:

“I received a phone call from Anthea. She asked me for a reference for a job with the CIA. I trust you won’t repeat any of this to anyone?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“I won’t,” he promised.

“It’s a terrific opportunity for her. It’s a career-changing opportunity, actually. I couldn’t just give her a reference: I phoned the director of the CIA myself and insisted she was given the position.
She phoned me tonight to thank me…she starts immediately.”

To be honest Sherlock hadn’t even thought about the consequences of his brother being fired on Anthea and his other employees. He didn’t think Mycroft was one to have personal relationships with his employees, but then again he had worked with them, depended on them—probably even helped to save their lives—for *years*. Of course he would make sure they were taken care of.

“That was really nice of you,” Sherlock replied.

“Nice of me?” His brother shot coldly. “My mistake cost Anthea her job. She didn’t even feel safe staying in London after what we did. You have no idea the risk my employees lived with, day after day, and I…I made a decision that could have put them all in danger. That changed all of their lives. And that agent…she could have died on my watch. The trauma that she has to live through now, the pain and fear, it’s just not fair.”

“You know you were right,” Sherlock said. “If you went back and time and had to make the decision again you would.”

Hesitant, Mycroft ringed his hands together and diverted his eyes to the ground. Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat as he realised what was happening—Mycroft was admitting he might have been wrong.

“Look, no matter what you can’t spend the rest of your life second guessing your decision,” Sherlock said. “You can’t change what happened. You’ll drive yourself insane.”

He had a horrible feeling Mycroft was already nearing insanity. He watched, helpless, as he brother ran his hands over his face, through his hair, and let out a frustrated sigh.


“The world would be so boring if it did,” Sherlock snorted.

His brother neither agreed nor disagreed. He just simply looked lost. He looked like he was hardly even aware of where he was.

“Can I ask you something serious?” Sherlock said quietly. No reply. “Are you depressed?”

Sherlock watched his brother’s mouth fell open, as his eyes went dark and his hands clenched into fists. Crickets chirped nearby, and a shiver went down his spine as a cool wind brushed by them.

“You have been there for me more times than I can count,” Sherlock went on. “You’ve saved me more times than I’d like to admit. I’m here for you too, you know. You can trust me.”

At last Mycroft let out a long sigh, slapped his hands against his knees, and lifted himself up from the swing.

“I just need sleep,” Mycroft announced.

But when he tried to walk Mycroft stumbled. Sherlock caught him and wrapped his arms around his body to steady him.

“Come on,” Sherlock murmured.

Wordlessly he led his brother into the house. Mycroft leaned heavily on him, but Sherlock managed to get them both back and inside and to the sofa. When he let go, Mycroft helplessly sank
into the cushions and stretched out his body. Sherlock grabbed a few blankets and a pillow from
the nearby armchair.

“The pies,” Mycroft slurred, lifting his head wearily.

“I’ll take care of it,” Sherlock promised.

And by take care of it he meant stay up long enough to make sure the first pie finished baking in
the oven. There was no way he was staying up at this hour to bake a second. He lay for hours
curled up in the armchair, breathing in the smell of freshly baked pie as he watched his brother
sleep. A few times Mycroft fidgeted in his sleep, he jerked from one side to another and let out soft
cries. He couldn’t begin to imagine the horrors that followed Mycroft into his dreams, but he was
just pleased he was finally getting some sleep. Sherlock watched over him until after sunrise, when
he heard the first door creak open upstairs. He closed his eyes to pretend like he was also
sleeping…and with moments he was out like a light.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait! I was sick and also had some writer's block. For some reason I just
couldn't put this chapter on paper, even though it was so clear in my head! So
hopefully it turned out okay! What do you think? Thanks for reading and for all the
support!
“Bored!” Sherlock muttered. “I am so bloody bored.”

“Sherlock,” his boyfriend warned as he ran a hand through Sherlock’s curls.

Sherlock sat in the same armchair he spent the night sleeping in, and his partner had pulled up a chair next to him.

“Bored!” He complained again.

“Behave,” John hissed into his ear, tugging his curls just hard enough to make him wince.

“Snoopy!” Dan suddenly exclaimed, jumping to his feet. He pointed to the telly excitedly, as though they couldn’t see the famous pup floating through the streets of New York.

Since he had made the mistake of falling asleep in the living room he had been roped into watching the Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade with his family once he woke up. Mycroft was still sleeping on the sofa- he would have a heart attack when he realised how late they let him sleep. Greg sat next to him, while Dan was on the floor with Laura and Jason in the armchair opposite Sherlock. He had to admit, the parade was just as dull as he dreaded it would be. How Americans sat and watched these same floats go down the same route, followed by the same god-awful lip-singing, year after year he did not know.

“The marching bands aren’t bad,” John said. Sherlock scowled. “Oh, come on, the parade is tradition. Dan loves it.”

“He’s four,” Sherlock whined.

Jason was lucky- he got to escape shortly after the beginning to start smoking the turkey. Sherlock tried to make excuses to go help him, but each time he tried to get up John forced him to sit back down.

“Sesame Street!” Dan suddenly cried. Then he began singing along with the songs, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin.

“Okay, that’s kind of adorable,” he admitted, pointed at his nephew.

John laughed along with him, and the noise finally woke Mycroft up. His brother stirred and looked around wearily. He looked confused, like he thought he might still be dreaming- and he clearly couldn’t remember how he got to the sofa.

“Good morning, love,” Greg said, leaning down to kiss his partner’s head.

“What time is it?” Mycroft asked as he sat up and ran his hands over his face.

They all exchanged glances, knowing a freak-out was coming, and at last Laura was the brave soul to admit:

“A little after eleven-thirty.”
Mycroft’s eyes lit up in horror.

“Eleven-thirty?” Mycroft repeated, clearly struggling to keep his cool. “Why didn’t someone wake me?”

“You needed the sleep,” Greg argued. “In fact I’m tempted to march you right back to bed and let you sleep all morning.”

With a sigh the eldest Holmes sibling got to his feet.

“I think I’ll have a shower instead,” he muttered. “Half eleven in the morning. I don’t think I’ve slept this late in my life.”

Greg chuckled as he stood to follow his boyfriend up to their guestroom.

“It’s true,” Sherlock realised. “I honestly don’t think I can ever remember Mycroft sleeping this late, not unless he was working all night. And even then…”

“I’ve been worried about him,” Laura sighed as she watched her son dance along to the music playing on the parade. “He’s clearly not getting enough sleep. I think losing his job has been a lot harder on him than he lets on. He won’t even talk to me about it, and we’ve been talking a lot lately.”

Biting his tongue, Sherlock decided to not admit that he had just asked his brother the night before if he was depressed. He had a horrible feeling depression was what was bothering Mycroft, but he knew his brother would never put a name to it. Mycroft would instead insist that whatever ‘phase’ he was going through he could get over by himself. He would never ask for help. He would never think it was a real problem.

The two smiled at each other, and Sherlock had to look away, feeling as though he were intruding on a personal moment.

“Have you ever been to the parade, Dan?” John asked.

“No,” Dan pouted. “I just watch it on TV.”

“Too many crowds,” Laura muttered.

That Sherlock had to agree with. He couldn’t imagine what had to be going through the minds of any of the people who actually stood out in the freezing cold for hours for the sake of this parade they had probably all seen dozens of times before. When at last Father Christmas appeared at the end of the parade, Sherlock had never felt more relieved for something on telly to be over. He would have preferred John’s football matches to this any day.

“Santa Claus!” Dan cried, pointing at the screen again. “Christmas is coming!”

“Yes,” Laura groaned, as though she had sincerely forgotten the holiday was on the way. “Yes, it is. What do you want for Christmas this year, sweetie?”

“I can’t tell you, Mommy!” Dan said as he plopped down beside her and threw his arms around her. “I can only tell Santa Claus!”

Even as he hugged her Laura rolled her eyes, and Sherlock laughed.

“You know Mommy likes to get you a present too,” Laura said.
“Wellllll,” Dan said as he placed his finger to his chin, like he was truly making one of the hardest decisions of his life. “Maybeeee….a new bike!”

His sister grinned, like she was relieved his request was something that was very doable. She kissed her son on the cheek and turned off the telly as the parade came to an end.

“Well,” Laura said, her eyes twinkling. “I suppose it’s time to get back to cooking.”

He followed Laura into the kitchen and stood back to watch as she began making the dressing for the turkey. He couldn’t help but to turn his nose up at the mixture she was putting together.

“So basically Thanksgiving is just an excuse to eat your body weight’s worth of food,” John commented as he appeared beside him.

Rolling her eyes, Laura replied:

“It’s really all about family. Sure, people appreciate the whole coming to the New World thing, but above all things, I think people love Thanksgiving because it’s one of the only times everyone gets to see their entire family in one place.”

“That makes sense,” John offered. “I suppose people rarely get to see relatives for out of town so they really enjoy putting together this big feast for them.”

“Exactly,” she said.

When his sister intended they all spend the day cooking, she wasn’t exaggerating. Laura had their menu pinned to the refrigerator, and as Sherlock stared at it he wondered how they could all possibly eat that much food. When the dressing was done he and John were instructed to start on the vegetable dishes, beginning with a sweet potato casserole.

“You’ve got to mash them harder,” John told him with a grin on his face. “Here.”

Frowning, Sherlock stepped back and let John show off.

“Yes, you have amazing muscles,” he teased.

“I used to cook potatoes with my gran,” John said. “She’d let Harry help her with the beans, and I always had the potatoes. God I miss my gran, she was easily my favourite relative.”

“You never talk about her,” Sherlock realised.

His boyfriend shook his head, but instead of becoming emotional he kept a smile on his face.

“My grandfather was also an army doctor,” John explained. “My gran just cooked…she cooked the most amazing dishes. And she played piano really well too. We stayed with them a lot during summer holidays. Granddad passed away when I was about seventeen, Gran did when I was in my twenties. I still remember everything they taught me though.”

“They would be really proud of you,” Sherlock murmured as he swooped in to steal a kiss to his boyfriend’s cheek. John’s smile brightened as he slipped his hands around his waist and held him as he watched him cook.

“It’s nice that you’re being so romantic,” John said, “but don’t think it will get you out of cooking.”
Together they managed to successfully mix the ingredients and lay them all out into a dish.

“Thank god,” John sighed when their dish was finally baking in the oven. “I swear this is the most stress I’ve been under in a long time, and all we’ve done is heat up some beans and make a casserole.”

Around noon Laura and Dan joined them.

“Time to make the mac and cheese!” Dan cried with a grin.

“No now remember, repeat after me,” Laura said as she placed her hand over her heart. Dan mimicked her. “I will not-“

“I will not,” Dan repeated.

“Eat-“

“Eat.”

“Any of the food we make-“

“Any of the food we make.”

“Until dinner.”

“Until dinner.”

With a smile, Laura explained to them:

“Last year he kept ‘tasting’ the mac and cheese until half of it was gone by dinner.”

They laughed, but Dan wasn’t bothered as he pulled up a stepstool that helped him be tall enough to reach the kitchen sink. After his hands were washed, Laura took the cheese out of the fridge, and Dan’s eyes lit up like she had just presented him with an early Christmas present.

“Do you remember what to do?” Laura asked him.

“Yes!” Dan replied. “Tear up the cheese!”

Sherlock grinned as he watched his nephew begin to tear the cheese into bits and throw them into a bowl.

Suddenly Laura fell forward and had to use her hands to grip the countertops.

“You okay?” John asked, gazing at her in concern as she closed her eyes and tried to steady herself.

“I’m fine,” she muttered as she ran her hands over her face. “Just a bit of nausea, that’s all. It’s nothing. I’m probably just getting a migraine.”

“Is it because of the baby?” Dan asked.

Sherlock froze.

Baby?

Baby?
He thought back to Laura’s behaviour over the past couple of weeks. Now that he thought about it he hadn’t seen her have a single glass of wine, which was unusual for someone who enjoyed pairing the right wine with dinner as much as Mycroft did. Then there was that night he ran into John and Laura in the restroom. She had looked so pale, so ill.

Then it hit him: she had been throwing up that one night!

Of course.

There was no stupid plumbing problem, he had figured that much at the time, but honestly he had forgotten about the incident.

Laura was staring at Dan like she wasn’t sure if she wanted to yell at him or laugh. As soon as Dan said the word ‘baby’ his hands flew to his mouth as he immediately realised his mistake.

“Oh Dan,” Laura sighed.

“I’m sorry,” Dan said quietly.

It was obviously he really meant it, and Laura wasted no time in scooping him up in a hug.

“It’s okay, sweetheart,” Laura promised. She looked to Sherlock and smiled. “I’ve been trying to find the right time to tell you, but we’ve just been so overwhelmed. But I guess the cat’s out of the bag now. I’m pregnant!”

One of the biggest grins Sherlock could ever remember showing off crossed his face before he threw his arms around his sister.

“I’m so happy for you!” He murmured as they embraced. “And so proud.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner!”

“You have a right to your privacy,” Sherlock pointed out. “I would only want you to tell me when you’re ready.”

“Thank you,” his sister whispered, squeezing him. Obviously she had been really afraid that he would be angry.

Tears had formed in her eyes, and she swiped at them as she stepped away.

“We didn’t plan for this,” she admitted. “It’s been so overwhelming planning this move and preparing for a baby.”

Beside him, John was grinning like an idiot- and blushing a bit.

“You knew!” Sherlock teased.

“Yes, he did,” Laura confessed. “That night when you walked in on us, John had found me throwing up in the middle of the night. He’s been an amazing help- I’m sorry I had him keep this a secret for you. I really wanted to tell you myself.”

He turned to John, who flashed him puppy dog eyes.
“Do you forgive me?” John asked innocently.

Sherlock paused for dramatic effect before leaning down to kiss his cheek.

“Of course,” he replied.

Letting out a happy sigh, Sherlock tried to fully comprehend the news he just received. A baby!

“I’m going to be an uncle!” Sherlock announced suddenly.

Dan glared at him.

“But you’re my uncle!” His nephew whined.

“Yes, I am,” Sherlock said. Dan grinned. He turned back to Laura and asked: “So is everything…”

A smile spread across her face and she nodded.

“Yes, I’m healthy, the baby is healthy,” she offered. “We are both perfectly fine. I’ve just had some hellish morning sickness. It just doesn’t seem to be going away.”

“A lot of women experience that,” John reassured her.

“I know,” Laura sighed, “but that doesn’t make the nausea any better.”

Standing back, Sherlock was absolutely beaming as he gazed at his sister. She looked so happy, so proud, so glowing. Now he understood why everyone described pregnant women as glowing!

“How far along are you?” He asked.

“About seven weeks,” Laura asked.

His heart leapt.

“Seven weeks!” He exclaimed. “Seven weeks already?!”

Laura blushed, embarrassed, and John nudged him.

“A lot of people wait to tell their family and friends,” John pointed out.

Of course he knew John was right, he just wished he could have seven more weeks of feeling this excited. There was going to be a new addition to their family! A brand new Holmes! Well, a brand new Carter. But all the same!

“Do you know if I’ll have a baby brother or sister yet?” Dan asked.

“Not yet, sweetie,” Laura said, kissing the top of his head. “It looks like the cheese is all ready to go.”

The food: Sherlock had completely forgotten all about Thanksgiving.

“We can help him, if you need to lie down,” John offered.

His sister bit her lip, like she could truly use the rest but didn’t want to miss out.

“It’s okay Mommy,” Dan promised. “You need to feel okay so the baby feels okay!”
“The kid speaks the truth,” John chimed in.

“Okay,” Laura sighed, kissing Dan on the head again. “I’ll just lie down on the sofa. If anyone needs me—“

“We’ll be fine!” Sherlock and John promised in unison.

She threw them a grateful smile before shuffling out of the kitchen and into the living room.

“Okay, Dan,” John said as they both took their places beside the four year-old. “What’s the next step?”

First Dan froze, then when neither of them said anything else he looked between the two of them, giving them his best “how am I supposed to know?!” stare.

“Just kidding!” John grinned. “Okay Sherlock, you grab the milk.”

It turned out cooking with Dan was actually quite fun. It was obvious his nephew really enjoyed it, and he caught himself smiling more than once. Sherlock was beginning to see why being together as a family on this day was so important to Laura.

An hour later Mycroft and Greg returned, both looking rather…cheery and refreshed. Greg has his hand rested on Mycroft’s lower back, and his brother’s face was all…flushed. Sherlock’s nose turned up when he realised just how the two lovers had spent the past hour. He decided to not ask questions.

“You’re turning into quite the cook,” Mycroft commented to Dan as he glanced at the casserole, beans, and macaroni.

“Thank you,” Dan said, beaming even though he was, as usual, sheepish at being complimented.

“Jason texted to see if I wanted to help with the turkey,” Greg said. “I think it’s time to answer my calling.”

“Well, I better get one last kiss then,” Mycroft teased.

Greg rolled his eyes but gave him a quick kiss on the lips anyway. That’s when Sherlock realised—Mycroft didn’t know about the baby! At least, he assumed not. He glanced over to John, who met his eyes- his partner was always thinking the same.

“Did the pie turn out alright?” His brother asked him.

He nodded. He noticed his brother rubbing at his neck, sore from the night spent on the sofa. Even though Mycroft had finally gotten some sleep his eyes still looked tired, and he still didn’t quite look like his usual self.

“Dan, would you like to help me make the second one?” Mycroft asked.

The kid’s eyes light up and he jumped up and down as he cried:

“Yes! Can I lick the spoon?”

Mycroft laughed.

“Sure,” he replied.
At last that evening the entire family- save for Jason, who was to bring the turkey to the table- gathered around the door to the formal dining room. They simply stood there for a few moments, gazing at the spread on the table as though they were afraid to touch anything.

“It’s beautiful,” Laura finally whispered.

“How are we supposed to eat all of this?” Sherlock announced.

“We’ll find a way,” his boyfriend breathed beside him.

John wore a look of pure hunger and determination on his face, like he had never seen anything more appetizing in his life.

“I want to eat!!” Dan whined.

His mother grinned as she rested her hand on his hand and ruffled his curls. Someone cleared their throat behind them, and they all turned to find Jason grinning proudly. He held a dish with the turkey sitting on it in his hands and Sherlock had to admit, it looked absolutely delicious. His stomach growled, and for the first time he was certain he really could feast as much as Americans did on Thanksgiving.

“I’m so proud of this turkey it’s almost a shame to eat it,” Jason confessed.

“No!” Dan exclaimed. “I’m hungry!”

“Are you ready to eat?” Jason asked him, just to mess with him. Dan nodded eagerly. “Alright, I suppose we can eat the turkey. First though, I’d like to thank Greg for helping me with it.”

“What exactly did you contribute?” Mycroft asked.

Shrugging, Greg offered:

“A drinking companion?”

“He helped,” Jason laughed.

“I learned a lot, that’s for sure,” Greg admitted, “and most importantly, we didn’t catch anything on fire.”

“Cheers to that,” Mycroft muttered.

That seemed to be their cue to take their places at the table. Jason made his way to the head of the table where he raised his knife- and paused.

“Can I just say something?” Jason asked. When no one protested, he went on: “I don’t think any of us could have imagined that we’d be here, today, together, eating this amazing looking meal. I know we’ve all been through a lot, and normally I don’t believe in the whole idea of ‘everything happens for a reason’, but I think we all finally have the happiness we deserve. And me and you…”

Jason turned to his wife and beamed. His eyes were actually misting over; he was obviously trying to not spill the beans on the pregnancy secret.

“We’re about to have a wonderful year.”

He shared a kiss with Laura, who wiped away a single tear that fell from her eye.
“Those no use hiding anymore,” Laura finally sighed. “Mycroft, Greg, I’m afraid we’ve all been keeping a secret from you.”

Mycroft and Greg exchanged glances, clueless as to what could be going on.

“You didn’t really want us to tag along on this holiday, did you?” Mycroft asked, his voice dark and body completely still although he was clearly teasing.

“No,” Laura laughed. A smile spread across her face, truly making her features glow. “I’m pregnant. We’re having another baby!”

Sherlock bit his lip, trying to not grin like an idiot as he watched his brother and Greg for their reaction. But the two were simply…shocked. They stared at Laura: Greg’s eyes wide while Mycroft’s was narrow, Greg’s mouth agape while Mycroft’s lips remained in a firm line.

“You’re having a baby?” Mycroft replied slowly, as though he truly wasn’t sure he heard her correctly.

Grinning, Laura nodded.

“Yes,” she said, her voice breaking. Another tear slipped from her eye.

Without speaking Mycroft stood up. His body was completely stiff, his face straight, unamused. Sherlock panicked as he thought of Mycroft’s own history with pregnancy and the trauma that still haunted him.

Laura stood when Mycroft reached her seat, and for a moment the two siblings just stared at each other. She searched his eyes, trying to figure out what was going on (Sherlock just then realised she might not know about that part of his past).

“Come here,” Mycroft announced quietly as he held his arms out.

They embraced, and Mycroft breathed in a deep breath as Laura rested her head on his shoulder.

“I’m so happy for you,” his brother finally whispered. A smile slipped across his lips as his eyes flashed over to Jason. “I’m so happy for all of you.”

“Thank you,” Laura whispered back as they broke apart and held hands. “I’m sorry I hid it from you.”

“So these two knew then?” Mycroft deduced, glancing toward Sherlock and John.

“In their defence Dan spilled the beans this morning,” Laura said. “Well…John found out on his own. He’s been a great help, making sure I’m okay and answering my questions.”

Their older brother looked to John and offered him a firm smile. Meeting John’s eyes, Mycroft offered, sincerely:

“Thank you.”

“No problem,” John replied. “Any questions any of you have, I’m happy to answer.”

“We’re really lucky to have such amazing support,” Jason said, raising his wine glass to them, “and for that, I am thankful.”

“Me too,” Laura added, wrapping her arm around Mycroft’s waist.
“I’m really happy for you both,” Greg offered.

He stood to join his partner at the other end of the table and offered Laura a hug before shaking hands with Jason.

“How far along are you?” Mycroft asked.

“Seven weeks,” Laura said. “The baby and I are both perfectly healthy. We actually go in for another appointment in a few days.”

“Can I go, Mommy?” Dan pleaded.

“You’ll be in school,” Jason explained.

Dan pouted, and Sherlock genuinely felt for him. As he studied his nephew’s face he realised something was wrong. His nephew almost looked like he felt left out, and Sherlock realised how overwhelmed Dan probably was at the idea of having a baby brother or sister. He probably did feel left out, what with all the baby talk going on, and he probably just wanted to go to the appointment to feel included. Sherlock made a mental note to have a talk with him after dinner.

“Right,” Laura sighed, turning back to everyone. “I don’t know about you all, but I’m starving.”

Jason began carving the turkey, and it seemed like in no time food was disappearing from the table.

“This sweet potato casserole isn’t half bad,” Laura commented to him and John.

“I suppose that’s a compliment, considering we had no bloody idea what we were doing,” Sherlock muttered.

His boyfriend nudged him and thanked Laura. Sherlock had to admit there wasn’t a single dish he didn’t like- even the macaroni mainly made by a four year-old was pretty good. And the turkey…

“This is absolutely brilliant turkey,” Greg said through a mouthful of turkey and dressing.

“Yeah, I’m just glad I only have to do this once a year,” Jason said, “but it didn’t turn out half bad.”

“I’d say we’re a family of pretty good cooks,” Laura commented, “and Dan, the mac and cheese is wonderful.”

“Thanks, Mommy!” Dan grinned. He was scooping of the last of his third helping of the dish. “I could make this every day!”

They all laughed, although Sherlock had a feeling Dan was serious. He could totally see his nephew sneak into the kitchen every day and try to figure out how to make mac and cheese for dinner.

“I still think the concept of celebrating an American Thanksgiving is blasphemy,” Mycroft admitted. He glanced around to each of them with a look of what Sherlock could only describe to be pure gratitude. “But I’m very thankful to be here with all of you today. And Gregory, I was wrong: your assistance with the turkey didn’t completely backfire.”

“Aw, thanks love,” his partner replied with a grin.

Even as they were all finishing up their second plateful of food, it didn’t stop Jason from raising
his knife and asking:

“More turkey?”

They all groaned in unison. Sherlock felt like he wouldn’t have to eat for another week.

“I’m stuffed,” John announced. He patted Sherlock on his back. “I know you have to be.”

The consulting detective nodded.

“Good,” Mycroft said, wiping his mouth with his napkin. “Then it’s time for dessert.”

Again they all groaned, and Sherlock was certain no one saved room for dessert.

In the end they decided to wait on the pies, and the family retreated to the living room. Laura asked him if he could play something on his violin, and Sherlock found himself playing song after song for a couple of hours straight. At one point he wasn’t even sure what he was playing anymore, but it felt good to practise again. It felt good to perform in front of people as they sat, staring at him in amazement. He watched his own fingers dance across the neck of the violin, thinking they could just play on and on forever if he never stopped them.

When it was time for Dan to go to bed Sherlock offered to tuck him in. Reluctantly, Dan changed into pyjamas and climbed into bed. He seemed to realise all the adults would stay up having a good time while he was forced to sleep, and Dan’s face didn’t hide how mad he was at having to go to bed early.

“So that was a pretty good Thanksgiving, yeah?” Sherlock asked as he sat on the edge of Dan’s bed.

Dan nodded and offered him a small smile.

“It was yummy!” He replied.

But then his eyes flashed away, and it was all too obvious there was more going on in that head of his than meets the eye.

“Are you excited about the baby?”

He watched the way Dan’s demeanor changed when he brought up the baby: his smile fell, his shoulders slouched forward, his eyes fell downward and his hands folded together in his laps.

“I guess so,” he said quietly. He looked up at Sherlock with sad eyes. “Can you read me a story?”

Placing his arm around Dan’s small body, Sherlock held him close, trying to remind him he shouldn’t feel alone.

“It’s okay to feel nervous about being a big brother,” Sherlock said, “and it’s okay to feel worried that you’re going to be left out.”

Dan pulled a stuffed bear that usually sat on his bed into his lap and held onto it tightly.

“You won’t be left out though,” Sherlock said as he rubbed gentle, soothing, circles against his back. “In fact, you’ll have a super important role in the baby’s life.”
“Really?” Dan asked, looking up to him.

Sherlock nodded.

“You’ll be a big brother,” he explained, “and there’s nothing more important than being a good big brother.”

Biting his lip, Sherlock thought of Mycroft and how utterly lost he would be without his brother in his life. He never would have gotten anywhere without him. He never would have even gotten past his mother’s death. He never would have made it to uni—even though he did drop out. And even though Sherlock was such an arse to him for so many years during his drug abuse Mycroft never gave up on him. He was always there for him. If Sherlock ever needed his help, his brother would be there.

“Really?” Dan asked.

He nodded.

“You’ve got to be there to protect your baby brother or sister,” he explained. “They might get in trouble, they might make you angry, and they might make bad decisions, but it’s your job as big brother to always be there for them. Good big brothers are some of the best things you can have in life. They’re going to need your help in many, many things. But most of all, they will need a friend.”

A smile stretched across Dan’s face.

“I will have someone to play with!” Dan realised.

“Yeah!” Sherlock replied. “A little brother or sister is like an instant friend that you always have to play with whenever you want.”

“I can teach them things,” Dan said, “like…how to tie your shoes! Except, I don’t really know that yet. But I will!”

“Yes,” he said with a laugh. “I know your mommy and daddy are very busy planning for the new baby and planning to move to London, but they still love you very much. And guess what? They’ll need you as much as your new little brother or sister will.”

Dan hugged his bear tighter, and Sherlock ran a hand through his nephew’s curls.

“It’s okay to be nervous,” Sherlock reiterated, “and it’s okay to be scared and confused. You can always talk to me, or John— or anyone. Even your mum and dad.”

Suddenly his nephew threw his arms around him, and Sherlock let out a surprised laugh.

“I love you, Uncle Sirlock,” Dan said.

“Yeah,” Sherlock said as he hugged him back. “I love you too.”

John was already in bed when he returned to their room after reading Dan a story (or two, or three). Silently, Sherlock changed into pyjamas while John finished up the editing he was doing. As soon as he climbed into bed his boyfriend sat his laptop on the bedside table and turned to him. They shared smiles, and John reached out to stroke his hair.
“So…our first American Thanksgiving was a success,” John said with a smile.

Grinning, Sherlock replied:

“Yes, surprisingly so,” he teased. “Though I don’t think I’ll want to eat for another week.”

“Oh, you will!” John challenged. “We’re going to New York City next week!”

“Oh…yeah,” he said, pretending like he had forgotten. They kissed, and he adored how bright and full of life his lover’s face looked when they broke apart. He ran his hand through John’s blonde strands, which seemed to be getting longer than he had ever seen them. He felt so overwhelmed with happiness, both because of the successful holiday and the news about his sister, that he just couldn’t stop smiling. Then suddenly, he had an idea for a joke. “John, I have some news. I’m pregnant.”

He tried to keep a straight face, but John burst out laughing. Giggling, Sherlock tried to be serious as he went on:

“It appears I have defied all laws of science, and I will be the first man to ever give birth.”

Rolling onto his back, John continued laughing harder than Sherlock had seen him laugh in some time. It was really nice, seeing him in such a good mood, and he joined him in his laughter.

“Well I suppose I’ll be the first baby daddy whose baby was born by another man,” John teased.

“That you will,” Sherlock said. He ran a finger down his lover’s cheek. “Nice going.”

“I have no regrets.”

John planted his lips on his own, and they shared a soft, long kiss. When they broke away Sherlock felt completely relaxed...completely happy.

“I’m so thankful for you,” Sherlock whispered.

“And I’m thankful for you,” John replied.

He rested his head on John’s chest, and they both fell silent as his brother began running his fingers through his hair. They didn’t speak anymore, deciding instead to simply enjoy how extraordinarily content they both felt. At last his lover’s arms, with a smile on his face and his stomach full of good food cooked by his family, he fell asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Honestly Thanksgiving is one of my top favorite holidays. It's so simple...just family and good food! But yes, the concept is a bit odd lol! Thanks for indulging with me in seeing these guys celebrate their first Thanksgiving. I really hope you enjoyed this chapter! Thanks so much for all the kudos and feedback!
Four Years, Three Months, Six Days

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Monday after Thanksgiving Dan went back to school, and Sherlock woke up around nine AM to find John still asleep. Quietly, he rolled out of bed, put on his dressing gown, and shuffled down the hall and toward the kitchen to make himself some tea. He stopped when he heard the voices of Laura and Jason arguing quietly in the kitchen. He hid at the end of the hall, where he could listen in without being seen.

“I’ll pick him up from school,” Jason was saying, “and I swear to god if he’s there-

“No, you have to promise me-”

“It’s not fair!” Jason insisted. “You shouldn’t have to worry about him. He shouldn’t be at Dan’s school!”

“What am I supposed to do?!” Laura exclaimed, obviously fighting to keep her voice down. “Get a restraining order against my own father?”

Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat. So their father’s stalking had gotten worse than just texts and emails…so much worse. His blood boiled at the thought of their father following Laura around to the point where he was showing up to Dan’s school.

He decided right then and there: he had to put a stop to it. Laura couldn’t make excuses for him.

“Yes!” Jason hissed, and Sherlock agreed with him. “That’s exactly what you should do! We have a baby on the way, Laura. We can’t be worrying about him.”

“He won’t actually do anything-”

“But with his history?” Her husband pointed out. “Just let me pick Dan up, and if I ever see that bastard near my son’s school then I will let him know exactly who I am and that I will pursue legal action against him!”

“Jason!” Laura shot. “I just don’t want any drama, okay? We’ll be moving soon- we’ll be an ocean away from him! Just please…I want to leave this all behind us. I can’t deal with him anymore.”

There was a long pause, and Sherlock could imagine Jason slipping his arms around his wife’s body and pulling her close.

“I know,” Jason whispered. “I’m so sorry.”

“I just want to get away from here,” Laura whispered back.

The house fell silent, and Sherlock slipped back to the room, feeling it wasn’t an appropriate time to interrupt. He started a shower and closed his eyes, thinking of how scared his sister must be feeling. What the hell was their father doing showing up at Dan’s school? What was he trying to prove- that he could find her? Was that supposed to intimidate her?

He also felt terrible knowing that part of the reason she was so excited to move to London was to get away from their father.
Curling his fist, Sherlock resisted the urge to punch at the shower wall. When he was done he snuck upstairs and knocked on Mycroft’s door. His brother propped the door open and peered through a crack in the door.

“Yes?” Mycroft asked.

“We need to talk.”

He had Mycroft meet him out in the garden. Even though it was quite cool, the fresh air made him feel like he could breathe much easier. He explained to his brother what he overheard, and Mycroft walked beside him quietly, stone-faced, while he contemplated what he said.

“Jason is right,” Mycroft finally announced. “She should get a restraining order; he is stalking her.”

“But she’s moving across the pond soon,” he pointed out.

“What’s stopping him from following her?”

Both brothers stopped and stared at each other. He hadn’t even considered that. Surely their father wasn’t that crazy- surely he didn’t have the sort of money to do that.

That’s when the wheels in Sherlock’s mind started turning. If their father was stalking his sister then he wanted something. He doubted it was Dan- surely the man was sober enough to realise he would never have any right to see his grandson. He still had his father’s work number. He could demand answers, demand he stay away, protect his sister.

“Perhaps you’re right,” Sherlock sighed, pretending like he believed his brother.

Glancing up at the dreary, grey, sky Mycroft turned his nose up and briefly closed his eyes. Sherlock frowned, still not convinced his brother was completely okay.

“How have you been sleeping?” He asked.

His brother simply shrugged.

“Insomnia is not something one can help sometimes,” Mycroft replied. He hesitated before confessing: “I keep having nightmares- dreams- about different events I dealt with during my time in my position. Except in these dreams, nothing turned out the way things went in real life or worse- I come up with ways things would have turned out better. In some of these dreams people we had…dealt with…come back and I can’t stop them.”

Mycroft let out a long breath and his eyes danced around, anxious. Sherlock had the feeling his brother was yearning for a cigarette.

“You can’t keep thinking like that-“

“I know,” Mycroft insisted. “I know, but it is what men who hold or have held positions of power do. Even Gregory…Gregory constantly has nightmares about unsolved murders. Even the ones he did solve haunt him. Of course, you can’t tell him I said that.”

“I won’t,” he promised.

“They’re just nightmares,” his brother sighed. “What I need to focus on reality, and what is most important right now is Laura. We can’t let our father near her.”
“Agreed,” Sherlock nodded.

They fell silent. Sherlock didn’t want to admit that he had been in contact with his father. He didn’t want to admit that he was worried he was part of the reason Laura was being followed. He didn’t want to admit that it had crossed his mind, even for a split second, that he could meet his father if he wanted to. He was only a couple of hours away…not that it would do him any good. Not that he could ever do that. Not that he should want to do that.

“Sherlock-” Mycroft warned. And somehow, just like that, he knew his brother had figured it all out. “You can’t.”

“There has to be a reason he’s stalking her now-”

“You can’t.”

“Someone has to be there for her! Someone has to put a stop to this!”

“You can’t!” Mycroft exclaimed, grabbing his arm. They glared at each other. Sherlock breathed heavily, unsure of what he wanted to do. Did he break away, argue, and ruin that trust they had finally established between each other? Was there the possibility…could there be a way that Mycroft was right? “He abandoned you. He abandoned us. He doesn’t deserve your attention. Laura should get a restraining order; she doesn’t need us to step in.”

His hands balled into fist at his sides. After so many years of his brother following him with cameras, randomly kidnapping his friends off the street just to interrogate him on his well-being, and in general doing whatever was in his power to keep tabs on him, he was not going to stand by while Mycroft let Laura deal with this on her own.

“He’s a criminal, Mycroft!” He snapped. “Do you really think you’ll keep him away with a restraining order?”

Crossing his arms, his brother challenged:

“Then tell me, baby brother, what do you think we should do? Go to him ourselves and threaten him?”

Sherlock bit his lip, fuming. Then he began to think…

“Element of surprise,” he muttered.

“What?” Mycroft demanded, his eyes narrowed.

“He doesn’t even know we know about Laura,” Sherlock pointed out. “He doesn’t know we know where he lives, where he works. I looked him up, Mycroft. He’s working in a bloody garage as a mechanic! Christ we’re much stronger than he is!”

“Sherlock-”

“He has to know that this isn’t acceptable,” Sherlock said. “He has to know we’re not going to take this shit from him.”

“There’s no we,” Mycroft replied darkly. “He’s not stalking us. He doesn’t want anything to do with us. Of anything he’ll probably be pissed to see us.”

Somehow Sherlock still found himself pissed at the idea that for some reason, their father was
more interested in seeing his daughter again instead of his sons. He knew he shouldn’t be. He knew he should feel the same way as Mycroft and not want anything to do their father.

“Sherlock,” his brother said again, placing his hand on his shoulder. He sounded like he felt sorry for his younger brother, and that made Sherlock even angrier. “Honestly, we don’t know what he’s capable of. We don’t know his intentions. Please Sherlock, please just promise me you’ll let Laura handle this, and let the police do their job if she does decide to put a restraining order against him.”

But he couldn’t promise that.

Suddenly a glimmer of understanding flashed in his brother’s eyes.

“You can’t possibly want to see him, do you?” Mycroft shot, his voice coated with the slightest hint of amusement.

Sherlock could only turn away and storm off- otherwise he risked giving his brother a very black eye.

“Sherlock!” Mycroft called, chasing after him. He could hear his brother panting for breath as he ran, but Sherlock didn’t stop until he felt a hand grab his shoulder. “I’m sorry. I know it’s only natural to feel some sort of curiosity about your parents. If you truly want to see him- if you want to confront him- I will go with you.”

Drawing in a deep breath, he turned back to his brother, unsure if he should feel grateful or uncertain about what he was getting himself into.

“Do you think it’s a good idea?” He asked quietly.

His brother shook his head.

“I don’t think so,” Mycroft admitted. “I’m afraid you’ll only get hurt. But I’m also afraid you will go off on your own and do something foolish.”

“I don’t need your protection,” Sherlock replied with a smirk.

Straightening up and crossing his arms, Mycroft shot, ever so pompously:

“Too bad.”

They had a good excuse to leave the house when John and Greg decided to spend the day watching American football. Mycroft rented a car and drove the two hours up to Syracuse, and the two brothers stayed silent most of the trip. A half hour into the drive Sherlock began to panic: what exactly was he going to say to his father? He tried to let the pleasant greenery of the nature around them soothe his anxiety, he tried to tell himself he would be able to figure it out, but when they reached Syracuse city limits his heart began to pound.

Before he knew it they were pulling off to a gravel road. Besides a few small houses the only thing on the road was a garage with a mid-size car park that Sherlock couldn’t help but to notice only had three cars waiting to be worked on. The garage was open to reveal a Honda sedan was currently being worked on, and someone’s legs stuck out from underneath the car. Sherlock swallowed, knowing this could be the very first time he set eyes on his father- at least that he remembered.

“We don’t have to do this,” Mycroft murmured.
Sherlock ignored him, threw open the passenger door, and his brother rushed to follow him as he stormed toward the garage. His father heard them approaching, and he kicked himself out from underneath the car. A shiver went down his spine as he heard his father speak to him for the first time ever, in a rather normal—dare he say it, welcoming—American accent:

“How I can I help—"

He stopped when he saw who they were. His father’s eyes first fell on him and Sherlock froze, realizing his entire life was being judged by how he looked to his father right now. But then his father’s eyes flashed over to Mycroft, and his breathing seemed to quicken. Sherlock couldn’t help but to steal a glance over to his older brother, who was obviously trying very hard to stay calm and collected. Mycroft shifted from foot to foot, unbuttoned his blazer, swallowed nervously.

As for his father, he looked nearly the same as he did in the newspaper articles he found online, except perhaps his hair was a bit tamer. And he was older, in his sixties. He still shared Sherlock’s curls and features— in fact he hardly looked like Mycroft at all. He was certain his brother was relieved to see that.

The tension finally broke when their father suddenly asked, quietly, almost fearfully:

“Mycroft?” Sherlock was almost surprised—almost jealous—that his brother was addressed first. But his brother looked more uncomfortable than he had ever seen him. He almost looked ill. His father explained: “I’ve seen pictures of you, Sherlock. But Mycroft…I’ve never been able to find anything.”

Of course. Sherlock was easily findable on the internet: not only was there John’s blog but there were countless news stories and interviews featuring him. Mycroft, however, was able to hide. Mycroft had the ability to make sure he couldn’t be found.

Their father took a sudden step toward his eldest son, and Mycroft took an abrupt step back. Sherlock was actually surprised—did his brother feel threatened? He shuddered to imagine the flashbacks that must be racing through his brother’s mind, but luckily their father took a step back and again swallowed nervously. None of them were sure what to do or say.

At last:

“What are you boys doing here?” Sherlock flinched at the casualness of his tone, and their father seemed to sense it made them uncomfortable. “Please tell me you didn’t come here all the way from England.”

Sherlock snorted, and Mycroft looked furious.

But the truth was, he still didn’t know what to say to him. Apparently, neither did Mycroft. When it was evident neither was ready to talk their father finally sighed and asked:

“What do you need?” Sherlock snorted again; like they would ever actually need anything from him. “If it’s money, you’re out of luck.”

Now they were just being insulted. Did he honestly think his grown children would fly over the ocean to beg for money from their estranged, abusive, father?

His eyes ran over his father, over his strangled curls that—although coated in sweat—were so similar to him, over his slim, ailing frame. He found himself trying to find ways Mycroft looked like him, but alas, he knew his brother would always have their mother’s eyes, her skin tone, and her hair color.
“We want you to stay away from her,” Mycroft finally announced. Sherlock was surprised he spoke first, but he didn’t react.

“What?” Their father said with a dry, uneasy, laugh which gave away that he knew exactly what Mycroft meant.

“Stay away from Laura,” his brother reiterated, not amused.

For a long moment their father just stared from them, looking from son to son, obviously wondering if they were serious. Sherlock realised for the first time how silly this must look from an outsider’s perspective. Maybe his brother was right: maybe there wasn’t anything they could actually do to convince their father to stay away from Laura.

Then their father laughed again, as though he were genuinely amused by their demands.

“You don’t have to worry about her,” he replied casually.

He turned back to his collection of tools on a bench beside the car he was working on.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

His voice sounded hollow and unfamiliar.

“Laura,” his father said, “she’s not yours to worry about. You shouldn’t even know about her. She’s not your responsibility.”

Before Sherlock knew what he was doing he was rushing forward and pinning his father’s head down against the tool bench. Car parts went flying, metal tools clang against the ground, and his father winced as his forehead landed against a wrench.

Sherlock didn’t care.

“Do you know whose responsibility is?” Sherlock spat. His father flinched at the power of his voice. “Yours. And you threw that relationship away. You abused her. You lost your right to be a parent. You have no right to harass her.”

“I’m just trying to-”

He didn’t want to hear it. There was a loud thud as he picked his father’s body up and slammed it into the bench again.

“You don’t have the right,” Sherlock hissed. “She doesn’t want anything to do with you. You’re a selfish, cowardly bastard and I swear to god if you go near her, her family, or any of us ever again- or call, or email, or contact us in anyway- you will find out exactly what we’re capable of.”

Sherlock’s body shook a little; he was almost in shock of his actions, his words. He held his breath as he waited to see how effective his threat was.

Then his father laughed.

Laughed.

Wild-eyed, Sherlock tightened his grip on his father’s collar and threw him from the bench to the ground. Behind him, Mycroft stood up straight, his eyes unwavering; he made no motion toward stopping his younger brother.
“I promise you that you will be back in prison by Christmas,” Sherlock shot.

He spit at that the ground, and again his father only laughed. Then his eyes turned toward his
youngest son, and though for a moment Sherlock though he saw a glimmer of sincere regret in
them, that glimmer quickly changed to amusement.

“How?” His father challenged.

One sweep of his eyes over his father’s body and he found them: the track marks, on his left arm.
There were fresh ones, from no longer than a couple of nights ago. Sherlock felt sick inside, but he
still manage to announce quietly:

“Drugs.”

Sherlock couldn’t even look at him anymore. He hated himself for deciding to come here; he
couldn’t even meet eyes with Mycroft as he turned away and headed straight for the car.

It was all he could do to not run.

He felt sick as he held his hands against the car door and waited for his brother. Neither spoke as
they slipped inside, and Sherlock sighed as he rested his head against the cool window.

“Please don’t,” he murmured.

“What?” Mycroft asked innocent as he started up the car.

He knew the words were right off the tip of his brother’s tongue: I was right. We never should
have come here.

“Don’t say it,” he said.

Mycroft didn’t say anything, not for nearly an hour into their drive back to Schenectady.

“Are you hungry?” Mycroft asked.

Instead of answering Sherlock simply closed his eyes tightly an tried to pretend like he was
sleeping. This didn’t stop Mycroft from pulling over to a restaurant.

“This looks promising,” his brother muttered sarcastically.

Sherlock didn’t answer. He didn’t think he could eat, and even as they sat down and were asked for
his order he didn’t reply. Mycroft ordered him a burger and got himself a salad with vegetables on
the side.

“Sorry, I was starving,” Mycroft admitted, “though I don’t expect much from here.”

Honestly neither was he, but he didn’t feel like talking. He wanted to curl up in bed with John and
somehow be able to erase the past twenty-four hours.

He needed a distraction, he decided, and he let his eyes wonder to the other patrons. There was a
young man and woman sitting in the corner- they were brothers and sisters, not a couple. The girl
looked like she might be in uni, and he imagined they both needed an escape from their families
during the holidays. There was an older man at the bar eating meatloaf and mashed potatoes; he
was showing the waitress a picture of his grown son, and the waitress seemed to have a genuine
interest. He was a regular, then, probably for years. Their own waitress was working a double shift
and had kids at home. The booth across from them had last belonged to a family of five.
Their food arrived, and Mycroft must have noticed how hard the waitress had been worked too because he didn’t say anything when his salad came swimming in dressing.

“I almost wish I ordered the burger,” Mycroft mumbled when the waitress walked away.

Sherlock pushed his plate toward him, genuinely offering his food up.

“No,” his brother insisted, shaking his head. “Eat. I know you haven’t had anything since breakfast. Eat or we’re not getting back in that car.”

He scowled, but at the same time his stomach growled, and Sherlock knew Mycroft was right. He needed food, and John would kill him if he knew he went all day without eating.

“We shouldn’t have come here,” Sherlock finally said softly as he watched the sun set.

“Maybe,” his brother replied, his voice barely audible even in the quiet diner. “But I can only imagine what affect that visit had on him. I hate to admit it, but you might be right. You really may have convinced him to leave Laura alone.”

His eyes flashed up to his brother in surprise, and he was shocked to find the corner of Mycroft’s lips turning up in a smile.

“Why do you think so?” Sherlock asked.

With a shrug, Mycroft popped a forkful of broccoli into his mouth, winced, and replied:

“He has just completed quite a long prison sentence,” he pointed out. “He has found a stable job, one he actually seems to like. He’s vulnerable right now, and you found his weakness.”

Don’t remind me, Sherlock thought as he sank further down into the booth.

Suddenly his brother’s hand fell on his arm, and he forced himself to meet Mycroft’s eyes again.

“You are not him,” his brother promised. He pointed down to the burger. “Eat.”

Forcing himself to eat, he tried to think of anything but being where he was now. For the first time he truly wished he were back in London and as far away from New York as possible.

Once he returned home, vowed he’d never come back here.

“Sherlock do you have any idea what today is?” Mycroft asked. He shook his head, his eyes glued to the window as he tried to ignore his brother. “Today marks four years, three months, and six days that you have been clean.”

Sherlock blinked. A shiver went up his spine. Those memories of entering rehab and his struggle to get clean had been locked away in a room deep inside his mind palace for so long that he had nearly lost all sense of just how long ago that was.

“You’ve counted?” Sherlock asked.

His brother nodded.

“Each day,” he said. “And I’m proud of every single one of those days.”

Swallowing nervously, Sherlock simply offered a small nod of thanks.
Four years, three months, and six days.

Mycroft might have been proud, but all he could think was... *I did drugs for nearly ten years. I haven’t even been clean for that amount of time yet.*

“Sherlock,” Mycroft called sympathetically, as though he understood the battle raging in his head right now. “You should be proud of yourself.”

Mycroft called the waitress over for the check. As he finished eating his burger in silence he thought of Luke and of how he never got to be clean again. He died a drug addict. Closing his eyes, Sherlock fought back tears as he imagined what Luke looked like. He could very clearly picture his kind face, his sharp blue eyes, the smell of his aftershave and the marks that plagued his left arm.

If he was so strong why wasn’t he able to stop them from destroying their lives?

“Sherlock,” Mycroft said softly, jerking him away from his thoughts.

Sherlock didn’t say another word during their journey back to Laura’s. When they arrived at the house they found everyone had already shuffled off to their bedrooms for the night. Mycroft bid him goodnight and went upstairs to Greg, while Sherlock slipped down the hall to his and John’s guest bedroom.

He found his lover sitting up in bed with his laptop, typing frantically. For a moment he simply stared at him as he leaned against the doorframe. A small smile fell across his face as he watched his boyfriend shake his head in frustration and bite his lip.

“New deadline?” Sherlock asked, surprising John so much he jumped.

“Christ you scared me!” John hissed.

Smirking, Sherlock climbed into bed, still fully dress. John set aside the laptop and ran his hand through Sherlock’s curls. He loved that feeling, the intimacy and playfulness of John’s touch. They snuggled down into bed until they were faced to face, and after gazing at each other for a long moment they finally shared a delicate kiss.

“Where did you sneak off to?” John asked.

Sherlock kept his eyes closed, and his boyfriend didn’t push the subject. He wasn’t sure what the family would have thought of him and Mycroft being out so late, but at least John seemed to understand he needed his space.

“Four years, three months, and six days,” Sherlock announced softly. His eyes flashed open to find John staring back at him in confusion. “That’s how long I’ve been clean.”

His boyfriend’s eyes went wide with delight, and his lips slipped into a grin so bright that Sherlock couldn’t help but to feel a sense of pride.

*It makes John happy,* he thought, *and that should be enough.*

“Oh my god,” John breathed as he wrapped his arms around him. He allowed Sherlock to rest his head against his shoulder. “I’m so proud of you. God Sherlock. I’m so happy.”

“Really?” Sherlock mumbled into his lover’s body.

He felt John nod.
“I’m so happy you’re healthy,” John explained softly. “I’m happy that you’ve learned to appreciate your body, your health. I just hope...I just hope that you know how truly amazing you are.”

His eyes remained shut tightly as John held him, and he felt tears swell behind his closed eyelids as he thought again of Luke.

I failed him, he thought, as my father failed me.

“I’m so proud of you,” John whispered again above him, running his hand through his hair once more. “I love you so much.”

His lover was so full of pride, so full of amazement and admiration. But Sherlock...he felt like he was breaking apart inside.

For almost ten years he did drugs. For over six he lived on the streets. He had only been friends with John for a little over a year...and they had only been together romantically for a matter of months. Even though it felt like they had been lovers for ages, their relationship was still so young.

What if I’m not strong enough? What if I fail John too? What if I slip up?

As John held him and continued to whisper compliments into his ear, Sherlock could only hold on and not dare admit what he feared the most:

What if I’m just as weak as my father?

Chapter End Notes

I must admit, I was really nervous to post this chapter! But of course I couldn't tease all of this talk of Sherlock's father and being in New York without them meeting!
And...well, you haven't seen the last him.

Coming soon...NYC!!!! Finally, right?!!

Thanks so much for all the kudos and feedback! I was rushing to get this up before I went out of town for the weekend, so I apologise for any errors!

What are your thoughts?
New York, New York

Chapter Notes

NYC what is about you?
You're big.
You're loud.
You're tough.
-Annie

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

John’s mouth hung agape as he stared at the mass of people, movement, and sounds all around him.

“So…” he announced, not really sure what to say.

Beside him, Sherlock stood equally as stunned.

“So…” his boyfriend echoed.

His partner swallowed nervously, and John’s lips turned up in a bemused smirk. The great Sherlock Holmes was actually intimidated.

I should be getting video of this.

Suddenly someone bumped into him, and behind him Mycroft shot:

“Would you two move?!”

Straightening himself up, John nodded and began rushing forward along with everyone else in Times Square.

They were finally in New York City. After picking Dan up from school that Friday afternoon they took a train into the city for the weekend, and as soon as they arrived John was quickly realised a weekend was nothing in NYC. He felt like a kid again- he wanted to look at everything, go in every shop, taste all of the food, and experience everything he could. Time Square was just as chaotic as he had seen on telly and in cinema. He actually felt quite small being there.

After an embarrassing attempt at taking a group picture that ended in Greg nearly getting run over by a bicyclist they all agreed it was time to find something to eat. Getting them all into the same restaurant seemed to be impossible with the wait times (and lack of reservations) so they broke up into groups, but John didn’t mind- he was anxious for some alone time with Sherlock.

During the last week his boyfriend had obviously been distracted. Not only had Sherlock’s appetite seemed to diminish, but John would wake at night from a bad dream only to find Sherlock lying beside him, already wide awake himself. Sherlock and Mycroft were hardly speaking, and- unless he was imagining things- both of them seemed to be actually avoid being stuck alone with their sister.

In fact, Sherlock didn’t seem to be too comfortable being shuffled away from the group and into
the Italian restaurant John picked out for them. It was like he knew he was about to be interrogated about his behaviour.

So John started carefully, as to not scare him off.

“What do you think so far?” He asked as they stood with a crowd of people against a wall to wait for their table. Sherlock ignored him as he stared at his mobile, sorting through emails. “New York versus London, I mean.”

The consulting detective merely shrugged.

“They’re both overcrowded, they’re both touristy, they both have an insane cost of living,” Sherlock replied. “New York is London, with more skyscrapers.”

With a laugh, John had to shake his head and disagree.

“It’s a whole different vibe,” he argued. Sherlock didn’t answer, and it was to the point where John had to wrestle the mobile away from him to get his attention.

“Hey!” Sherlock whined.

“Would it kill you to talk to me?” He demanded. His boyfriend’s eyes glowed darkly as he stared at him, but John wasn’t intimidated. “You’ve been acting very strangely this past week. Something’s obviously bothering you, and I wish you’d just tell me!”

His eyes darting to the ground, Sherlock mumbled:

“It’s none of your concern.”

John’s heart skipped a beat as anger and hurt flooded through him.

“Are you serious?” He snapped. When he didn’t get an answer he grabbed Sherlock’s arm, forcing him to face him. That caught the attention of a few other patrons, but he didn’t care. He wanted Sherlock to realise how ridiculous he was being. “It’s my concern because I love you, and when I can see that you’re upset I want to know why so I can help you. I’m here for you, you know that.”

“Watson, party of two!” The hostess suddenly called.

The two remained silent as they were seated. John feigned a smile as they were seated and read the day’s specials, but once the hostess walked away he turned back to Sherlock, waiting for a response. When it was obvious Sherlock was still not comfortable talking to him he reached out and placed his hand over his lover’s. Maybe he was being too harsh on him, he thought. After all, everyone was entitled to some secrets.

“It’s okay,” John reassured him. “I just want to make sure you’re alright. You’ve been distant… I’ve just been worried.”

Their server came along to go over the menu with them. John ordered salads for both of them (despite Sherlock’s scowling) and a couple of glasses of wine, knowing they would both need it.

He noticed Sherlock reaching for his mobile again, and for the sake of not being ignored while eating in a fancy Italian restaurant John cleared his throat to change the subject.

“Laura wants to take Dan shopping,” he commented. “I know it’s not the most exciting thing we could be doing, but I was thinking it would probably be good to follow them around and get ideas
for what Dan might like for Christmas.”

Some sort of realisation flashed in Sherlock’s eyes, and his lover announced:

“Actually, if we’re going shopping I need a new scarf…and you need a new coat.”

John glanced down at his trusty winter coat, the same one he wore ever since joining the army, and frowned.

“What’s wrong with this one?” He asked

His boyfriend offered him a kind smile and explained:

“You’ve lost weight- it’s too big on you.”

His own eyebrows shot up as he pulled the coat away from his body and noticed for the first time that it had gotten quite big on him. He imagined he lost weight without realising it during his recovery, and while he knew that wasn’t a healthy way to lose weight he was flattered Sherlock had noticed.

“Alright then,” John said, “dinner and shopping. That does sound good to me.”

Once he stopped trying to get answers out of Sherlock their meal was actually quite enjoyable. The pasta was incredible, the wine gave him just the buzz he was looking for, and he actually got another smile or two out of Sherlock as they talked mainly about Dan.

As they left the restaurant Sherlock slipped his hand into his and offered him a smile. It was his way of reassuring him that he was alright, and as much as John hated to admit it he knew the best way to get Sherlock to talk was to wait and let him come to him when he was ready.

And so they went shopping.

John almost found himself dreading the shopping trip…he had grown quite attached to his coat. It was the coat he was wearing when he met Sherlock, he wore it during all their cases and running around London. He wore it when they first kissed, and Sherlock took it off him before they first made love.

But as he looked in the mirror of the shop and held out his arms, he realised just how much weight he had lost- and how worn the coat had become. Perhaps it was time for something new. Turning back toward the racks and racks of options, John let out a sigh and began to shift through the clothes.

“How about denim?” He asked, holding up a sharp, dark denim jacket.

Sherlock’s nose turned up; he actually looked like he wanted to gag.

“Do try to not show your age too much,” Sherlock teased.

“So denim is outdated?” John said. “That must why it’s showcased in a designer clothing shop in New York City.”

“It’s not *you,*” Sherlock pointed out, snatching the coat away from him and placing it back on the rack. “Plus it’s not practical. You need something heavy, good for London winters. Something with pockets…”

John pulled out a few longer coats, even a few Belstaff-style ones which Sherlock immediately
grabbed and placed back on the rack.

Then his eyes fell on a simple black leather jacket, and John grinned. It was classy, sharp, and just the right length. When he tried it on Sherlock stepped behind him and placed his hands on his shoulders.

“What do you think?” John asked.

He turned around and was pleased to see the coat seemed to shape his body perfectly.

“I think you haven’t looked at the price tag,” Sherlock teased.

Frowning, John glanced down at the price tag and his eyes went wide.

“Shit,” he muttered. “I’ve never bought a piece of clothing this bloody expensive.”

“I’ll buy it.”

His eyes shot up to Sherlock, and he hesitated before replying. They weren’t exactly in the habit of buying expensive gifts for each other, and he wasn’t sure if he’d be comfortable with it.

“For Christmas, John,” Sherlock explained.

“I can’t,” he admitted, “that’s too much for a gift.”

Sherlock turned him back toward the mirror, and John melted a little bit at just how perfect the two of them looked together right then.

“Okay, I’ll accept your gift,” John grinned, “but we split the cost.”

“Okay.”

He laughed at his lover- of course Sherlock would jump at the chance to save money, even if he had just offered him an extraordinarily expensive gift. Before they left he bought Sherlock a new tie, complaining he only wore the same old ones whenever they needed to dress formally.

That night he and John lay together in their hotel bed, holding each other in the dark. They were exhausted after a day of travelling and walking around Manhattan, but neither was ready to sleep. He traced his fingers around Sherlock’s chest, rubbing gently over his nipples and crawling his way up to his neck. Leaning over, he placed gentle kisses along Sherlock’s jaw.

But his lover seemed anything but aroused.

Sherlock was staring up at the ceiling, lost in some far-away nightmare. Placing his hands on Sherlock’s face, he forced his partner to turn toward him. His boyfriend gazed into his eyes, obviously desperate for support but afraid to open up.

“Come here,” John murmured, holding out his arms. He was pleased when his lover didn’t hesitate to cuddle up against him. The warmth of Sherlock’s body against his was comforting, and John held him tight, hoping to make him feel safe. He planted a kiss to the top of Sherlock’s head and was ready to surrender to a night of just holding each other, but to his surprise his partner began to talk:

“My father’s stalking has gotten worse,” Sherlock admitted softly. “He showed up at Dan’s school
this week…I overheard Laura and Jason talking about it.”

John’s face turned to Sherlock, his mouth agape and eyes wide with horror.

“No!” He breathed.

His boyfriend nodded, confirming the truth.

“She didn’t want to do anything about it,” he went on, “but I didn’t want to risk something happening. We don’t know how dangerous he is or how much of a threat he is. I didn’t want to take any chances.”

Swallowing nervously, he had a bad feeling where this confession was going, and if he was correct it would perfectly explain why the tension between the two Holmes brothers and Sherlock isolating himself.

Eyes closed, Sherlock let out a long breath before continuing.

“I wanted my father to know he couldn’t mess with us. I thought the best way to do that was to see him myself. I went to see him, at his job, with Mycroft.”

John had to close his eyes and bite his lip to keep from saying what was going through his mind: you fucking idiot.

Sherlock had gotten hurt, just like John knew he would if he kept digging into his father’s affairs.

“Clearly he wasn’t taking my sister’s warnings seriously. I thought some sort of…element of surprise was in order, something that would really scare him away. Looking back, I have no idea what I was thinking.”

“You threatened him?” John asked, his eyes searching his lover’s.

“I told him we weren’t threatened by him. I told him if he didn’t stay away he would find out just how strong, just how powerful, we were. I was a complete, utter, twat.”

Gently running his fingers through his lover’s curls, John tried to find a way to respond that didn’t include I told you so. Arguing wasn’t what Sherlock needed right now. His boyfriend was completely shaken, and John had a feeling he wasn’t just bothered by the physical confrontation but simply by meeting his father for the first time.

Turning toward him, Sherlock met his eyes. He looked almost child-like as he whispered:

“You were right: I should have left it alone. He’s a monster. He thought we were…he treated us like we were nothing. We were a joke to him.”

John turned his face so that his cheek nestled against Sherlock’s. As he placed his hand over his lover’s heart it could feel it pounding madly.

“You’re such a good man,” John whispered back. “You were just trying to protect your family.”

Sherlock didn’t seem to hear him.

“He recognised Mycroft,” he confessed. “He hadn’t seen his oldest child since Mycroft was nine years old, but he recognised him right away. He had never even seen a picture of him. Mycroft looks nothing like him. Nothing.”
His lover stopped to breathe. John didn’t dare interrupt him.

“I threatened to turn him over to the police for doing drugs,” Sherlock said. He turned to look John dead in the eye, and a little part of him died seeing his boyfriend so hurt, so disappointed in his own heritage. “I think part of me was hoping he would be someone he just isn’t. He hasn’t changed. He’s a madman.”

At last his lover buried his face into John’s shoulder, and he wrapped his arms around his boyfriend’s lean body. He just wasn’t sure what to say. Usually John was always so good at this, but he felt like there wasn’t anything he could say that would make his partner feel better. He glanced over to the curtains drawn over their balcony window, thinking of the sheer amount of people out and about on the streets below, and he had an idea.

“Come here,” John said.

He grabbed their dressing gowns as he slipped out of bed and led a sleepy, reluctant, Sherlock out into the cool night air.

“It’s freezing out here,” Sherlock mumbled, wrapping his arms around himself.

John ignored his complaints as he pulled him close. Together they both sighed and let their eyes roam the skyscrapers that towered above them. Lights twinkled from all around them. On the streets below cabbies honked at other cabbies and tourists rushed across the street.

“It’s all a bit mad, isn’t?” Sherlock whispered.

John had to smirk. Right now in this very city people were still lined up down the block to get into some of the best restaurants and bars in the country- in the world, even. Broadway shows were still going strong, backed by some of the hardest working and most dedicated actors and dancers out there. Painters were working on masterpieces, and street performers were dreaming impossible dreams.

“If by a bit mad you mean completely brilliant then yes,” John teased.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock leaned against him, his hair blowing gently in the wind.

“I considered going to school here,” John confessed.

He hadn’t thought about the brief time in his life where he considered running away to America in decades, but being in the very city he once dreamed of living made it all rush back to him.

“Really?” Sherlock asked, eyebrows shooting up.

“Yup,” he replied. “I applied for NYU. Didn’t get in though.”

“I’m glad,” Sherlock announced. He grabbed John’s hand and brushed his lips across his knuckles. “You would have hated it here.”

“Oh, would I have?” He laughed.

“Yes!” His boyfriend insisted. “You complain if the tube gets busy at rush hour. If pizza delivery takes over twenty minutes you start getting anxious. Rent is even more ridiculous here than in London. You would miss being so closely connected with the rest of Europe- and not to mention you would miss football. But most importantly, you would have never met me.”
He looked up at his lover, flattered that he would say something so romantic.

“You really don’t think so?” John asked.

“Please,” Sherlock snorted. “The chances of us both meeting each other here in New York in another life? Next to nothing.”

“What if you still met Laura in this other life?” John pointed out. “And what if you still came to visit her in New York? What if you decided to go to that same clothing shop to buy a scarf the same time I decided to buy a coat?”

Shaking his head, his boyfriend pointed out:

“But you wouldn’t have been shopping for a coat. You didn’t even realise you needed one.”

“Then we could have met in a pub then. Or a club. You could have been dancing…our eyes would have met…”

“You would have laughed at me because I can’t dance…”

“Perhaps,” John teased. He swirled around so that they were face to face. Their eyes met, both twinkling. Their hands rested in each other’s palms. “Perhaps I would have asked you for a drink.”

A wicked grin crossed Sherlock’s face.

“And you would have insisted you were not gay.”

“Perhaps I would have made an exception.”

Leaning forward, John planted a soft kiss on Sherlock’s lips and placed his hands at his boyfriend’s sides. He let out a moan as Sherlock’s lips danced with his. His heart raced as Sherlock’s lips parted, allowing him room for his tongue to slip inside his mouth and explore. It was intimate, it was surreal, making out there on a balcony in the middle of New York City. They may have been surrounded by millions of people, but at that moment John felt like they were completely alone.

“I love you,” he whispered when they broke apart. He looked up to meet Sherlock’s eyes. “You’re amazing. Life without you just wouldn’t be right.”

Sherlock reached up and ran a hand over his head and rested around his neck.

“Life without you would be incredibly dull,” Sherlock breathed.

A shiver went down his spine at the power of his lover’s words. His body shook slightly in the cold, and his breath danced in the air as he said:

“Let’s go back to bed, yeah? It’s freezing out here.”

With a laugh, Sherlock nodded in agreement and followed him back into the room.

Chapter End Notes

More family togetherness next chapter. There was originally some this chapter, but it didn't seem to fit in! More in New York next...and a new case soon! Based off of one
of my favorites! Thanks for reading...seeing all of your feedback and support REALLY means a lot! I know I've completely jumped the shark here, but it's all in good fun!
New York, New York Part II

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was freezing.

The wind swept off the ocean and wrapped around him relentlessly. Above them muggy, grey skies swirled with the threat of an oncoming storm- and yet tickets for the day’s ground tour of the Statue of Liberty had still sold out. All around him families were just taking pictures, seemingly ignorant of the true historical importance of where they were.

“Uncle Sirlock, Uncle Sirlock!” Dan cried, tugging at his coat.

Sherlock feigned a smile as he stared down at his nephew, who held his mum’s mobile in his hand.

“Can you take a picture with me?!” Dan pleaded.

He closed his eyes briefly, realising his own family was part of the tourists who seemed to only care about getting the right camera angle.

“Of course,” Sherlock said anyway.

He snapped a few photos of them in front of the Statue as well as a few beside the ocean. Dan jumped up in down in excitement as Sherlock showed them to him, but he decided his nephew shouldn’t only be excited about the scenery.

“Hey Dan,” Sherlock said, kneeling down to his level and placing a hand on his arm. “Do you know what this statue is?”

“It’s the Statue of Liberty!” Dan announced proudly.

“Do you know what it stands for?”

His nephew stared at him blankly, looking disappointed that he didn’t know.

“It was a gift to the United States from France,” Sherlock explained.

“A gift? Are they friends?” Dan asked, confused.

Sherlock smirked.

“Why don’t you ask Uncle Myc?”

With a big grin, Dan turned and ran to his other uncle, who was standing away from the crowd, gazing out to sea.

“Uncle Myc, Uncle Myc!” Dan exclaimed.

Sherlock grinned, knowing Dan had no idea how long of a history lesson he was about to receive. His brother’s eyes flashed over for a split second; they seemed so…empty. He knew Mycroft hated him for asking him to go meet their father. Even though his brother was good at pretending he was also good at avoiding, and the two of them had hardly spoken since arriving back in Schenectady.
“Are you even having a little fun?” Laura’s voice suddenly asked behind him.

He spun around, trying to not look so surprised as he found her smiling at him.

“Not particularly,” he admitted.

“You’re not really a museum and historical sites kind of person, are you?” His sister teased.

He offered her a small smile.

“I don’t mind them,” he said. His eyes flashed around at all the tourists texting, putting posts on social media, and taking pictures of themselves. “As long as they aren’t full of tourists.”

With a laugh, Laura nodded.

“I can’t blame you- although to be fair we are tourists too,” she said. Her eyes trailed the crowd and landed on their older brother, who was clearly boring Dan to death with a history lesson. “I think Mycroft’s in his element, though.”

“No,” he replied, shaking his head. “He just likes showing off.”

Just then John came out of the museum along with Jason and Greg; they were giggling like schoolboys who had been exchanging inside jokes during a miserable school trip.

“Hey love,” John greeted, wrapping an arm around his waist. Sherlock scowled; usually that kind of greeting meant he had just been gossiped about.

“So…” Jason began carefully, nervously glancing toward Laura like he knew she wouldn’t approve of what he was about to say. “I was thinking of taking Greg, John, and Dan over to Yankee Stadium. No kid from New York should grow up without seeing it!”

“You can come along, if you’d like,” John offered to him. He had this blank stare and a nervous twitch like he also knew his partner would disapprove.

But honestly, Sherlock was clueless. He simply blinked, hoping John would fill him in on what they were talking about.

“You know…Yankee Stadium” Jason said when he saw how confused he was. “It’s like the most famous baseball stadium ever. You do know what baseball is…right?”

Sherlock blushed a little: usually he didn’t get embarrassed about his lack of pop culture and sports knowledge, but he didn’t like being this clueless in front of his family.

“I don’t think he knows about cricket, let alone baseball,” John confessed, throwing him a sympathetic smile.

Clearing her throat, Laura stepped in to save him.

“Sure, you guys go,” she said. “I’m sure Dan will love it. We’ll find something to do.”

As they stepped back onto New York concrete and parted ways with all the other tourists, Sherlock let out a sigh of relief. He hoped Laura’s plans for him and Mycroft involved something a little more laid back, a little more every day. A little more…local.
Mycroft, on the other hand, looked so out of it that he imagined his brother would be just as content with spending the rest of the day in the hotel.

It turned out Laura’s plans for them didn’t involve Manhattan at all. They took the tube out to Queens (Mycroft did an excellent job at hiding how disgusted he was of public transportation), and when they got off Laura hailed a cab.

“Sorry,” she offered to Mycroft. “I know you hate the subway. Trust me though, it’s silly how expensive it is to take a cab from Manhattan to Queens - not to mention the traffic is horrible. This way is much more efficient.”

Mycroft didn’t look convinced, but again he didn’t argue as the cab led them through an area of rough-looking flats and shops with bars on the windows. While he wasn’t bothered by shady neighborhoods, his brother shifted in his seat, uncomfortable. But Laura, Laura seemed right at home. Her eyes gazed out the window, filled with a sense of longing. A half-smile rested on her lips. She looked more relaxed than he had seen her in ages, and her behaviour made him even more anxious to know why they were in Queens.

At last the cabbie let them off at a rather dreadful flat building. With its mud-brown exterior, its barred-windows, its cracked walkways and overgrown gardens the building looked as though it was built in the sixties and not touched since.

“This is where I used to live, after I moved away from home,” Laura announced.

She pointed up to a third-story flat. Clothing hung over the balcony rails to dry. Bars were on the windows. In the distance ambulance sirens wailed.

“It was all I could afford,” she sighed. “Even then I still struggled to make ends meet. I put most of my expenses on credit cards and had to call companies begging for an extension on utility payments. It was horrible. But it’s also where I raised Dan until I moved in with Jason.”

A pit fell in his stomach. Beside him Mycroft looked away, clearly forcing himself to not say anything.

“It’s okay, I know the place looks awful,” a sad smile fell across her face, “and it was pretty awful. My neighbours were a bit…sketchy, but we all just stayed out of each other’s way. I have so many memories of this place…bringing Dan home for the first time, seeing him roll over for the first time. Watching him crawl, hearing him speak. I’m proud of what I accomplished while living here. I needed to come back here to see how far I’ve come.”

She wrapped her arm around her waist and rubbed her hand over her abdomen. Sherlock placed an arm around his sister and let her rest her head on his shoulder.

“I wish we had known about you then,” Mycroft stated softly. “We would have helped.”

“Yes,” Sherlock agreed, his voice a mere whisper.

“It’s okay,” she shrugged. “All of those experiences made me stronger. All of those experiences make me even more grateful for the life I have now.”

That he could understand. He had lived in his fair share of sketchy flats, with his fair share of odd neighbours and bars on the windows. There were more years of his life when he hardly had any money at all than years when he felt financially secure. And all of that made him love the life he had with John even more.
“Sorry to bring the mood down,” she wiped at a tear that escaped from her eye.

“No need to apologise,” Mycroft offered, squeezing her shoulder.

“I really just wanted you to see the New York City beyond Manhattan,” she explained, “and honestly I wanted to come back to Queens one more time before I moved.”

He had to admire his sister: he hadn’t been able to bring himself to visit the old haunts he shared with Luke. Even being back in his childhood home took some getting used to when he and his brother had started talking again. Yet with Laura, as tough of times that she went through she seemed to know how much she would miss this place when she moved across the pond.

“We don’t have to hang around right here,” she said. She took one last look up at her old flat, sighed, and smiled. “Let’s go for a walk.”

She took off before waiting for them to agree to go. Laura held her head up as she walked, confident and not intimidated by her surroundings. The wind swept wildly around them, but Laura wasn’t bothered.

“Forgive me for being so blunt,” Mycroft said, “but this area seems a bit…dangerous.”

Laura let out a laugh.

“It’s not the best,” she admitted. “You probably shouldn’t wander around here after dark, but it’s really no more or less safe than anywhere else in New York City. There are nice areas of Queens too. There’s kind of a misconception about this area when it comes to safety, and it scares some people away, but there’s some really great things about this neighbourhood. Like the food. Are you guys hungry?”

Sherlock’s stomach growled in response. She led them down a few blocks of homes and small businesses before they reached a street filled with restaurants, shops, banks, and fast food.

“How does Indian sound?” She asked. They just happened to be passing an Indian restaurant as she asked, and Sherlock had a feeling she had been purposefully leading them here. “This place is amazing.

The restaurant was dark and small, with only a dozen tables. Only a couple of them had patrons. He wasn’t too convinced it was legit yet- and he knew Mycroft wasn’t- but still he smiled and decided to trust her. “I used to come here all the time since it was so close. I actually really miss it; I haven’t found anything like it in Schenectady. This place is owned by the sweetest Indian family…”

Suddenly her face lit up, and she was grinning like an idiot as a waiter approached them.

“Naveen!” She greeted; he grinned at her and waltzed over so he could place a hand on her shoulders.

“Laura!” He replied. “It’s been…years. I had hoped you were joking about moving.”

“No, I really had to go,” she said. Sorrow fell across her face, and Sherlock had the feeling she was holding herself back from telling her old acquaintance more. “I’ve really missed your food, so I had to bring my family here. They’re visiting from London.”

“Family?” Naveen asked, throwing Sherlock and Mycroft a confused, but welcoming, smile. “Well I hope you will find our cooking satisfactory. Let me know when you are ready to order.”
“Thank you,” his sister offered.

She was still smiling as he walked away, and she shook her head as though trying to get her thoughts out of the past.

“Dan doesn’t like Indian food,” she confessed. “I think it’s too spicy, for him so we never eat it. Thanks for indulging with me.”

Sherlock’s stomach growled again. Even if he didn’t have high expectations, some chicken tikka masala sounded excellent right now.

“I want to thank you guys,” Laura said after a few moments of silence. “I know this whole trip has been way out of your comfort zone, especially for you, Mycroft.”

She smirked and even Sherlock had to laugh. It was true- he could have fun when he wanted. He could appreciate culture when he wanted to. But Mycroft…the most social his brother liked to get was seeing a symphony in a room full of quiet strangers. This was, after all, the same man who liked to frequent a club where no talking was an actual enforced rule.

“It’s good to spread your wings every now and then,” their brother commented.

“When was the last time you went on a holiday for fun?” Laura challenged. “A holiday that didn’t evolve spending most of your time reading a book in a fancy hotel room?”

His brother blushed ever so slightly and seemed to be grateful when their food arrived.

“You know Mycroft, Greg was telling me how good it was to see you come out of your shell a bit more.”

“It’s been good for me, I suppose,” Mycroft replied, though he didn’t sound entirely convinced. “I fear I hold Gregory back sometimes. It’s nice to see him relax and have some fun.”

Sherlock snorted.

“I can’t believe you just said the word ‘fun’,” he teased.

The comment earned him a glare from his brother, he grinned in return, and for a moment things felt normal between them.

“I just can’t stop thinking about how crazy life is about to get,” Laura sighed. “To be honest I haven’t felt relaxed at all this entire holiday.”

“Well it’s not too much a holiday for you,” Mycroft pointed out. “I know that must be very stressful.”

Their sister smiled and replied:

“That’s why it was nice to get away to the city this weekend,” she admitted, “but I still can’t relax. I feel sick all the time…and frankly it pisses me off that I can’t drink.”

“I can’t even imagine,” Mycroft muttered.

Sherlock tried to picture his brother going through the pain, sickness, fear, pressure, and stress of pregnancy…and found himself laughing out loud.

“What?” His brother demanded, as though he knew he was being made fun of in Sherlock’s head.
For a few moments he focused on eating, and he was surprised to find that the food was actually pretty flavourful and tasty. When they left the restaurant Laura took them straight back to the tube; she seemed to have lost interest in visiting any other haunts. She hadn’t told her friend the waiter that she was moving to London, and Sherlock was becoming more and more convinced that his sister was playing on running away from New York forever.

It was still early when they got back to the hotel, but Sherlock was surprised how exhausted travelling made him. The hotel lobby was quiet at half seven in the evening; all of its patrons would still be out for hours. Laura announced that she was quite tired and wanted a nap, while Mycroft settled into one of the armchairs with a newspaper and Sherlock wondered over to the bar.

Wine.

Wine sounded good right now.

So he ordered a glass of cabernet sauvignon and stared at it.

Inside he felt like a confused teenager. He wasn’t quite sure what was wrong with him. He wasn’t quite sure why he wasn’t having fun. He just felt so…down. Not only did he still feel guilty about taking Mycroft to meet their father he somehow felt like he was ruining everyone else’s holiday. Why hadn’t he wanted to go to that baseball stadium with John? Why wasn’t he more excited to be at the Statue of Liberty with Dan?

*What is wrong with me?* He thought to himself.

At that moment the hotel lobby door opened and the other half of their family bursts into the room. Relief flooded through him when he saw John grinning ear to ear as he approached him.

“How was it?” Sherlock asked.

“Amazing!” John exclaimed. The consulting detective raised an eyebrow. “No, really! It really was very cool. And Dan loved it.”

He waved toward the boy that was thrown over his father’s shoulders, asleep and sporting a new baseball cap on his head.

“It wore him out though. He slept the entire cab ride back.”

A smile fell across the side of his face as he met eyes with Jason, who looked quite tired himself.

“Laura’s napping,” he explained.

“Thanks,” Jason replied. “I think I’m going to try to put him down for an early bedtime, so I’m sure as soon as his head hits the pillow he’ll be wide awake.”

As soon as Jason was gone John stole a kiss to Sherlock’s cheek. The gesture him smile, and as he met his lover’s eyes he finally felt somewhat relaxed. Their hands fell together and their eyes met.

“You don’t even like baseball,” Sherlock teased. “You loathe it, in fact. It’s the one sport you and I both agree is dull.”

“Well maybe I was wrong,” John said, shrugging innocently. “You know, I actually really enjoyed it. Jason knew someone and was able to get us a private tour- I can’t even begin to imagine how expensive that would be normally. And Dan really did love it. The kid looked like he was on top of the world up in those stands. We even got to go out onto the field. I’ve got to say it was really
neat.”
That was what he loved about John: even if his boyfriend had no interest in something at all he would still give it a try.

“I’m glad you went,” Sherlock said.

They shared a kiss, and John ran a hand through his curls.

“I’m pretty exhausted,” John admitted. “I think I’m going to go work on the book for a while. The final draft is due this week, you know.”

Actually, he didn’t know. His eyes widened in surprise- if John had told him he must have been completely tuned out.

“Yeah…yeah…” he stuttered, attempting to not sound completely clueless.

John grinned at him.

“Enjoy your drink.”

It was Greg who joined him at the bar in the end. A smile actually peered at the corner of Sherlock’s lips: he could always trust the copper to join him for a drink whenever he needed to drown his sorrows in a glass.

“Cheers,” Greg said as he raised his shot of whiskey before taking it.

Sherlock chuckled.

“Was the tour that bad?” He asked.

“Nah,” Greg replied. His eyes widened for a moment before he shook his head, trying to adjust to the strength of his drink. “It was cool, I suppose, if you’re into baseball and all that. Jason was totally freaked out by being there. I think Dan was just excited to be at a baseball stadium. We could have taken him to some little league field by a church and he would have been just as thrilled.”

Plus he just likes being around his dad, Sherlock thought.

It was a theory he kept to himself and didn’t dare share, but he couldn’t help but to think of it. Jason was a clearly over-worked; he wasn’t sure if his sister’s husband was just a workaholic or was just terrified of saying no to his boss and risking his job, but he worked hours most people would scoff at. Sherlock could tell whenever how much Jason missed Dan by the way he came home and hugged him, holding him close for as long as possible. And he could see by the way Dan’s eyes lit up how much he missed his dad during the day. He was certain Jason would do anything to spend the day with his son, and Dan would do anything to spend the day with his dad.

“This holiday is exhausting, isn’t it?” Greg asked. “I actually texted Donovan this morning just to make sure they haven’t replaced me while I was gone.”

With a laugh, Sherlock asked:

“How are they managing things without us?”

“Us?” Greg grinned. He shook his head and answered: “Things are fine. Surprisingly quiet, actually. Donovan says it’s as though all the criminals in London are waiting for you to return
before they come out.”

“Lovely,” he said, rolling his eyes.

Greg ordered a glass of Riesling, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to question his choice.

“Aren’t you not supposed to mix types alcohol or something?” He pointed out.

Shrugging, the DCI responded:

“The rules can be bent while on holiday.”

His friend glanced back to his brother, who still had his head buried in the newspaper.

“Laura texted me and told me Mycroft actually went on the tube,” Greg said with a chuckle.

“Please tell me you took pictures.”

Proudly, Sherlock whipped out his mobile and showed off the pictures of the miserable-looking Mycroft hanging onto the rails of the tube as they road into Queens.

“Now that is priceless!” Greg said. “Send those to me.”

“Will do.”

Pausing for a moment, Greg stole a glance to him before daring to ask:

“Has he told you anything about potential job offers?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“He worries about it more than he lets on,” Greg said. “To him the clock is ticking…every day he doesn’t work is a day he’s out of the loop. It’s another day he’s forgotten about.”

He could understand that- Sherlock felt the same way whenever he and John went through a dry period of no cases. It wasn’t that he worried about his reputation, he worried about his mind. He would fight for ways to keep his mind occupied, to keep his deduction skills sharp, and he knew his brother was the same when it came to his negotiating skills.

“Sherlock…” Greg started; there was obviously more he meant to talk to him about than just his brother’s job. “I know you two went to see your father.”

Letting out a long breath, Sherlock stayed still, quiet, for a moment as he tried to decide how to react. He hadn’t wanted everyone knowing about this. Even after he initially told John they hadn’t talked about it again. He had just hoped that maybe he could just…get over it. Maybe this could all go away.

“He told you?” He finally said quietly.

“Did you tell John?” Greg challenged.

Sherlock sighed; his friend was right. Sometimes he still forgot how close his brother and Greg must be. He knew the bond between them was just as strong, just as pure as the bond between him and John.

“He’s not upset with you,” Greg offered. “He’s just going through a lot.”
“I know,” Sherlock whispered. He took another sip of wine. “Because of me.”

“No,” Greg protested, placing a hand on his arm. Their eyes met, and he appreciated how honest his friend seemed to be. But he still didn’t believe him. “Myc’s grown so much over the past few years. When he found out about the stalking he was furious: you wouldn’t believe the level of surveillance he put on your family and your father to make sure he stayed away. Now that he’s out of his job he can’t have that kind of power anymore and he’s really struggling with that. And I think all of that’s been even harder to deal with while on holiday.”

Sherlock stole another glance over to his brother and realised he was still on the same page of the newspaper.

“He loves you,” Greg said softly. “He loves you and Laura both, and he wants to protect you both. Trust me I think in his mind he wanted to go after your father too when he heard how bad the stalking had gotten.”

“But he knew better,” Sherlock mumbled.

His friend planted a supportive hand on his shoulder.

“You’re safe, and that’s all that matters,” Greg said. “Laura and Dan are safe too.”

He was still unconvinced. Truthfully he didn't feel like his sister and Dan would truly be safe from his father's stalking until they were back in London. Their father would have no idea where she would live, where Dan would go to school, or...

And suddenly he understood why it seemed like his sister was running away. She wouldn't feel safe until she was an ocean away from her father.

And suddenly, he didn't blame her. He hated it, but he didn't blame her.

“I’m told tomorrow is Central Park day,” Greg said before finishing his drink. “Gotta admit, it's what I’ve been looking forward to the most. Should be good.”

He sat his drink on the bar and knocked on it with his knuckles.

“I better go make sure Mycroft isn’t traumatized or something after riding the tube,” he announced.

Sherlock managed a weak chuckle as his friend walked away. He finished his drink and decided he needed some air so he wandered out to the street. It was dark now, and the street seemed to take on a different demeanor at night. There were groups of girls stumbling down the sidewalk wearing high heels and fur coats that engulfed their bodies. Cab after cab stopped at the corner to let people off to go to clubs and restaurants. And across the street there was an alleyway, where he could just make out the outline of someone curled up near a dumpster, sleeping. Someone played guitar just down the block while they sang off-key. He could smell seafood from the restaurant next door.

His mobile buzzed, it was a text from John:

*Are you okay?*

Car horns went off around him like gunshots and he jumped. His hands shook as he replied:

*Yeah. Coming up now.*

Throwing a final glance around the road Sherlock silently bid the city a goodnight before he
grabbed the door handle once again and disappeared back into the hotel.

Chapter End Notes

At first I was nervous about writing all of this touristy stuff, but then I thought hey, if Mycroft seeing Les Mis works in the show then why not???

Disclaimer: I absolutely positively LOVE baseball with all my heart. Only Sherlock thinks it's dull, not me!

I'd love to know your thoughts on this New York trip! There's still more fun to come...and a case! Thanks so much for reading, for all of your kudos and feedback!
Reconnecting

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

John’s eyes batted open to find his lover’s body pressed up against his. Sunlight beamed in through the closed curtains, and he breathed in the few moments of peace and quiet they had before they were once again consumed by the chaos and noise of New York City. He smiled as he wrapped his arms around Sherlock’s body, and when he felt Sherlock stir awake he gently rocked against him.

“Good morning,” John murmured against his boyfriend’s neck.

“Morning,” came the muffled reply.

“You feel warm,” he sighed. He snaked his hand around his lover’s waist and pressed against his pyjama bottoms, where Sherlock’s cock was already half-hard.

“I had a very good dream,” Sherlock said, a wicked grin spreading across his face. “For once.”

He laughed at the thought of his boyfriend, former Mr ‘Married to My Work’, having a wet dream. Gently, he pressed against Sherlock once again.

“And what were we doing in this very good dream?” He asked.

With one hand he rubbed the growing bulge beneath Sherlock’s pyjamas while the other slipped his own boxers down his hips. His lips graced Sherlock’s neck, sucking at a particularly sensitive spot. Sherlock groaned and John teased him even more by brushing lips against his ear next. His tongue traced back down his jaw, drawing in the salty taste of his lover’s skin.

“You were…” Sherlock swallowed nervously and blushed. Clearly the dream was a bit dirtier than Sherlock felt comfortable talking about out loud, and if there was one thing he loved it was seeing his lover squirm. “You were…in me.”

His lover practically squeaked out the two words, and John had to grin at how sheepish Sherlock was being about talking about sex. Yet when they actually fucked, he had no problem with it at all.

“We haven’t done that in a while,” John murmured as he traced his finger along his boyfriend’s spine. He then ran his fingers through Sherlock’s curls as he considered the state of his leg: he really didn’t feel too much pain when he lay on his side like this. It had been a while, and he missed having sex like that too. “We could do that now.”

Sherlock looked back at him, his eyes full of concern.

“You shouldn’t push yourself,” his lover said quietly. “I’m okay with waiting however long you need, John, really.”

“And I think I’m ready,” John replied as he placed a kiss to Sherlock’s neck. “We’ll go slow. We can always stop if it gets to be too much, but I want to do this, Sherlock. I want you.”

“And I want you.”

His boyfriend’s whispered words sent a shiver down his spine. They kissed, slow and sensual, while John reached over for the bag on the bedside table that contained the lube.
“Let’s see if I remember how to do this,” John teased as he poured some on his fingers and ran one of them down the crack of Sherlock’s arse. “God I’ve missed this.”

He pressed more kisses to Sherlock’s neck and back as he carefully pressed the first finger in. He tried to keep in mind that it had been awhile since Sherlock had done this too, and he also needed to adjust.

“Fuck!” Sherlock hissed as John pressed in further.

“You okay?” John asked softly.

Sherlock nodded and closed his eyes tightly as John pressed in with two fingers this time. He scissored his fingers and Sherlock moaned.

“Does that feel good?” He whispered, his voice rough and sinful.

His lover nodded again.

“God,” Sherlock groaned as he fingered him faster, deeper.

“Come here,” John muttered. He pulled Sherlock closer. Momentarily his weight shifted to his bad leg and he winced. He buried his head against his lover’s back and bit his lip to hide the pain. As the pain subsided his hand crept around to Sherlock’s chest. He rolled his fingers over his boyfriend’s nipple.

“John,” Sherlock whispered.

He tried to line himself up with Sherlock but the angle was weird. John had to shift his weight to get the angle right and pull Sherlock closer to him.

“This might be a bit awkward,” he confessed.

“I just want you,” his lover breathed.

Warmth flooded his body, and John’s breathing quickened as he carefully pushed in.

“Oh fuck,” John hissed. Closing his eyes, he pressed his forehead again against Sherlock’s back and held onto him tightly as he adjusted. “Christ, you’re tight.”

“It’s been awhile,” Sherlock pointed out.

He was breathing hard as well, and for a long moment only the sounds of their panting filled the room.


Taking in a deep breath, John pushed in further and they both groaned as he slid in all the way.

“Shit,” he whispered as he pushed his cock in and out. “Fuck, Sherlock. I’ve missed this.”

“Yeah.”

“God.”

Sherlock reached down for his own cock and John batted his hand away. Slowly he ran his hand down the length of his shaft and Sherlock bit his lip to keep from crying out.
“That’s it, love,” John whispered. “How does it feel?”

“Good,” Sherlock gasped. “God John!”

“Fuck.”

He ran a finger over the head, which was already leaking as body of their bodies rocked together. Dipping down, his hand brushed over Sherlock’s balls and he squeezed them, just enough to make his lover groan. He could already feel his own release rushing to life. The warmth of Sherlock’s skin against his, the intimacy of being inside him, their panting breaths, made him feel closer to his lover than he had in weeks.

John came all too soon with a soft cry. His boyfriend gasped as his cum filled him, and John’s hips snapped forward rapidly, encouraging Sherlock to join him.

“Come on love,” John breathed. “Come on, Sherlock.”

With a moan his boyfriend came all over his hand, and they both gasped for air as they came back down to earth.

“Jesus,” John whispered as he slowly pulled himself out. Sherlock groaned again as his cock slipped out of him and a small string of cum followed. He couldn’t help but to laugh. “We are definitely leaving the housekeepers a nice tip.”

His lover laughed with him as they both rolled over to their backs. He grinned at the sight of Sherlock’s eyes lit up ecstasy. Reaching over, John ran his fingers through Sherlock’s now-sweaty curls. Their bodies were glazed with a red glow, their chests still heaved as they gulped in air.

“I love you,” Sherlock said. “I love you so much.”

“I love you,” John replied softly.

They shared a kiss, Sherlock’s hand landed against his cheek and John shuddered.

“You feel so good,” John whispered as he ran a finger down Sherlock’s cheek.

“Mmm your cock felt so good,” Sherlock teased.

Letting out a laugh, John folded his hands behind his head and gazed up at the ceiling. His lover leaned over to plant kisses up and down his stomach; John rested a hand on his back as he did.

“We should really shower,” John pointed out, reluctantly as his eyes noticed the clock on the bedside table. “It’s already half seven.”

“Don’t wanna,” Sherlock whined. He threw himself back against the pillows and turned to John with a goofy grin on his face. His lover’s hand fell against his cheek again. “I want to stay in bed with you.”

He couldn’t help but to smile, flattered, and he found himself relieved at how much Sherlock was enjoying being so close, so intimate with him. It was an irrational fear, he realised, but part of him had been worried Sherlock was becoming so withdrawn that he wouldn’t want to be with him like this anytime soon.

“That’s why we’re coming back into the city on our own,” John commented.

They shared a round of gentle kisses before John finally sighed and carefully threw his legs over
the bed.

“John,” Sherlock announced. He turned back toward him and found a soft smile planted across Sherlock’s face. “I can’t wait.”

John reached out, grabbed his hand, and squeezed it.

“Same here,” he promised.

Chapter End Notes

I decided a nice, smutty, interlude was in order so these boys can reconnect! They do deserve some intimacy! Thanks for reading! I hope you are enjoying their adventures in America :)


“It’s beautiful isn’t it?” John asked, his palms- ever so slightly sweaty- gripping Sherlock’s hand. His eyes turned to him, twinkling in the dark. “Me, you, and the night sky.”

Sherlock stared at him, mouth agape for a moment before he finally hissed:

“You’re kidding me, right?”

His boyfriend burst out laughing, which earned them a nasty glare Mycroft, who sat next to them in the planetarium. The digital representation of the universe actually wasn’t that bad. The quality was surprisingly engaging and the information wasn’t entirely useless. He retained it for all those millions of questions Dan kept asking him about the universe that he did not know the answers to.

“That was awesome!” Dan exclaimed when they filed out of the theatre ten minutes later. His dad had to chase after him as he ran to stand beneath the giant models of planets hanging from the ceiling. “I wanna go to space!”

He couldn’t help but to grin. Rarely did he miss being that young, but he remembered the days when he truly believed he could be a pirate one day.

“You know, I know someone who’s been to space,” Mycroft bragged.

“Really?”

“Yes, really!” His brother insisted. “I met him at a funding event for a space program.”

There was a slight blush to his brother’s cheeks, Greg chuckled, and Sherlock could only hope there wasn’t more to this story.

But he decided he probably didn’t want to know.

“I could get lost in this museum for days,” Laura sighed as she watched her husband chase around her son.

“What’s your favourite part?” Mycroft asked.

“The dinosaurs,” she replied without hesitation and with a big grin on her face. All four men stared at her, surprised that’s what she would be so interested in. “What, I’ve always loved dinosaurs! Who doesn’t love dinosaurs?”

It turned out Dan shared his mother’s love of dinosaurs. When they reached the top floor of the museum the almost-five year old kid’s jaw dropped at the skeletons.

“Is that a real t-rex?!” Dan exclaimed as he tried to take off running.

Jason grabbed his arm to stop him.

“No running!” Jason scolded.
“No running,” Dan repeated before he took off again.

His father rolled his eyes.

“As long as he doesn’t break anything,” Jason muttered.

The truth was, Sherlock agreed with his sister’s view of the museum: one really could be locked in here for days and never run out of things to do. In the end though he was happy to step outside into Central Park and breathe in fresh air. He noticed his boyfriend was limping rather badly, even with help of his cane, and placed a comforting hand on his shoulder.

“Alright?” Sherlock asked.

John nodded.

“Yeah, fine,” he muttered, clearly lying.

“It’s a lot of walking,” Sherlock pointed out. “We can rest if you’d like.”

The corners of his lover’s lips turned up into a smirk and he replied:

“That’s not why I’m limping.”

Sherlock let out a laugh and quickly covered his mouth with the back of the hand, hoping no one was overhearing them. John winked. A bright smile sat on his partner’s face, and Sherlock’s heart fluttered at how handsome his boyfriend looked at that moment. Sunlight bounced off his blonde hair, his eyes twinkled, and even with his limp there was just this energy about him that made it obvious how much John was enjoying life.

“Can we play soccer now?” Dan begged his parents from behind them. He had begged his parents to let him take his beloved soccer ball with him to NYC, and Jason had been nice enough to lug it around all day in his backpack so they could play in Central Park.

“Okay,” Laura finally grinned. “Clearly you have way too much energy built up in you that you need to get out.”

They were able to find a big enough spot in an open area in the park, and Dan grinned ear to ear as his dad rolled the soccer ball on the ground toward him.

“Can you play with me Uncle Greg?” Dan asked, batting puppy-dog eyes at him.

“Oh alright,” Greg said, pretending like it was a tough decision.

Truthfully Sherlock felt like Greg was just happy to finally have someone to play football with on a regular basis- even if that someone was four. John took a seat on the ground nearby with Mycroft, and Sherlock was about to join him when suddenly the football came flying his way thanks to Greg’s poorly-aimed kicked. He managed to duck his head and let it bounce off his forehead just in time, and although his head pulsed with pain and his ears began ringing, it didn’t take him long to realise everyone was staring at him.

“What?” He demanded.

“That was awesome!” Dan exclaimed, punching his fist into the air.

“Christ Sherlock, that was brilliant!” John chimed in. “You really never played football as a kid?”
Sherlock’s eyes travelled over to Mycroft, who simply shrugged. His brother was perhaps the only one who didn’t seem ridiculously impressed with…whatever it was he just did.

“That was a head-butt, mate,” Greg explained as he walked over him to take the ball back. He slapped a hand down on Sherlock’s shoulder. “Most players train for years to do that as smoothly as you just did!”

The consulting detective just blinked.

“I have no idea what I just did,” he admitted.

Greg laughed.

“Don’t worry about it,” he replied, “just know that it was brilliant.”

He took a seat on the grass beside his boyfriend, who kept grinning at him even though Sherlock remained clueless.

“No, no, don’t sit,” Greg said, “I want to see if we can tap into more of your natural footballer skills.”

“I don’t have natural footballer skills,” Sherlock mumbled.

Mycroft smirked at the comment.

“Come on,” Greg insisted, holding out his hand. “Don’t be so posh about it. You have a real football-loving family here, and it’s time you learned the game.”

With a sigh, Sherlock thought about how much Dan would be playing the sport in London and how he didn’t want to miss out every time his nephew asked if he could play with him. He took Greg’s hand, shed the coat he was wearing, rolled up his sleeves, and gave in. He was surprise when Greg continued holding his hand out after he stood up.

“Oi! You too, Mycroft!” Greg announced. Both Holmes brothers reluctantly joined him, and Greg threw the ball down on the ground. “First rule of the game: no hands, unless you’re the goalkeeper.”

“I know that much,” Sherlock complained.

His friend simply rolled his eyes.

“I’m going to stand over here,” Greg said, kicking the ball between his feet as he walked a good distance away from him. He stood beside Dan, who looked utterly amused at his uncles learning his favourite sport. “Now the best way to start out playing football is to just ease into it. Feel comfortable with the ball.”

“You aren’t training us to win the bloody World Cup,” Mycroft muttered underneath his breath.

This time Sherlock smirked. Their eyes met, and for at least one moment it felt like they were connecting again. Ignoring his partner’s jokes, Greg kicked the ball over to Sherlock first. The ball moved so slowly Sherlock found it ridiculously easy to kick it back over toward Greg without any trouble.

And then Greg kicked the ball over to Mycroft…who missed it completely and let it roll behind him. His older brother glared, as though some mystical force in the universe was playing tricks on
“Oh come on!” Greg laughed. “You’re not even trying.”

“No, because this is silly,” Mycroft muttered.

“Kick it back over to me,” Greg instructed.

With a scowl Mycroft kicked his foot out- and completely missed the ball. Sherlock threw his hand over his mouth to stifle a laugh as his brother stomped at the ground.

“Gregory!” Mycroft whined. “This is just…it’s not for me.”

“Football can be for anyone,” Greg argued as he walked toward his fiancé. He placed a hand on Mycroft’s shoulder and looked him in the eye. “You’re just not as hand-eye coordinated as some are.”

“Not hand-eye coordinated?!” Mycroft snapped. “I worked for-!”

He stopped short and looked around, realising he nearly exposed something top secret.

“Yeah, but they didn’t teach you football, did they?” Greg teased.

With a sigh, Mycroft looked down at the ground in defeat.

“No,” his brother mumbled. “No one ever bothered teaching me football.”

Even Greg didn’t argue with that one. Truthfully, Sherlock knew that even if someone had tried to teach Mycroft to play sports as a kid he would have never taken an interest in it. But Mycroft was right: they had no father figure, not even a close friend to take them outside and teach them how to play sports. Their mum was more into literature, music, and arts and they followed her down that path instead.

“Come on, love,” Greg said as he stood beside Mycroft. “Even you can learn how to kick a football around. Watch me.”

First Greg drew his foot back ever so slightly, and then he propelled it forward without actually kicking the ball.

“That’s all,” Greg said. “You just have to concentrate- keep your eye on the ball. You try- kick the ball over to Dan.”

Across from them their nephew grinned, and Mycroft threw him a small, uncertain, smile. Nevertheless he let out a deep sigh and thrust his foot forward. This time he actually made contact with the ball and it actually rolled all the way toward Dan. His brother’s lips turned up in a satisfied grin.

“See!” Greg exclaimed, slapping Mycroft on the back. “I told you it wasn’t so hard.”

“No,” Mycroft mumbled. He glanced down at his loafers. “Though, I really don’t think I’m wearing the right kind of shoes.”

Laughing, Greg took his place beside Dan again. The two Holmes brothers humoured the DCI by participating in this little game for a few more moments. Sherlock found himself grateful when his mobile rang ten minutes later, giving him a reason to excuse himself. Laura took his place while he wandered off a good enough distance away to give himself of privacy. He didn’t recognise the
number on the caller ID, but he could tell it was a New York number. He hadn’t a clue who could be phoning him from New York, and he didn’t recognise the female voice on the other line after he answered.

“Mr Holmes?” The voice said. “My name is Mary Robinson. I’m a nurse at the University Hospital in Syracuse. I’m very sorry to have to tell you this, but your father is here in the ER.”

For a moment he forgot to breathe. Confusion cluttered his brain- he couldn’t figure out how anyone would be able to contact him about this or if he should care.

“I’m sorry, how did you get this number?” He demanded, his voice uncharacteristically shaky.

“Your father gave your name and number as his emergency contact.”

Sherlock wasn’t sure which was more surprising: the fact that his father gave the hospital his contact information or the fact that he didn’t seem to have anyone closer to him for them to phone. He closed his eyes, trying to keep himself from freaking out in public. He reminded himself that his family was nearby, and that half of them still had no clue he had even seen his father.

“Sorry,” Sherlock said; he wasn’t sure why he felt the need to apologise. “It’s just… I don’t exactly have a relationship with my father. I don’t know why he would want me as his emergency contact.”

“That’s understandable, Mr Holmes,” the nurse said, sounding sincerely sympathetic, “and I’m sorry to have to bother you with this. It’s just your father has gotten himself into a very bad situation. He’s not cooperating with the police. I wanted to contact family to try to see if someone could come and talk to him, be with him.”

His heart skipped a beat, and Sherlock’s throat felt dry and his head felt heavy as he replied:

“Did you say police?”

There was a long pause on the other line before the nurse finally admitted:

“Mr Holmes, your father had a drug overdose.”

Chapter End Notes

I've never been to New York, but I had a ton of fun researching stuff for this story! I would LOVE to go to the American Museum of Natural History! I hope you enjoyed their NYC adventures! Thanks for all the reviews, kudos, and support! It really means a lot to me!
His throat was tight. The world seemed to be spinning. Sounds of laughing and chatting echoed around him, but he couldn’t even remember where he was. As Sherlock hung up his mobile he had to remind himself to breathe, had to remind himself that he was standing in the middle of Central Park and was surrounded by hundreds of people. He found John staring at him from nearby, and when Sherlock swallowed nervously and found he couldn’t bring himself to move his boyfriend seemed to automatically know he was needed.

“What was that about?” John asked after limping over to him.

Sherlock hesitated. He hadn’t decided what he should do about his father’s situation yet, but he knew what John’s suggestion would be. In case he did decide to go to Syracuse he didn’t want John worrying about him or trying to go after him.

“It’s about your father, isn’t? His partner asked. Sherlock stared at him, still too afraid to confess.

“Please stop shutting me out, please.”

On the other hand he knew John didn’t deserve him running off like that…and the more he thought about it the more Sherlock wasn’t sure he could handle this alone.

“He’s in hospital,” Sherlock admitted quietly. His eyes diverted to the ground, and he felt as though someone was stabbing his chest with knives as he added: “He had a drug overdose.”

A hand flew up to John’s mouth and his face contorted into horror. A few painful moments of silence passed them. After all, what was John to say? He wasn’t ever supposed to have even met his father. He shouldn’t even know who he was. He shouldn’t care who he was. This news should have no effect on him whatsoever.

So…why did it?

“I don’t know how to feel about this,” Sherlock finally confessed.

“That’s okay,” John replied, placing a hand on his shoulder and squeezing it. “I have no relationship with my mum right now- I mean bloody hell, she disowned me- but if I found out she was sick I’d go mental.”

“But your mum raised you,” he pointed out. “There has been some establishment of love between you. If Mycroft found out about this he wouldn’t care at all. I just can’t figure out why it bothers me so much. Fuck…what’s wrong with me?!”

He grabbed his head frantically and squeezed his eyes shut.

“Nothing, love,” John promised. “It’s human nature, that’s all.”

He took more deep breaths, forcing himself to calm down. He opened his eyes. His eyes scanned Central Park, noting the children running around, the lovers exchanging kisses, couples having a picnic, students studying. And for once he wished he could be one of those people, living a normal life.
But deep down, as much as he hated it, he knew what he had to do.

“I have to go back to Syracuse,” he announced.

“What?!” John hissed, looking around to make sure they weren’t being overheard.

“Something’s not right about this, John,” Sherlock said, shaking his head. “He wouldn’t just put me down as his contact without reason. Maybe...maybe he has a case.”

His lover crossed his arms over his chest, opened his mouth and closed it again, as though he truly couldn’t believe what he was hearing. And Sherlock knew he had every right to be skeptical.

“A case?” John repeated.

“It’s an overdose, the police are involved, John,” Sherlock pointed out, fully aware of how desperate he sounded. “Maybe he...maybe he actually needs my help.”

John purse his lips, obviously fighting the urge to shout at him right there in the middle of the park.

“And when has he ever offered you his help?” John asked quietly. “When has he ever so much as phoned, or sent you a birthday card, or asked for a picture of you?”

“I’m fully aware of how little my father has been involved in my life, thank you.”

The reply came out more hotly than he meant, and a fierce tension settled between them. He knew one way or another he had to go see his father - with or without John’s permission. But whereas the old Sherlock wouldn’t have cared what John did or didn’t approve of, the new Sherlock really wanted John to tell him it was okay to want to go.

“If you feel like you have to go, then go,” John finally said. “But on one condition: I go with you.”

Sherlock’s heart leapt. Part of him was grateful because truthfully, he wasn’t sure he could do this alone. But part of him was afraid for John to see his father, he was afraid for him to see that part of his heritage. Selfishly, he was afraid for John to see his father struggling so much with drug addiction in fear John might compare that to what his own struggle must have been like. He wanted to keep John separate from the addiction part of his life and from his father. Yet he knew John’s demand was fair - it wasn’t right for him to keep running off and leaving his partner in the dark.


“Yeah,” John nodded.

“We can tell them when have a case,” Sherlock offered, glancing to his family. He felt badly for planning to abandon them. They were the family who never left him, who always stood by him and now he was about to sneak off once again.

“Apparently you think you do,” John said, his eyes narrowing.

Sherlock simply shrugged and began walking away, hoping they could leave this alone for now.

“Hopefully not,” he mumbled under his breath.

The train roared loudly as it sped down the tracks. Just as he expected his family had bought the lie about having a case, and he and John bough themselves at least a couple of days in Syracuse. He
had gotten no more word from the hospital on his father’s condition, and in the end he phoned them back to make sure his father was still in the A&E.

He had actually moved to intensive care.

He held his lover’s hand through most of the train ride to Syracuse. After hearing of his father’s worsening condition John seemed a bit more sympathetic. Sherlock even rested his head on his partner’s shoulder, feeling comfort in feeling the warmth of his body.

“I’m sure he’ll be okay,” John murmured.

He wasn’t sure why John was reassuring him.

He wasn’t sure why he cared about his father.

He only felt numb and confused.

When they reached Syracuse they grabbed a taxi to the hospital. The whole scenario didn’t even feel real until he walked through the doors and asked the front desk for direction’s to his father’s room. He found out his father had been moved from the ICU to a private room where he was being guarded by security. John’s hand still remained inside his, as though permanently attached to him as they stepped into the lift. He closed his eyes, tried to breathe, but he felt like the wind was knocked from him when he heard the sound of the bell going off, telling him they had arrived.

His father’s room was easy to spot thanks to the guard outside. Sherlock showed a badge the front desk had given him, but when he turned to face the door he froze.

Everything felt too surreal right now. He felt the world spinning around him, heard the noise and felt the bustle of the hospital but he didn’t feel like being here was real. For decades of his life he had wondered what his father was like and where he lived. Now he was in his father’s city, visiting him in hospital and meeting him for the second time. Now he knew his father was no one to look up to and he knew he had no business being here. Yet somehow the confused child inside him was grateful, relieved, to at least have some answers about his father.

“It’s okay,” John whispered into his ear.

With a shudder, Sherlock raised his hand and turned the doorknob.

The familiar beeping of hospital machines greeted him as they stepped inside the small room. His father seemed so small lying there in the bed. He didn’t stir when they entered; he was unconscious. As he stood there, looking at his father’s frail, pale body he couldn’t help but to be reminded of his mother in her final days. She had lost so much weight. She had lost all of her hair. The skin of her face became so skeletal, her eyes so distant. It was like every time he saw her more and more life faded from those pupils.

Those memories told him his father’s condition was not good. He was on oxygen. He could tell by his father’s vital signs that his blood pressure and heartbeat was dangerously low. His skin was practically gray; he seemed far skinner than Sherlock remembered, but perhaps that was the hospital gown that lay over him instead of the mechanic’s uniform.

And his hand was handcuffed to the bed railing.

Swallowing nervously, Sherlock flashed back to one of his drug overdoses. He remembered so
little of them- he had mostly faded in and out of consciousness. But he did remember waking up from more than one overdose handcuffed to a bed.

He squeezed John’s hand just to remind himself he wasn’t alone. Raising their hands to his lips, Sherlock kissed their joined knuckles.

“I was like that once,” Sherlock admitted softly, “handcuffed to a bed after an overdose. They did it because I broke the law, I know, but I think Mycroft kept them there because I was a danger to myself. Even after nearly dying so many times I still kept damaging myself.”

John squeezed his hand back.

“You aren’t him,” he whispered.

He looked over to his lover, meeting his eyes.

“He can’t know about that,” Sherlock announced.

His boyfriend simply nodded.

Suddenly his father stirred. His chest heaved, his arms jerked, and his eyes batted open.

“I better get the doctor,” John muttered before turning toward the door.

Sherlock grabbed his arm.

“Please,” he whispered. He let breathed in deeply as he met eyes with John, silently pleading with him to stay.

Swallowing nervously, John nodded before clearly his throat. He stepped up to the hospital bed and announced:

“Just breathe normally. You’re on oxygen.”

His father nodded. He groaned as he flexed his legs; he attempted to flex his arms and hands but stopped when he noticed the handcuffs around his wrist.

“You’re in police custody,” Sherlock explained coldly. “They phoned me. They said you gave them my name as your emergency contact. They said you weren’t cooperating.”

Eyes blinking, his father gazed up at him innocently. The act made his blood boil even more.

“I don’t know why you won’t leave my family alone,” he went on. “I don’t know why you won’t leave me alone. This is not me giving you a second chance- this is me demanding to know why you are doing this. We are going to go get your doctor, and we are going to let them do their job. But when you are able, you will give me answers. Then I will leave this hospital, and you will see neither see me nor any of the rest of your family again.”

He did not give his father a chance to react. Instead he grabbed John’s hand and stormed toward the door. It felt rather childish to be leaving this way, but as soon as he was in the corridor and out of his father’s sight he felt like he could breathe again.

“Sorry,” Sherlock mumbled. He let out a nervous laugh. “That didn’t exactly go as I planned.”

Truthfully he hadn’t planned anything- he hadn’t had a clue what to expect. But he certainly didn’t think the moment would go like that.
“It’s okay,” John said, squeezing his shoulder. “There’s no right or wrong here. I’m going to get his doctor okay?”

Sherlock nodded and watched as his partner went off to find the doctor. He couldn’t help but to feel a sense of pride when he thought about how loyal to his profession John was. Even in an emotional moment like this, he was still willing to help. He still made sure patient’s health came first. He was lucky- incredibly lucky- to have John in his life and it made him smile to think of how better of he was than his father. He had found love, and their love was strong. Their love was unbreakable.

“What?” John demanded when he returned to find the ghost of a smile on Sherlock’s face.

“Nothing,” Sherlock lied, shaking himself out of it. “Can we grab a coffee or something?”

“Of course,” John said.

He threw him a soft smile before placing his arm around his waist. They found a small coffee bar in a quiet corridor of the hospital, near a gift shop that was closed for the evening. The coffee tasted a bit cool and he lost interest in it after a few sips, but he was relieved just to have a reason to be away from his father’s room.

“What do you think?” He couldn’t help but to ask John. “About his condition?”

His boyfriend glanced at him, clearly surprised he had asked.

“It’s…it’s not very good,” John admitting. “His breathing was very shallow, his blood pressure very low. But I’ve helped countless drug addicts fight overdoses. Every case is unique…it’s about how much the patient is willing to fight.”

Reaching out, John grabbed his hand.

“What are you thinking?” John asked quietly.

Sherlock shrugged.

“I don’t know,” he whispered. With a frustrated sigh he ran his fingers through his head. “I really just want him gone. “

Out of the corner of his eye he noticed a copper sipping her own cup of coffee as she leaned against the corridor wall. She was flipping through a notepad and kept glancing at her watch.

She’s probably on my father’s case, he realised immediately.

She must have been asking him questions when he slipped by into unconsciousness, and now she was waiting for the call that he was awake again. Without explaining himself to John he stood up and stormed over to her.

“Hi,” the officer greeted when he stepped in front of her. She didn’t blink and her voice didn’t waver, despite his sudden, rather unruly, appearance. “How can I help you?”

Clearing his throat, Sherlock took a moment to try to calm himself down. He wanted to appear rational; he didn’t want people to start to think he was losing it.

“I got a phone call that my father was arrested and brought here following an overdose,” he explained. “I was told he was being uncooperative with the police.”
“Ah,” the officer said, glancing down at her notes. “You must be Desmond Holmes’ son; they told me they would call you. I was hoping you might be able to help us get through to him. He’s refusing to answer any of our questions.”

He threw a glance back to John, who was browsing through his mobile. Obviously his boyfriend wanted to give him space, but he had no doubt John was listening in best as he could.

“To be completely honest, I don’t really have a relationship with my father,” Sherlock explained. “I never even met him until last week.”

“Last week?” The copper asked, raising an eyebrow.

Sherlock swallowed nervously.

“Yes.”

He stopped when he realised what she was getting at- their meeting was probably the catalyst that led to his father’s overdose. He was probably so overwhelmed by meeting his son for the first time, by seeing his eldest child for the first time in decades, that he took solace the only way he knew how.

Sherlock knew he shouldn’t feel anything about this. This was something his father brought onto himself. There was no reason for him to feel any kind of empathy, or sympathy, toward him.

And yet, there he was, feeling guilty.

“Do you know anything of your father’s whereabouts since you saw him?” She asked.

He shook his head.

“No.”

With a sigh the officer finished her coffee and tossed it into a bin. Her eyes studied him, sizing him up, trying to find his weakness. He imagined how tired, confused, and helpless he must look to her.

“I understand that you and your father do not have much of a relationship,” she admitted, “but the funny thing about people who break the law is that they’ll trust almost anyone over a cop. So please, Mr Holmes, I’m hoping you can try to talk to him for me. We’re trying to get him to give up the name of his dealer and his dealer’s associates. We need their whereabouts and their descriptions as well. If he can give us this information we might be able to work out a deal with him.”

Dejavu hit him. He remembered having precisely this same exact conversation with Greg, years ago.

Tell me what you saw, what you heard, what you know.

But he really hadn’t seen anything, or heard anything, or knew anything.

“He just overdosed,” Sherlock announced darkly. “Maybe he really doesn’t remember anything. Drug overdoses can severely mess with your brain and even your memory.”

Eyes narrowing, the cop replied:

“I am aware. I have worked with victims of drug overdose before. If you aren’t comfortable with this I understand.”
“No,” he lied, shaking his head. “No, no I’ll talk to him, see what I can find out.”

“Thank you,” the cop said with a feigned smile. “I’m officer Smedley, by the way. Here is my card.”

She whipped out a business card, and as soon as he took it her mobile rang and she turned away to answer it. Briefly he closed his eyes. The most important thing, he decided, was to not become overwhelmed.

_Treat this like any other case_, he told himself.

He couldn’t become too emotional. All he had to do was find out whatever information he could, report it back to the cops, and leave his father be. There was no reason to become attached.

“You okay?” John asked when he approached their table.

“Yeah, let’s go,” he replied with a single nod.

When they returned to his father’s room he found the older man breathing heavily in his hospital bed and staring at the wall. He didn’t budge when they entered. He was no longer on oxygen, but his face was still pale and his fingers still had a slightly blue tint to them.

“How are you feeling?” He asked. No answer; his father probably knew why he was there. He had to make himself appear as sincere as possible. Sherlock stole a glance over to John, who simply shrugged. “Why did you put me down as your emergency contact?”

At last his father met his eyes, and a chill went down Sherlock’s spine. Eyes narrowing, his father studied him for a moment, and Sherlock was certain he had figured out why he was interrogating him.

“Why did you show up?” Desmond Holmes challenged, his voice rough and groggy.

It was a fair point- a point made him hesitant to reply. Was his father playing mind games with him? Or maybe he had realized the police wanted to play this game so he gave them a name of someone who wasn’t likely to answer the phone.

Sherlock tried not to let the question eat at him. Instead he forced himself to focus.

“I threatened to turn you into the police for doing drugs,” Sherlock said, “and you go and overdose on heroin. Why?”

“I didn’t intend to,” his father replied coldly. He licked his lips and cleared his throat, obvious tell-tell signs of lying.

Letting out a laugh, Sherlock shot:

“Right. Nobody ever intends to overdose.”

“No!” His father cried out, so suddenly and forcefully that Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat. “Look at my arms.”

With a frown Sherlock stepped forward and examined the left arm his father held up. There was a single series of fresh track marks, clearly from tonight’s overdose. There were two tattoos on his forearm that read “forgiveness” and “strength” in Chinese letters. He had to bite his tongue and force himself to not comment on that.
There were also distinctive fingerprint shaped bruises along both his wrist and forearm.

His father held up his right arm next, revealing that it was littered with faded white scars and more recent pink scars from track marks. His right arm was obviously his usual arm of choice. Briefly the realisation that his father must be left handed crossed his mind.

“Someone did this to you,” Sherlock realised quietly.

The room felt ice cold as his father nodded stiffly.

“Why didn’t you tell the police?” He asked.

A single laugh escaped his father as his head turned away from him, his eyes suddenly darkening with pain.

“Like they would believe a junkie went and got himself drugged,” he mumbled.

“What happened?” Sherlock demanded.

After a long, uneasy, pause his father finally turned back toward him. The man staring back at him looked defeated, empty. As they stared at each other Sherlock didn’t even feel like he was looking at someone he would have once called ‘dad’ when he was a toddler. Surely this couldn’t be the same man who taught his brother how to tie his shoes or changed their nappies. The man looked like the shell of a human, a human who truly did not care what happened to him. He may have brought Sherlock hear because he would believe him, but there was something more to this.

“One of my co-workers stopped coming into work a few days ago,” his father began. Letting out a sigh, his eyes drifted away to the wall once again. “His wife came into the shop early this morning and asked me if he had been in. He hadn’t come home, and he hadn’t answered texts or calls. Apparently this isn’t the first time he’s done this. She said she found an address crumbled in the pocket of one of his uniforms.

The moment she gave me the address I knew what it was: it’s a drugs den. She told me she drove there looking for him but no one answered the door when she knocked. But when she took one last look at the house before driving off she says she could have sworn she saw her husband looking at her through the upstairs window. She called the police, but when they went around they couldn’t find him. The person staying in that room was a drifter named Hugh.”

Suddenly his father let out a round of coughs and threw his head back against the pillows. John rushed to his side to give him a glass of water. His father frowned when he noticed John studying him.

“You haven’t introduced me to your friend,” he pointed out.

John looked to Sherlock, waiting to see how he wanted to handle this.

Sherlock decided there was no reason to lie.

“This is John...he’s my partner.” His father’s eyebrows shot up in surprise at learning his son was gay, but he didn’t interrupt. “He’s a doctor.”

Chuckling, his father replied:

“Good for you, you found yourself a doctor.”
“It’s not like that!” Sherlock shot, but John threw him a look, warning him it wasn’t worth it to get into a fight over this. He decided to change the conversation back to his father’s story. “You went to the drugs den, didn’t you?”

“Yes,” his father sighed. Closing his eyes, he hesitated for a moment, before continuing quietly: “This kid, Neville, he’s a good kid. He’s a hard worker, and I know he loves his wife. He doesn’t deserve to end up with the life I had…a life ruined by drugs.”

A pit fell in Sherlock’s stomach, and his eyes diverted to the ground. No, no one deserved a life ruined by drugs.

“I offered to go check it out myself,” he went on. “I fought my way into the house, saying I was looking for a friend. I went up to the room upstairs. The drifter was sleeping in the room when I went in, but the strange thing was I found one of the kid’s uniforms from the garage bundled up in the corner. That’s when the junkies running the place caught up with me and caught me snooping around. I was knocked out cold, and when I came to they were interrogating me about who I was, who I was with. They thought I was an undercover cop, they thought I had to do with the cops who came around before. They began pumping my veins with heroin...soon it became obvious that they intended to kill me and make it look like an overdose.”

“What stopped them?” Sherlock asked, though he was almost afraid to know.

“They were both shot in the chest,” his father said. They stared at each other for a moment as the full impact of what he said hit Sherlock. Murder: that’s what this was about. “I blacked out. When I woke up I was handcuffed to a hospital bed and being read my rights.”

It must have been the drifter, Sherlock realised immediately.

“The police think you did it?” He breathed.

His father nodded, and the world seemed to slow to a stop. He could feel John’s eyes on his, and he could hear his boyfriend silently pleading get out now, don’t get involved, please!

“That’s quite the story,” Sherlock stated.

“Yes, it is,” his father said darkly, his eyes narrowing in on him once again. “So you are the consulting detective. Tell me: will you take my case?”

Chapter End Notes

I am SO sorry for the delay! I forgot to mention I was going out of town. Hopefully it was worth it! I was nervous about this chapter what with all the Doyle-ish dialog and telling of the case, but here you have it! Thanks, as always, for all of your feedback and support!!! You guys are the best!
John didn’t say a word as he stormed after Sherlock, practically chasing him through the carpark and to their rental car. He managed to grab his boyfriend’s wrist before he could unlock the car. Their eyes met, and John shot:

“You aren’t driving. You are far too upset to drive.”

“Fine,” Sherlock mumbled, thrusting the keys into his hand.

The tension was thick between them as they both threw open the car doors and slammed them shut behind him. He listened to his boyfriend breathe deeply- in and out, in and out- as he tried to calm himself down. He knew Sherlock was panicking. He knew Sherlock had no idea what to do. He knew all this put Sherlock at risk for doing something really, really stupid.

“You’ve got to promise me something,” he announced before starting the car. He turned to Sherlock, forcing his partner to look him in the eye. For a moment he was taken aback by how angry Sherlock looked, how frustrated. But he knew that meant he only had to keep a closer eye on his lover. He couldn’t let Sherlock push himself away from him. “You’ve got to promise me you won’t go to that drugs den house.”

Sherlock’s eyes lit up with fury, and a pit of hurt formed in John’s stomach.

“That’s where the crime scene is, John,” his partner said, his voice cold and unfamiliar.

John’s eyes travelled to the A&E entrance. Even as they spoke some poor sod was being wheeled in on a stretcher, rushed to get emergency care to save his life. He had been down this road far too many times with Sherlock, and he couldn’t do it again.

“I won’t let what happened to your father happen to you,” John said, pointing to the hospital. “I don’t want you to get involved with this. To be perfectly honest, I don’t understand why you’re taking this case.”

His boyfriend glared at him, and for a long, horrible, moment John didn’t recognise him.

“Because,” Sherlock spat, “my father is being charged with a murder he did not commit. I don’t care how horrible of a person he is, no one deserves to rot in prison for a murder they did not commit.”

Looking down to the floorboards, John refused to admit that he agreed. He knew Sherlock’s heart was in the right place, he knew his boyfriend could never let an innocent person go to prison, but at the same time he simply did not want anything to do with the case. Sherlock had been nothing but hurt, nothing but abandoned by his father. He hated to see his boyfriend go off on a wild goose chase for a man who never bothered to so much as phone him in the past three decades. He didn’t want to risk Sherlock getting hurt for this man’s sake.

But he knew it was no use arguing with his boyfriend. Sherlock would always do whatever it took for a case, and trying to talk him out of it would only push him away.

“Where do you need to go?” John asked.
Placing his fingertips underneath his chin, Sherlock thought silently for a moment before replying:

“There are really two cases here: the first is finding the drifter and finding out if he really did pull the trigger. The second is finding Neville, but I think the key to finding him will be the drifter.”

“Are you thinking the drifter killed him?” John asked.

Sherlock offered him a single nod.

“Perhaps,” he replied simply.

“So where do we start?”

The consulting detective turned to him, and their eyes met. He had to admit that it felt good to be included- and a teeny part of him was excited to feel adrenaline pumping through him.

“My father gave me the number and address of Neville’s wife,” Sherlock said. He began keying in the address to their GPS. “I say that is our first stop.”

Neville and his wife, Kate, lived not too far from Desmond Holmes’ garage. As John shut the car off he took a moment to admire the breathtaking lilac and pink sunset painted across the sky. The St. Claire’s home was a quaint white house with bare oak trees that had shed orange and red leaves across the yard. The neighborhood seemed rather quiet; everyone’s driveway was full of cars, and John imagined how many of those families must be sitting down to dinner right now.

Food…he thought miserably as his stomach growled. He knew Sherlock wouldn’t want to stop in the middle of a case to eat dinner.

“It’s quite the picture of the American dream, isn’t it?” John asked.

Shrugging, Sherlock replied:

“It’s quite small.” John rolled his eyes as he stepped out of the car along with his partner. Before they could make their way up the drive Sherlock stopped, took in a deep breath of fresh air, and let his eyes dance across the sunset. “It is peaceful, though.”

John offered him a small smile. Their feet crunched against the gravel drive, and the floorboards of the front steps squeaked beneath them as they ascended to the front door.

A young woman answered the door after Sherlock knocked. She wore a long, raggedy, grey sweater, faded blue jeans, and a t-shirt that looked too big on her. The bags under her eyes told John she hadn’t been sleeping; in fact he could even make out faded tears from where she had recently been crying.

“Mrs St. Claire, I’m the consulting detective who phoned you,” Sherlock explained.

Kate blinked, and it took her a moment to realise what he was talking about.

“Yes,” she stuttered, a bit absent-minded. “Yes.”

She raised a hand to her head, as though she was still confused, and led them into the house. The smell of cigarette smoke immediately hit him, and he had to bite his lip to keep from gagging on as the horrendous scent flooded him. Sherlock was scrunching up his nose and looked obviously uncomfortable being around the smell. Not only was he already battling with memories of his own
drug addiction but now his former nicotine addiction. It was all John could do to not grab his arm and drag him out of the house right then and there.

As quaint as the house was on the outside, it was, well, a complete disaster on the inside. The smoky smell followed them as they wondered through piles of dirty clothes and moving boxes. It didn’t get better as they stepped into the living room, where the sofa and armchair were so cluttered there was no room to sit. Kate didn’t explain the mess, nor did she even seem to notice it as she simply stood in the middle of the room as though waiting for someone to tell her what to do.

“You’re not with the police?” Kate said, her voice wavering slightly.

“No,” Sherlock said. His eyes flickered around the living room, taking in all the little details. John loved seeing him at work like this- he loved wondering what was going on inside his brain. “When was the last time you saw your husband, Mrs St Claire?”

Kate closed her eyes and brought her hand to her forehead, as though it was painful to have to think back and remember.

“Thursday,” she finally replied. “Thursday morning when he left for work.”

“And what time was that?”

“Seven-thirty.”

“And how late does he usually work?”

“Until seven-thirty, he works straight twelve hour shifts.”

“May I take a look in the master bedroom, please?”

With a stiff nod Kate waved toward an open door that was right off the kitchen.

The master bedroom was just as untidy as the rest of the house, with dirty laundry thrown about and the faint smell of mildew in the air. On the bed a purple flower-patterned duvet was turned all the way down to the end of the bed. The sheets were in desperate need of changing. The master bedroom door was propped open slightly, the light was on and clothes spilled out of it.

How do two people have so many clothes?! John couldn’t help but to wonder.

All of a sudden there a tiny meow echoed through the room, and both he and Sherlock jumped as an orange tabby cat leapt onto the bed. The consulting detective’s eyes narrowed and his face contorted into confusion, like he had never seen such a creature before.

“How do two people have so many clothes?!” John couldn’t help but to wonder.

All of a sudden there a tiny meow echoed through the room, and both he and Sherlock jumped as an orange tabby cat leapt onto the bed. The consulting detective’s eyes narrowed and his face contorted into confusion, like he had never seen such a creature before.

“Hello…” John said uncertainty as he reached out to pet the cat.

To his surprise the cat purred and rubbed his head against his hand appreciatively. He grinned at Sherlock, but his boyfriend just rolled his eyes.

“That’s Charlie,” explained a soft voice behind him.

Turning, he found Kate leaning against the doorframe with a sad smile on her face. She looked as though she could collapse from exhaustion right then and there.

“When was the last time you slept, Mrs St Claire?” John asked.

With a shrug of her shoulders and a shake of her head Kate replied:
“I can’t sleep. I don’t want to sleep.”

He turned back to Sherlock to find his boyfriend peaking around the bedside table to the left of the bed.

“Right,” Sherlock announced, swiftly turning back to them without warning. “I think we’re done here, John.”

He pulled out a card with his mobile on it and handed it to Kate.

“Do phone me, if anything happens- no matter how afraid you are to tell me something.”

The consulting detective’s eyes met Mrs St Claire’s, and for a moment John was surprised to realise his boyfriend was being completely sincere.

“There is…one thing,” Kate said hesitantly. She withdrew her mobile and pulled out a text that read:

_I will be home soon. Please don’t worry._

“I just received it this morning,” Kate admitted. “It’s from his number. It means he’s still alive, right?”

He and Sherlock exchanged glances, both of them thinking of the clothes found in that drugs den and the murderer that was on the loose.

“It could have been sent by anyone,” Sherlock confessed. “Someone could have his mobile and could be trying to mislead you.”

Kate let out a choked sob and raised a shaky hand to her face.

“I don’t have anyone besides him, Mr Holmes. All we have is each other and we have this strong connection. It’s like…it’s like I can feel him with me when he’s not here. I know he’s alive, I know he’s out there somewhere. I can feel it.”

Raising a hand to her shoulder, John tried to force the kindest, most honest smile he could manage.

“I’m sure he’s okay,” he offered quietly.

She nodded, but anxiety overwhelmed her once more as she simply fled out of the room. They took that as a sign to show themselves out. His feet pounded down the steps after his partner, but John made sure to wait until they were in the privacy of their car before speaking.

“I take back everything I’ve ever said about you being a slob,” John announced.

“I appreciate that,” Sherlock grinned.

His boyfriend lifted his feet up to the dash to rest them; John immediately swatted him down, earning himself a glare.

“I hired the car, Sherlock, I don’t own it.”

Sherlock smirked.

“You’re having fun with this, aren’t you?” He teased.
“With what?” John shot.

“Driving. You would love to have a car. You were ready to blow all of our earnings on one.”

John couldn’t help but to turn his lips up into a small smile.

“I do enjoy having an excuse to drive,” he admitted. Shaking his head, he tried to remember what was important. “What did you deduce in there?”

“Neville clearly disappeared willingly. Besides Kate’s confession there were prescriptions inside the bedside tables: prescriptions for meds he would currently have to take, meds that were not in the house. And you’re wrong, they’re not slobs. They’re planning a quick getaway. There were moving boxes stashed in the laundry room.”

“I wonder if they’re renting this place or if they own it,” John said, gazing up at the house through the windshield. “Maybe they’re having money problems.”

His boyfriend hummed in response.

“Well,” John sighed. “It’s best that we not keep sitting in their driveway like weirdoes.”

Much to John’s dismay, Sherlock’s next plan of action was to snoop around his father’s garage. If anything were to happen to them out here no one would know until the shop re-opened. There were a few houses further down the road, but the lights were already turned off for the evening. When he shut off the car they were left in total darkness; Sherlock whipped out the torches he had thankfully thought to snatch from his sister’s house.

“It’s bloody freezing out here,” John mumbled, shivering as he stuffed his hands inside his coat and followed his boyfriend to the garage. He watched as the consulting detective examined the lock he was about to pick, and he couldn’t help but to wonder what was going through his lover’s head. Of course, knowing Sherlock he was pushing aside all things personal, all things emotional and solely on the case. “What do you expect to find in here?”

But suddenly Sherlock stopped and smiled.

“What?” John demanded.

Reaching forward, Sherlock casually pushed the door opened. Someone had left it unlocked. His partner held his finger to his lips, signaling him to be careful and quiet as he led him into the shop. The door led them into a tiny, claustrophobic office area. There was barely enough room for a desk and computer, a narrow wardrobe, and a mini-fridge with a microwave on top. Sherlock threw a curious glance toward the computer, as though he were considering if it were worthwhile to hack into it.

Just then the sound of a garage door opening sounded from the next room. His and Sherlock’s eyes met. A car engine started up, and John’s heart began to pound.

“Fuck,” Sherlock hissed as he grabbed John and fled toward the door.

Their feet hit gravel just in time to see a station wagon speeding down the path.

“We can catch him!” Sherlock said. “Come on, John!”
“What?!" John exclaimed as he chased after him. “Sherlock, I think you’re underestimating just how limited my driving experience really is.”

The sound of keys jiggling rang in his ears, and John’s eyes widened with fury.

“You’re not driving,” Sherlock proclaimed proudly.

He didn’t give time to argue before he jumped into the driver’s seat and started the car.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck bloody fucking shit,” John muttered under his breath.

Going against everything his brain was telling him to do John jumped into the car and put on his seatbelt just as Sherlock sped out of the lot.

“For god’s sake, be careful!” He cried as he held onto the side of the car. “We’re driving on bloody gravel, Sherlock!”

“Would you please be quiet?!”

Biting his tongue, John promised himself he’d never let Sherlock forget about this night. They quickly broke the speed limit as Sherlock followed the headlights of the station wagon. Their small, economy, rental car slipped a few times on the gravel, and John found himself grabbing onto Sherlock’s shoulder every time he began to lose control. The station wagon made a sharp turn onto a narrow road and Sherlock followed; John could have sworn he felt the car turn ever so slightly onto the side. He tried not to think about how at this point they had no clue where they were- they were far from any motorway, and when he checked his mobile he found he had no signal.

Wonderful, he thought bitterly.

“I can cut him off,” Sherlock suddenly announced.

“What?!” John shot.

His heart was beating out of control. All the blood seemed to rush to his head and images of him and Sherlock lying upside down in a wrecked car flooded his mind.

“The road becomes two-lanes up ahead,” Sherlock said through gritted teeth. His hands held the steering wheel in a death-grip. “I can cut him off.”

“No! Sherlock, no! Don’t you dare-!”

Completely ignoring him, Sherlock floored the gas pedal and swerved around station wagon. Closing his eyes, John found himself praying for the first time in a long time:

Please God…let us live so I can beat Sherlock to a pulp.

With one hand he held tightly onto Sherlock’s arm, and he planted the other against the window as his boyfriend gained a fair amount of distance on the wagon. Suddenly he felt the car turn, and as the screeching of tires filled his ears John bit his lip so hard he could taste blood.

Then at last everything was silent. He heard the car door opened, and he found himself breathing hard as he saw Sherlock leap out onto the road. Looking over to the station wagon, he saw that the driver of the stolen car had done the same- he was trying to run away into the fields surrounding him. But Sherlock was faster, and he managed to push him to the ground before he could get too far.
The sound of punches being exchanged made him wince. Through the darkness, John ran and tackled the driver just before he could try to pin his partner to the ground again.

“Don’t’ even think about it!” John spat as he held the driver down.

With shaky hands the consulting detective fished his torch out of his coat pocket and shone it down on the driver’s face.

The face was the hideous, filthy face of a homeless man. He wore thin, khaki trousers that were a couple of sizes too big and a shirt looked like a rag wrapped around him.

“A drifter,” Sherlock murmured under his breath. “What are you doing here?”

When the drifter simply groaned instead of answers, Sherlock jumped to his feet to begin investigating himself. As he stormed off to the stolen car John checked the drifter’s pulse and was surprised to find it was so faint.

“What did you take?” John asked him.

The drifter simply stared up at him with wild eyes. For the first time John noticed the deformity on his face- his upper lip was twisted upwards. His teeth were filthy; one tooth was missing.

“Nothing,” the drifter finally spat at him.

His breath was so foul and the horrid smell from his body so strong that John held his arm over his face to keep from feeling sick.

“John!” Sherlock suddenly called.

He looked behind him but he was afraid to leave the drifter alone in fear of him running off. His boyfriend strode over to him and handed him a paper bag: it was a pharmacy bag that had a prescription for Neville St Clair. Once again John felt his heart racing, and once again his eyes fell back to the drifter. The man seemed so small, so fragile and weak. He just didn’t strike John as a murderer.

The drifter’s eyes met his, and his heart skipped a beat as he felt as though the man were pleading with him. He was asking him to believe his innocence.

Sherlock too out his mobile and began dialing.

“Who are you phoning?” John asked.

His boyfriend glared at the drifter, obviously not willing to give him any doubts.

“The police.”

Chapter End Notes

I really like the story of the Man With the Twisted Lip, so I hope to do some sort of justice with my version of it! It does feel nice to be writing a case for them again! I hope you all will enjoy it. Thanks, as always, for all the feedback and support!
Sherlock’s leg bounced up and down furiously, uncontrollably, as he and John waited in the lobby of the Syracuse police station. John’s hand rested on the knee of his leg that managed to stay put on the ground. Every now and then his boyfriend squeezed his knee, trying to keep him calm, but Sherlock’s mind was racing with nerves as they awaited the results of the police’s initial interview with Boone. Unfortunately they would not let him attend, and he didn’t want to ask Greg to talk them into it since that would tip him off about where they really were.

There was a soft rumbling sound from beside him, and he turned to his boyfriend with a smirk on his face.

“Was that your stomach?” Sherlock teased.

John paled, embarrassed, and wrapped his arms around his abdomen. Patting his shoulder, Sherlock got to his feet and asked a sergeant if there was a snack machine around. There only options were protein bars, crisps, and candy, but John’s face lit up when he saw him come back with snacks and bottled water.

“God I love you,” John muttered as he snagged a bag of crisps out of Sherlock’s hands. His partner grabbed one of the chocolate bars, and Sherlock chuckled as John threw crisps in his mouth with one hand and took bites out of the candy with the other.

He stared at the bag of crisps he got from himself. It was nearly midnight now, but despite the fact that it had been nearly twelve hours since he last he had no appetite. He knew John always thought he didn’t like to eat during cases because he didn’t like to spare the time to take a break. That was partly true, but anxiety tended to take hold of him during cases more than he liked to admit.

Sherlock found early in his time with working with Greg that he simply couldn’t digest food that well while he was that anxious and that adrenaline-filled.

“Mr Holmes?” A female copper announced.

The consulting detective jumped up at the sound of his name. Beside him his partner stumbled to his feet, and he reached out to grab Sherlock’s shoulder and steady him. The cop was the same woman that he talked to earlier in the hospital.

“We’ve sent Boone's fingerprints off to see if his fingerprints match those we found at the crime scene.”

That was the beauty of a drugs den, wasn’t it? There were always plenty of fingerprints to be found, and they were very likely to find those of Boone’s.

“There was a gun in the car Boone stole,” Smedley went on. Sherlock’s eyes jumped up from their spot on the floor. “There was gunshot residue on Boone’s hands. If the fingerprints on the gun are a match to his and if the fingerprints at the crime scene are a match then this could be a pretty open and shut case.”

The Boone case is barely a three, Sherlock thought to himself. Even Lestrade could have solved this one, now that Boone was caught and the evidence was laid out in front of them. But there was still a huge chunk of this case missing:
Neville St Claire.

“Now as far as your missing person goes, I’m sorry but we have no leads,” she confessed. “Boone claimed he’d never heard of Neville St Clair before. He claimed he didn't seen him in the drugs den. He also claimed he was innocent of murder.”

“Oh of course he did,” Sherlock muttered.

Smedley offered him a firm, sympathetic, smile.

“There’s really nothing more to do here tonight but a lot of waiting and a lot of paperwork, so why don’t you go two get some sleep?” She suggested.

As much as John would hate it he really needed to check out the crime scene to see if he could find anything that told him where St Claire could have gone- or could have been taken. But the best time to do that would be mid-morning, when the addicts would be most vulnerable and at their weakest. She was right: it was time to call it a night.

Plus there was nothing holding John up except his recent sugar rush, and that would only last for so long.

“Could you recommend a hotel around here?” His boyfriend asked.

“Sure,” she offered. “Oh, and Mr Holmes? Considering the evidence stacking up against Boone and the lack of physical evidence against your father, I think it’s safe to say we will be able to release him soon.”

He offered her a simple nod but nothing more. He had done his job, as quickly as he had hoped he would have. Honestly if he wanted he could walk away from this case now and leave the missing persons case to the police.

But somehow, he felt obligated to stay in town.

After giving them a list of nearby hotels Smedley turned back to her desk where a pile of paperwork awaited her before she could leave, and they trudged out the door.

He was surprised how completely knackered he felt as they climbed back into their rental car. His adrenaline was slowly fading. He could feel the energy in his body winding down like someone shutting off the lights in an empty market. But it wasn’t just the conflicting emotions of dealing with his father that was weighting him down…

“John,” he breathed.

His boyfriend turned to him, but before John could say anything Sherlock brought his hands to his cheeks and trapped him into a soft kiss. He breathed in his smell, finding comfort in his familiar warmth, in the taste of chocolate on his teeth and the sweat on his neck. John pulled away, clearly impressed.

“What was that for?” John asked.

“For being amazing,” Sherlock replied, a sheepish smile lingering on his lips, “and for tagging along with me on this.”

John raised a hand to Sherlock’s neck. His eyes twinkled.
“I will always tag along with you,” he whispered with a smile. “You can count on that.”

They kissed again, and Sherlock allowed John’s tongue to slip between his lips and trace his mouth. His body grew warm, and Sherlock felt surprisingly comfortable, making out like this in the middle of a carpark…in a car. He grinned, and John laughed.

“What?” His boyfriend demanded.

“It’s rather…hot,” Sherlock confessed. He swallowed nervously, feeling a bit embarrassed to say it: “Doing this…in a car…with you.”

“Yes,” John replied, “imagined if we owned a car…we could do this all the time.”

“Ah, yes, snogging in London traffic: my favourite sexual fantasy.”

They both giggled, and John shook his head in awe as he turned back to the steering wheel and started up the car.

“Yeah, well…” John said, looking over to him and making sure their eyes met. “Maybe on the way back to Schenectady we’ll find a place to pull over and fulfill some of my sexual fantasies.”

Sherlock was certain his face burned bright red at the very thought. His cock twitched in his trousers, and he had to close his eyes and force himself to think of other things to distract himself.

Once they found a hotel he and John fell asleep quickly, without even bothering changing into pyjamas. That night he dreamt of the week his mother died. It was perhaps the longest week of his life: he remembered it as a blur of visitors to his family home. He remembered it was dozens of “oh I’m so sorry”s and “she was far too young”. He remembered it as silence, as he and Mycroft weren’t sure what to say to each other or anyone else for that matter.

For most of the time he just felt raw. He felt empty. It felt like someone had ripped out his soul and replaced it with black nothingness.

He was eleven years old, and he had just lost the only parent he had ever known.

Well, the only one he could remember knowing.

What was he supposed to do?

He lay awake in his silent, lifeless, home and stared up at the ceiling, trying to wonder how things were going to work now. He was stuck with Mycroft, who had been more focused on his future than anything. Mycroft was always so consumed with university and his studies that he seemed to have forgotten that he had a little brother. Surely he couldn’t be expected to do this? It just wasn’t fair!

Anger overwhelmed him so much that he felt tears rushing to the surface. Sobs began to take over him, and soon he was curled up in the fetal position, hugging his pillow and wishing desperately for everything to go back to the way it had been before.

It was so easy to imagine his mother’s arms wrapped around him. It was so easy to imagine the scent of her perfume- just the faintest hint of vanilla. So clearly could he smell the lavender candles she used to burn in her bedroom that the imaginary scent began to choke him. He coughed through his tears and sobbed hard, burying his face into his pillow.
“Sherlock?”

The sound of his brother’s soft call outside his door stopped his heart so quickly his chest hurt. His eyes went wide and he frantically wiped at his face, trying to stop his tears before his brother entered the room. Neither brother said nothing as the weight of the mattress shifted. Mycroft’s hand fell on his back, and for the longest time they just sat in silence. It made him angry, the fact that they had nothing to say to each other. It was like they weren’t even related. Mycroft could never understand him.

“Mummy would be very proud of how you handled this week,” Mycroft said softly. Even hearing him say ‘mummy’ made him tear up again, and Sherlock hugged the pillow even closer. Closing his eyes, his brother let out a sort of strangled sigh, as though he himself were trying not to lose it. Sherlock turned to him, interested- he had never seen Mycroft break down before. Mycroft was always so strong, so capable of containing his emotions. He wasn’t sure if it would make him feel better to see his brother cry or not, but he wouldn’t find out because when Mycroft opened his eyes again he simply looked…drained. “I feel guilty, you know. I’ve been so preoccupied with school that I’ve been ignoring my family. I feel like we could have had so much more time together.”

He knew Mycroft was hurting just as much as he was, and it was probably even harder for him because he had no one to comfort him. He had to be the strong one for his little brother, and Sherlock respected that.

“You were very good to her, Myc,” Sherlock said quietly. “You helped her a lot. She would be proud of you too.”

“Thank you, baby brother,” Mycroft said with the smallest ghost of a smile on his face.

Silence fell between them once again, and Sherlock bit his lip as he stared down at his sheets, afraid to say what was really been nagging at the back of his mind.

“Sherlock?” Mycroft pleaded softly. “What is it? You can tell me anything, you know.”

He looked up at his brother with wide, desperate eyes. His voice broke as he finally confessed:

“What if they take you away?”

His brother frowned and demanded:

“What?”

“The government!” Sherlock exclaimed. “They come and take kids away when they have no mum or dad!”

Mycroft looked absolutely furious that such a thought could ever cross his mind, but Sherlock couldn’t help but to think about it. Even if he and his brother didn’t always get along, Mycroft was really the most family he had left. He didn’t want to lose him. He didn’t want to be left alone. Wrapping an arm around him, Mycroft situated them both so they could lie side by side in the bed.

“No one’s taking you away,” Mycroft promised.

“Grandmother is old,” Sherlock pointed out. “She can’t really take care of me. She can’t even drive!”

His brother hesitated for a moment before replying:
“It will be hard, and it will take some getting used to for all of us. Grandmother may be old, but she is best suited to be your guardian right now. But whenever I can I will be home to take care of you. After I get out of uni- and I think I can graduate early- you and I can live together.”

“You’re going to be my guardian?” Sherlock asked.

While he didn’t want to be taken away he couldn’t imagine Mycroft being a parent. Mycroft was so…private. He was so…weird. He liked odd things, like government books and theories and being at the library all day. What did Mycroft know about being a full-time guardian?

“If that’s what you want,” Mycroft offered. “Maybe once you’re older we can get a flat, somewhere closer to the city. I’ll have a job then.”

The thought of leaving home made tears swell in his eyes once again, and Sherlock felt sick to his stomach.

“I don’t want to move,” he whispered.

“T know,” Mycroft breathed, holding him tight. “I know.”

Sherlock looked up at him as a new idea occurred to him.

“What about father?” He asked.

Of course- that happened all the time too! Kids lost their mum so they went to live with their dad. Even though he knew their dad must not be a very good person since he left them he was still curious about him. He wanted to know who he was, what he was like. He wondered if his father would give him a second chance.

“What about him?” Mycroft shrugged.

“Maybe I should live with him.”

His brother’s eyes lit up with an anger he had never seen in them. For a moment he was afraid Mycroft was going to throw him off the bed and really lash out at him. He tensed up in fear, but Mycroft’s voice was steady as he insisted:

“You don’t want anything to do with father, trust me.”

“But why not?” Sherlock whined. “You never say!”

“He’s just…not very good.”

“But he’s my parent!” Sherlock said. “If I can’t have a mum then why can’t I have a dad?”

Placing a gentle hand to his cheek, Mycroft seemed to feel sorry for him as he gazed into his eyes, longing for him to understand. But Sherlock just couldn’t.

“He’s not the kind of father you want,” Mycroft whispered. “He’s not the kind of father you need.”

Frustrated, Sherlock threw himself back against his pillows and crossed his arms over his chest.

“Do you think he knows about Mummy?” He asked, after a thoughtful pause.

“I don’t know,” Mycroft admitted, shaking his head. His brother ran his fingers through his curls, like their mum always did, and Sherlock shuddered. He jerked away, and Mycroft didn’t protest. “I
know I’m not a dad, and I know you deserve to have parents…but I am your brother. And I will never let anything happen to you. I will keep you safe, Sherlock. I will make sure you are taken care of. I will be there for you.”

Sherlock nodded, although he still really wasn’t sure how he felt. His brother gave him one final hug before slipping out of the bed.

“Get some rest, baby brother,” Mycroft said. He studied him for a long moment with his finger to his chin, thinking. “You know, I have a chemistry exam coming up that I have to do a lab project for. I’m not particular good at labs, but I know you are. Would you like to help me practice tomorrow?”

His eyes lit up at the thought of working on a real-life chemistry project with his brother.

“Can we start right now?!” He exclaimed.

He was shocked when his brother laughed and actually replied:

“You know…why not?”

For the first time that week Sherlock smiled as he jumped out of bed. With his brother’s arm around his neck he skipped out of his room, grateful to be wanted…and mainly grateful just to have something to do besides feel sad.

Chapter End Notes

This case is a good example of a Doyle mystery that I think wouldn’t really be able to happen in modern times like it happens in canon, which is one of the reasons I like it!

Thanks for reading! I love hearing your feedback. I get the biggest smile on my face whenever I receive kudos and feedback!

Maybe, just maybe I’ll let them live out John’s fantasy ;)}
The Fatal Secret

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The other half of the bed was empty.

John had only just opened his eyes for the first time that morning, and already he was livid. His heart began to pound as he sat up and looked around, hoping perhaps Sherlock was just in the bathroom. But the bathroom door was open, the light was off, and the small hotel room was completely silent.

“What a bloody-”

His muttering was interrupted by the door opening, and he stopped when his boyfriend waltzed in carrying a bag of takeaway. Sherlock seemed to sensed that he had been angry to wake up to an empty bed and sheepishly explained:

“Room service here is non-existent...so I popped over to the restaurant next door and got us some breakfast. I thought you might enjoy some breakfast in bed.”

A smile slipped across his face even as he shook his head.

“God it’s amazing how you can be so endearing and yet so utterly infuriating all at the same time.”

He gave his lover a kiss on the lips as Sherlock joined him back in bed.

“Any word on fingerprints?” John asked.

Shaking his head, Sherlock replied:

“None yet.” He paused for a long time as John began opening the containers before finally announcing quietly: “My father’s not too well. His blood pressure kept dropping last night.”

Sherlock’s eyes fell to the floor as he stopped short, as though he just wasn’t sure what else to say. And neither was John. He wasn’t sure what his boyfriend was looking for...he didn’t think it was sympathy. Instead of risking saying something wrong John simply placed his hand on top of Sherlock’s.

“I spent an entire night muttering to myself in my sleep the last time I overdosed,” Sherlock sighed as he took his container in his hands. “My blood pressure dropped terribly. I was dehydrated and malnourished. I was delirious. I don’t even remember it, I’ve just heard all that from Mycroft.”

Eyes filled with guilt drifted over to John, but he couldn’t even let himself think about that version of Sherlock. Whenever Sherlock told him these stories it was like he expected John to change his mind about him or be angry with him, but he never could.

“You were stronger than you realise,” John said softly. “You fought to live, you fought to get better, and you did. You should be proud of that, not ashamed.”

Instead of replying Sherlock picked up his fork and began picking at the breakfast potatoes in his container. The breakfast was actually pretty decent: eggs, toast, red potatoes, sausage and gravy, and some mixed fruit and sausage. They ate in silence. Every now and then Sherlock yawned,
judging by the bags under his eyes John guessed he hadn’t gotten much sleep at all last night.

“Thanks for the food,” John offered. Sherlock simply shrugged.

It became obvious that Sherlock needed to get lost inside his head awhile so John continued to eat quietly, enjoying the chance to have a full meal on a case.

Then Sherlock’s mobile went off, and John bit back a sigh.

*So much for a peaceful morning, he thought.*

The consulting detective slipped off the bed and went over to the corner to give himself some privacy; all John could hear was his boyfriend muttering ‘thanks’ after only a few minutes of conversation.

“Dammit!” Sherlock exclaimed as he whirled around and threw the mobile at the bed. John caught it before the device could bounce to the floor. Eyes full of fury and frustration, Sherlock finally turned to him and explained: “The fingerprints on the gun didn’t match Boone’s.”

A pit fell in John’s stomach.

“Shit,” he muttered, running a hand over his head.

Letting out a long sigh, John lay back against the pillows and closed his eyes. So they were back at nothing. Just when he thought they might solve this case and be able to head out of town sooner than they thought, the rug got pulled out from beneath them.

“They belonged to Neville St Claire,” Sherlock announced.

John’s eyes flew open and for a moment he and Sherlock simply stared at each other.

“Maybe it was his gun,” John offered. “Maybe Boone was careful and knew how to cover his fingerprints.”

“He was high, John!” Sherlock snapped. “No…no. This doesn’t make sense.”

Grabbing his head in frustration, Sherlock spun around the room in dizzying circles before finally throwing his arms out to catch himself against the wall. It was a beautiful process, John thought, the way the theories bounced around in Sherlock’s head. Beautiful and sad, sometimes, but watching him work always sent his heart pounding.

“Where is Neville?” Sherlock muttered to himself, letting his fingers tap against each other in a rapid dance. “He could be anywhere, if he managed to get away. If he had a car…”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide, and his mouth fell open in a perfect ‘o’ shape. John’s heart pounded faster as he knew his partner had reached an epiphany. Whipping out his mobile, Sherlock put it on speaker as he phoned the copper back.

“Did you get fingerprints out of the stolen car?” Sherlock demanded before Smedley could even greet them.

John glanced to his boyfriend, hoping he would clue him in, but Sherlock didn’t even seem to be paying attention to him.

“No,” Smedley confessed, “no…not yet.”
He had a feeling she hadn’t been planning to but wasn’t about to admit that when Sherlock was so wound up.

“Of course you haven’t,” Sherlock muttered. Instead of scolding her further he simply announced: “I’m coming back to the station.”

And he hung up.

Ignoring the food remains on the bed, Sherlock dashed out the door before John could stop him. Rushing into the corridor, John looked down at himself, embarrassed to realise he was still only in boxers and a t-shirt.

“I’m not even dressed yet!” He called after him helplessly.

He found Sherlock tapping his fingers impatiently in the car after he dressed and checked out. His partner hardly gave him time to throw their bags in and put on his seatbelt before he sped off.

“What did you figure out?” John asked. Sherlock was speeding more than a bit as he swerved in and out of traffic down the main road. “Jesus! Please watch where you’re going!”

*Mental note, he thought, if I ever buy a car Sherlock’s not allowed to drive it.*

“Wait until we get to the station,” Sherlock said with a twisted smile on his face. “This might be the best reveal of them all.”

John couldn’t help but to grin as they stormed into the police station. Smedley spotted them immediately in the lobby, and she held a hand out to stop Sherlock from just waltzing back into the station.

“Mr Holmes-” she began calmly.

“I need a bucket,” Sherlock announced.

The copper blinked.

“Excuse me?” She said.

“A bucket, filled water and a towel,” Sherlock instructed. “If you had gotten the bloody fingerprints this case would have been solved twenty-four hours ago.”

One of Smedley’s co-workers appeared behind her, looking rather dumbfounded. While she clearly didn’t want to submit to Sherlock’s demands, but nevertheless he ordered to the other cop:

“Get the damn bucket, now.”

Once Sherlock was given the bucket he demanded to be led toward the cells. John wore a smirk on his face as he rushed side-by-side with his partner in crime. Although he had no clue what was going on whatever Sherlock was about to do would be brilliant, and John couldn’t be prouder of him.

Boone was passed out on the floor of his holding cell when they arrived. There were a few other men in the cell with him, but while they looked up in surprise Boone didn’t budge.

*You can smell him from here,* John thought as he held his arm over his mouth.
Sherlock wasted no time in taking two large strides over to Boone…and dumping the water onto Boone. At last the drifter jumped up. Eyes wide and shaking, he scooted back at the sight of Sherlock coming toward him with a towel.

“No, no, no, no!” Boone frantically cried, throwing his arms over his face.

Ignoring him, Sherlock forced his arm away and ran the towel down his face to wipe away the filth. He wiped next at his lip, revealing the deformity was…makeup?

Boone struggled against the consulting detective, suddenly displaying great strength as he tried to throw Sherlock off of him. But Sherlock was stronger, and he pinned the man to the ground as he continued to clean his face.

Underneath the dirt and grime, Boone looked in fairly good health. He seemed…normal. He seemed…familiar.

Then he realised where he had seen him before, and his heart skipped a beat.

“Oh my god,” he breathed, “that’s-”

“Neville St Clair,” Sherlock announced. He looked up at the stunned coppers with a smile on his face. “Your booking systems have been failed by makeup and dirt. Oldest con in the book is pretending to be a beggar. People are still stupid enough to fall for it.”

“Why?” Smedley asked simply, looking at Boone with disgust.

“Yes, Neville,” Sherlock shot, “I think we all deserve an explanation.”

Running his hands through his dirty, tangled, hair, Neville’s eyes fell to the floor as he quietly began:

“We were beginning to fall behind on the house. My mechanic job was great, but it just wasn’t enough. I had heard in the news about people in the city pretending to be beggars and making a lot of money from it. I thought…even if I only take away a hundred bucks a week doing that it will be worth it. I actually started taking home more than that. I thought we were going to be okay, with the mortgage, but things happened…we needed a break so badly I just didn’t know what to do.”

Letting out a shaky sigh, Neville hesitated for a long moment before continuing his confession:

“I did drugs, during and after high school.” John stole a glance to Sherlock, who shifted on the floor, clearly uncomfortable with the drugs talk. “At one point I started dealing- it was really good, quick, money, you know? When I met my wife I got clean and swore off drugs, but all I was thinking with our money troubles was how quickly I could earn what we needed if I was able to deal.”

Smedley shook her head in disgust and reached down to force Neville to his feet.

“Let’s take this to an interrogation room. Holmes, would you like to join me?”

John was shocked when Sherlock shook his head.

“No, you can take it from here,” he offered.

The copper offered him an appreciative nod. Quietly, Sherlock slipped out of the cell and John followed him without question. He completely understood that Sherlock did not want to sit and
listen to Neville talk about how easy it was to make money dealing drugs. Actually, he was relieved Sherlock had decided not to stay. It would be more than easy for the cops to handle the case from here, and he wanted to get Sherlock as far away from here as possible.

There was one thing he was wondering about, though, that John had to ask.

“Why didn’t they discover this when they took Neville’s fingerprints?”

Shrugging, Sherlock replied:

“Neville must have never gotten caught for his drug habits. He didn’t have a criminal record so he wasn’t in the system. Eventually they probably would have figured it out- Neville was just buying his time and probably trying to think of an escape.”

The two fell silent as they climbed into the car. Sherlock headed for the passenger seat, and John didn’t argue. He knew his partner needed some time alone, time to think and process everything that had happened.

“Where do you want to go?” John asked softly.

He had a feeling Sherlock would rather be back at Baker Street than anywhere else right now. Truthfully he was a little homesick himself right now. John yearned for the familiarity of their flat. He had never considered how much their flat was home to him until they were away from it for so long.

“I should go back to the hospital,” Sherlock said, though even as he did John could tell he was dreading it. “I need to fill in my father about the case.”

Nodding, John started up the car and decided it was best to not protest. The quiet ride to the hospital felt much like the taxi rides they would take back home after a trying or emotional case. He reached over and placed a hand on the hand Sherlock had resting on his knee, and his partner offered him the smallest of smiles, showing that he appreciated him being there.

When they reached the hospital and made their way through the maze of patients and staff, they found Desmond Holmes’ room to be empty. Sherlock seemed almost disappointed. For a long, quiet, moment they stood there, staring at the empty bed. He was afraid Sherlock felt like his father had left him again, checking himself out of the hospital without bothering to leave his son so much as a note.

A nurse walked into the room with an armful of fresh sheets.

“Excuse me,” Sherlock spoke up awkwardly. He cleared his throat, trying to regain his composure before asking: “Where is the patient? I’m…I’m his son.”

The nurse turned to him with kind, sympathetic, eyes and John began to panic. Maybe he didn’t check himself out…maybe he didn’t make it.

“Oh, he’s in oncology,” the nurse replied.

The consulting detective’s face contorted into confusion, and a pit fell in John’s stomach.

“Oncology?” Sherlock repeated, his voice raw and hollow.

“Yes, for his chemo treatment. He was already scheduled for one this week, and the doctor decided he could not skip it. He should be finishing up here in about thirty minutes.”
She gave them another sympathetic smile when she finished changing the sheets and left the room.

Sherlock looked like he had been punched in the gut.

“He has cancer,” his partner whispered. Raising his hand to his forehead, Sherlock squeezed his eyes shut. John wasn’t sure if he was trying to keep himself from crying or freaking out, but regardless he placed his hand on his shoulder. At last Sherlock opened his eyes; he simply just looked stunned. Yet he admitted: “It makes sense. He must have been diagnosed recently, maybe in the past month or two. That’s why he’s been stalking Laura. That’s why he’s been trying to see Dan. Not because of any cruel intention…but because he wants to tell them. He probably wants to see them, in person. Do you think he could be dying?”

He turned to John begging for answers, and John felt hopeless when he had none to give.

“Let’s sit down,” John said quietly, motioning to two chairs beside the hospital bed.

Sherlock let out a long sigh as he did and brought his fingers to rest underneath his chin.

“When my mum became sick it just happened so fast,” Sherlock suddenly announced. John turned to him, shocked. His boyfriend hardly ever talked about his mum’s death; he actually didn’t even know exactly what happened to her. He knew how painful her death was and never questioned him about it. “She went to the doctor because she had headaches; Mycroft later told me she just thought her migraines were getting really bad. It turned out she had a brain tumor.”

“Oh my god,” John breathed, raising a hand to his arm.

Closing his eyes, Sherlock’s voice broke as he continued:

“I was in so much denial. I just thought maybe she’d need to rest in bed for a while and then she’d get better, like having the flu. She would let me spend all day in bed with her, reading stories, watching telly, playing board games. I had no idea how seriously ill she was until she suddenly just couldn’t get out of bed at all. Her vision problems were very bad and she didn’t have the strength to walk. She barely lasted a year after her diagnosis.”

John grabbed his hand and squeezed it and Sherlock squeezed back.

“I honestly don’t even know if my father ever knew she died,” he said. “But you know...if Mum was alive today and found out my father had cancer, I think she would be upset. That’s just the kind of person she was.”

“That’s the kind of person you are,” John blurted out. His boyfriend was clearly startled but let him continue. “You have an amazing heart. I can imagine what a wonderful person your mum was because of all these amazing qualities you have. You have a good soul.”

Shaking his head, Sherlock pointed out:

“If Mycroft found out about our father he wouldn’t care. He wouldn’t even acknowledge it.”

“Yeah, well...Mycroft’s a very different kind of bloke.”

“I shouldn’t be so forgiving,” Sherlock announced.

“You don’t have to forgive him,” John insisted. “But if you came to some sort of...not even an understanding just...a common ground with him, would that be the worst thing in the world?”
His boyfriend was quiet for a long moment before he just shook his head.

“I don’t know,” he confessed bitterly.

At that moment the door to the room opened, and a nurse rolled his father into the room in a wheelchair. The man looked like he had had the life beaten out of him. Unfortunately, with his experience with cancer patients he knew that was exactly what Desmond was probably feeling like. He hardly seemed to register they were even there.

“Can I get you anything else, Mr Holmes?” The nurse asked.

John noticed she did not handcuff Desmond to the bed railing- he must be officially off the hook for the murder. Sherlock’s father gave the nurse a feeble shake of the head, but the nurse left him a cup of water anyway.

Adjusting his position in the bed, Desmond threw his head back and licked his cracked lips. His son reached over for the water and raised it to his lips, forcing him to drink some.

“Thank you,” Desmond muttered weakly. He breathed deeply for a few moments; he sounded out of breath, as though he had been running.

“Have you been out of breath a lot lately?” John asked.

He wanted to ask what type of cancer he had, but he thought it’d be better to ease Sherlock into the conversation later.

“No,” Desmond said, shaking his head. He let out a nasty round of coughs that made his stomach churned, and Desmond finally turned to his son. “They told you about the treatments.”

It wasn’t a question.

Sherlock nodded yes.

Gazing up at the ceiling, Desmond licked his lips a few times and blinked. John knew the withdrawal from the forced overdose was making the treatment a hundred times worse, and he had to admire the man just for being able to be alert and talking.

“I should have told you sooner,” Desmond sighed. “It’s lung cancer.”

For a moment, John stopped breathing.

He had met many, many lung cancer patients in his career. The battle was…the battle wasn’t anything he could ever imagine going through himself. But for a drug addict, for a smoker…John had a horrible feeling Desmond was fighting a losing battle.

“John…” Sherlock announced, his voice dry and broken. “Do you mind leaving us alone for a moment?”

He was surprised Sherlock asked, but still he nodded and got to his feet. He gave Sherlock a quick kiss before quietly leaving the room.

After closing the hospital room door behind him John let out a long sigh and closed his eyes. A tear slipped from his eye and John batted at it, not even sure where that had come from. He didn’t even know the man. Desmond had hurt his sons so much- hurt his whole family so much. Sherlock was right…why should any of them feel anything?
Why did they?

Probably for the same reason I still think about mum every day, John thought.

John took out his mobile, and for a split second he really thought he had the courage to phone her.

But what would he say?

What would she have to say to him?

Last time he phoned—on a whim, on a random boring Saturday afternoon—she didn’t even pick up.

Instead he phoned his sister.

It rang a couple of times, and a lump formed in his throat. Was she ignoring him too? Was she angry with him?

Then…

“John?” Came the quietest greeting, from so far away.

“Hey,” he breathed, voice shaking.

He walked away from the room, to a chair at the end of the corridor, to give himself some privacy.

“How’s America?” Harry asked.

There was actually a bit of energy in her voice, and John was so relieved to hear it.

“It’s good! Yeah it’s…it’s really good. I kind of miss London though.”

“I bet,” Harry teased. “I bet Sherlock’s going mental.”

John let out a genuine laugh, and he couldn’t remember the last time he’d laughed while talking to his sister. He actually found himself smiling, and he was really very glad that he had worked up the strength to phone her. It was so good to hear her voice, to remind himself that he did still have family out there somewhere, family that did love him.

Well, most of the time, he thought to himself.

“Yeah, he is;” he replied, “but it’s really nice to get to see him with family. It’s really strange, actually.”

Harry let out a giggle, and John’s smile broadened. He paused for a moment, wondering if he should confessed everything that’s been happening with Sherlock’s father. But he knew as much as he loved Harry, she sometimes could be a gossip or try to get into other people’s business, and it probably wouldn’t be the best idea.

“How are you doing?” He asked instead.

It was the question both of them dreaded. Admittedly, she usually wasn’t very truthful with him. She usually just passed the question off with a simple “I’m fine”, and they just pretended nothing was wrong. If they dared to venture into the topic further it always resulted in a fight. It was like they both knew that, and they were both so afraid of fighting that they just tried not to get into too deep of conversations.
"I’m really good," she said. Naturally, he wasn’t surprised. He tried not to feel too hurt that she wasn’t honest with him, but maybe now really wasn’t the time to get into this, when they were so far apart. “Really John…thank you, for pushing me to go to rehab again. Thank you for convincing me I could do this. It really helped. I’ve been staying with Mum and Dad and…it’s been living hell with Mum, but my relationship with Dad couldn’t be stronger. I’m sober- I’ve even got a job at a library.”

His eyes lit up at the news. Harry had never had jobs that were anything more than jobs in shops so the news that she sought out something more than that was really promising news.

“That’s brilliant!” He exclaimed. “Really, Harry, I’m very proud of you. How’s the job going?”

“It’s not bad,” Harry admitted. “It’s just part-time, but I really feel like I’m doing something worthwhile. I mean…it’s just sorting books and learning about the front desk work, but still. It feels like a real job.”

“It is a real job, and I’m really proud of you for trying it out.”

“Thanks!”

He could just imagine smiling to herself. It seemed like she had gotten a major boost to her self-esteem, and he couldn’t have been more grateful that things were turning out so well. He was even proud of himself for being strong enough to get angry with her, to convince her to do something he knew she wouldn’t want to do.

“How’s Dad?” He asked, feeling guilty about his lack of communication with his own father.

“Not too bad,” Harry said; he knew she was holding back on him. “He loses energy pretty easy, but whenever I’m home I try to get him to do stuff. We take walks around the neighborhood most nights. Mostly we just talk…did you know when he was young he got arrested for being drunk and disorderly?”

John barked out a laugh; he covered his mouth immediately, remembering he was in a hospital.

“No way!” He said.

“Yes!” She laughed. “He was seventeen. He and some of his mates were drinking down by the river. I guess they got a bit too rowdy and were somewhere they weren’t supposed to be, and someone phoned the police on them. He actually had to have granddad come bail him out.”

“Oh wow,” he said, running his hand over his face. “I remember granddad yelling at me once because I lied and told him I didn’t have any homework to do while he was watching us. I can’t imagine how badly he yelled at Dad for that.”

“It sounded brutal,” she said with a giggled. There was a long pause; the smile on his face lingered.

“Remember when granddad used to make homemade pizza for us?”

“Yeah,” he nodded, “I thought it was the coolest thing in the world that my granddad could make pizza himself.”

*I’ll have to try that with Sherlock one night…*

He imagined such efforts would end with their Baker Street kitchen covered in dough and sauce and Mrs Hudson freaking out at the very sight.
Nearby a door opened and shut, and he froze when he spotted his boyfriend hovering nearby the doorway of his father’s hospital room. He looked a bit…traumatised. His eyes seemed to be begging John for support, and he didn’t hesitate to immediately announced to Harry:

“Hey… I’m sorry, I need to go.”

“That’s fine,” she replied; she didn’t seem to be too upset at all. “John… thank you again. For everything.”

Pocketing his mobile, John walked over to his partner. For a moment they both just stood there, not sure what to say. He kept waiting for Sherlock to do something, say something, or give him some kind of cue about what he should do.

But… nothing.

“Ready to get out of here?” John finally asked quietly.

Sherlock simply gave him a stiff nod.

He looked like he might be ill.

John took his love by the arm and led him passed the hospital doors, into the carpark and to their rental car. Neither said a word as he climbed inside; Sherlock had seemed to retreat into his shell again. He leaned his head against the passenger window as John started up the engine. By the time he pulled out of the parking space Sherlock’s eyes were closed.

He was shutting himself off from the world.

Chapter End Notes

It was interesting trying to figure out how to wrap this case up and then I decided... why not just stick with canon? I know my version of the case isn’t perfect, but it's a case I really enjoy so I wanted to find a place for it in this fic!

And I thought it was important to finally explain exactly why Sherlock's mum passed away.

So... I'm over 1000 comments!! Woo-hoo! Thanks SO much!!! *hugs* I always love hearing your feedback, every comment and kudos makes me smile!

In the next chapter you'll find out what Sherlock and his father talked about. Then it's back to Schenectady to the family. And Christmas is coming soon for them!
Fathers and Sons

They sat in a painful silence, Sherlock with his fingertips rested under his chin and his father in bed, wheezing as he struggled to breathe in and out. The sound sent a chill down his spine, and he finally felt obligated to break their silence and ask:

“Are you alright?”

His father nodded, but even as he did he winced in pain.

“Chemo is killer,” his father muttered. He threw a glance to his son, his eyes full of self-pity. “But my lung capacity has always been shit. All those damn cigarettes.”

A pit fell in his stomach, and he was hit with a wave of guilt as he thought of all the hundreds of packs of cigarettes he had smoked in his life.

And then he thought of the packs he had seen in his father’s garage and the obvious smell of smoke that lingered on his clothing.

“But you still smoke,” he pointed out.

Shrugging, he mumbled:

“I’m already dying.”

He was certain John would punch him in the face if he ever made a statement like that. Even though he still wasn’t sure he felt any attachment to his father, it truly angered him to hear him sound that defeated.

“Then why do the treatments?” Sherlock shot. “Why not just…let things run its course?”

It was a horrible thing to say, but he could tell it struck a chord with his father.

“You wouldn’t understand,” he sighed.

With a bark of laughter Sherlock shook his head.

“You are a coward,” he spat.

“And what would you know about quitting smoking?” His father challenged.

“I’ve quit for almost a year now.”

His father’s eyebrows shot up, clearly shocked and impressed. He reached over for some water, and Sherlock gave him time, letting him talk when he was ready.

“What were you doing smoking?”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to laugh. That was literally the only thing his father had ever said to him that was the least be parental.

“All the cool kids were doing it,” Sherlock mocked.

Letting out a feeble laugh, his father shook his head and asked:
“Does Mycroft smoke too?”

He knew his brother would hate him for telling his father *anything* about him, but what was the harm in telling a dying man a little detail about his eldest son?

“Yeah,” Sherlock nodded. “He’s mostly quit now.”

What he didn’t want to admit was that it was Mycroft who actually turned him onto smoking in the first place. Sherlock was seventeen when he first saw the pack on top of his brother’s dresser drawer, and he decided to give it a try. Everyone at school was doing it, and he wanted to be prepared in case anyone asked him offered him one.

Mycroft had walked in on him.

He expected his brother to be livid- he actually was afraid he’d hit him. Instead Mycroft simply grabbed a cigarette for himself and showed him the proper way to smoke.

He wondered how much Mycroft regretted that today. It had to possibly be the stupidest brotherly decision Mycroft had made.

“What does he do for a living?” His father asked.

Sherlock was a bit surprised he was being interrogated about Mycroft, but then again he supposed it was natural for his father to be curious- and it wasn’t like he would get the information anywhere else.

“He’s a bit…unemployed right now,” Sherlock confessed.

He couldn’t help but to smirk and wonder how his father would react if he knew exactly what kind of job his son had previously held.

“Hurting for money?”

He let out another laugh.

“No,” he replied.

“I didn’t think so,” his father admitted, “not with that suit he was wearing.”

The smallest of smiles appeared out of the corners of Sherlock’s lips.

“He always looks like that,” he teased.

And there he was, actually having a somewhat civil conversation with his father. It was something that he never would have dreamt of happening- something he was certain he didn’t want to happen. But…it wasn’t too bad. John was right: if they could at least come to some sort of understanding, would that be the worst thing in the world?

Suddenly his father’s eyes landed on him and he studied him, as though wondering if it was okay to dig any deeper into his life.

“Why does your boyfriend walk with a limp?” He asked quietly.

Eyes falling to the floor, Sherlock folded his hands and drew in a deep breath.

“He was shot awhile back on a case,” he admitted. “It’s actually the second time he’s been shot: he
was shot in Afghanistan a couple of years ago. He was an army doctor.”

“Wow.”

The room fell silent as his father closed his eyes and bit his lip. Sherlock stared at the floor, determined to hold himself together and not become overwhelmed with emotion.

“Do you love him?” His father suddenly asked, opening his eyes.

Sherlock saw no reason to hide the truth.

He nodded.

“Hold onto him,” his father said, looking him in the eye. “Treat him right. Let him know…let him know he’s the most important thing in your life.”

Taken aback, Sherlock sat with his mouth slightly agape, unsure of how to react. His father’s advice was actually…helpful. It was thoughtful. It was…clearly advice his father regretted not following in his life.

He found himself simply nodding.

“You don’t have to make my same mistakes,” his father said.

Except…he already had.

“I did drugs,” Sherlock blurted out. He raised a trembling hand to his mouth; tears threatened to rise to the surface. “I was addicted to cocaine…for years I was addicted to it.”

He opened his eyes nervously, expecting his father to be hurt, furious…

Instead he looked sympathetic.

“They change you,” his father replied, his voice haunting. Hollow. “The drugs…they turn you into a different person. You have no idea the number of nights I’ve stayed up, wondering how everything would have turned out differently if I had never taken that first hit.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock whispered.

He felt empty inside. How would his life have turned out if he had just said no to that first hit? He could remember it so clearly: Luke telling him it was okay, it was no big deal. He could remember being so terrified of how the drugs made him feel. Then he remembered how…how calm they made things seem, how easily he was able to handle everything.

It was all so, so stupid.

He wasn’t even strong enough to say no. He wasn’t strong enough to deal with the pressures of uni on his own. Maybe if he had…maybe he never would have fallen in love with a drug lord. He would have never would have never come so close to dying so many times. He would have never known what it was like to spend the night sleeping on concrete in a freezing alley.

At the same time he might not have ever met Greg…he might not have ever met John.

But he refused to think of it like that.

“When was your last hit?” His father asked.
A shiver went down his spine as he replied:

“Over four years ago.”

“You started young?”

He nodded.

His father’s eyes fell shut. He looked pained. He looked- dare Sherlock think it- guilty.

“I pushed myself away from Mycroft,” he said. “I refused his help. I hit rock bottom more times than I’d like to admit. I…I almost died a few times.”

His father actually looked a bit ill at his confession. Somehow that made him feel relieved, knowing his father would have cared if he had died. He was overwhelmed with nervous tension, unsure of what more to say or what else he wanted to confess. He was well aware that this might be the only chance he might ever have to tell his father anything. It would be his only chance to ever have answers to his questions.

And he still couldn’t decide if he wanted those answers.

There was one thing he knew he did want to know though.

“Do you…do you know about Mum?”

What he really wanted to ask was if his father still felt any kind of love for his mum- if he ever did. Did they get married because they had a kid and felt like they had to? Did they only try to stay together because they had another kid and felt like they had to make it work?

His father’s face was void of any emotion as he replied:

“Yes. A mutual friend told me.”

So…his father knew their mother had passed away, knew his sons were left on their own with no parents to raise them, knew they would be desperate for support…and yet he never so much as phoned?

He could understand why Mycroft didn’t want anything, anything to do with their father. He really could.

“You wouldn’t have wanted me,” his father suddenly announced, as though he could read his mind. Sherlock’s eyes shifted up to him, cold and unforgiving. He was really curious what excuse it was his father was about to give him. “I was a drug addict. I couldn’t hold down a job. I wasn’t good enough to be your father.”

But you are my father! He wanted to shout. What gives you the right to decide not to be?

“You could have tried harder,” he mumbled.

“Yeah, I could have.”

Sherlock jumped to his feet and stared bitterly at the wall for a long moment before he decided he finally had to say what was really on his mind before it ate at him for good.

“Why didn’t you?” He demanded. “Why couldn’t you have cleaned up? Why didn’t you want to-why didn’t you want to at least try to be there for your kids?”
“Do you really think any social services or family lawyer would have let me near you?” His father spat. “I was a drug addict. I was… I was, I was abusive.”

Squeezing his eyes shut, his father drew in a strangled breath. He raised his hands to his face, pressing hard against his eyes, and Sherlock realised he was desperately fighting back tears.

“Mycroft wouldn’t have let me near you,” his father finally admitted, his voice breaking as he did.

“I know you used to hit him,” Sherlock said stiffly.

His father didn’t reply. Instead he continued to lay back with his eyes closed, like he was fighting a mental breakdown. For the first time he had a feeling that his father really was ashamed of the life he had lived, so much so that he felt like he didn’t deserve to try to find forgiveness.

“Your brother has every right to hate me,” he breathed, “but your mother wouldn’t have wanted me around you. She actually had a restraining order against me, I don’t know if you ever knew it.”

He didn’t, and somehow that surprised him. He never liked to think of the pain his mother must have gone through during that marriage and divorce. He especially never thought about the legal hassle she had to have gone through- and not to mention the pain and fear of getting away from her abusive husband.

“It just wasn’t possible,” his father said. His watery eyes raised to meet Sherlock’s. A pit fell in his stomach and a lump developed in his own throat. “I do regret it. I regret it all. I deserve this, this disease, because I shouldn’t be allowed to live after what I did to my family.”

As angry as he was, as disgusted as he was at his father, Sherlock didn’t think anyone deserved cancer, and it chilled him to the bone to think his father hated himself so much that he just wanted to be done with his life.

“You shouldn’t be here,” his father muttered. “You shouldn’t want anything to do with me. Your brother is right to want you to stay away from me. You don’t have to try to reconnect with me. I don’t know what you’re looking for, but you don’t need it.”

He still wasn’t sure what he was looking for either. At least his father was admitting his wrongdoings, he was admitting how ashamed he was. But it made Sherlock wonder even more why he cared. Why was he here?

“I don’t know what I’m looking for either,” Sherlock confessed softly.

His father’s eyes flashed to him again.

“Maybe you want to make sure that you’re not me.”

Sherlock’s eyes went wide. His heart skipped a beat.

Maybe that was it!

He needed to know that there was hope for him. He needed to know that his past didn’t control his future. He needed to know that he could change- and change for good. That he wasn’t destined to be a… deadbeat.

He was so afraid that one day John would wake up and realise he wasn’t good enough for him. He was afraid one day John would really think about everything he had learned about Sherlock’s pass and that it would scare him so much he would run away.
He was afraid that one day, John would want to get married and would second guess his faith that Sherlock was a good enough man to spend the rest of his life with.

“You aren’t me,” his father announced. ‘You got clean. You’re in love. You care about your partner, I can tell. You’re turning your life around, and you can do that. Permanently. I’m…I’m proud of you.’

Sherlock’s eyes lit up. The statement was possibly the last thing he ever expected to hear from his father. He felt tears form in his own eyes and he shut them, letting out a long breath.

“I’m sorry I let you down,” his father went on. “I don’t deserve to call you my son. I’ve read all about you on the internet. You live a life worth living. You saved yourself mistakes that most people can never come back from. You don’t have to worry about being like me because you are not. You are so much better than me.”

It was a total relief hearing those words from his father.

“You really worried about that, didn’t you?” His father asked quietly.

Sherlock didn’t respond. He didn’t move a muscle.

“Mycroft raised you better than I ever could,” his father sighed. “And your mum raised him better than I ever could have.”

He knew that was true.

That was the worst part.

No matter how much he argued with his father about why he couldn’t straighten up and treat his family right, he knew it was something that was just never possible.

“If you did drugs you know how much they change you,” his father said. “You know what they do to your head. They turn you into a different person.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock whispered, thinking of all the times he had fought—physically, in fact— with Mycroft. All those nights he no longer had memory of. All those alleyways he woke up in, not really sure how he got there.

“I’m a coward, Sherlock.”

It still startled him to hear his father say his name.

His father ran his hands over his pale face and licked at his dry, cracked lips. He shuddered suddenly, as though a chill just went through him.

“Take care of yourself, son,” his father went on quietly. “Hold onto your love. Take care of him.”

Sherlock nodded.

“I will,” he whispered.

With a heavy sigh his father looked over to him one last time. He was so obviously drained, his eyes were so very empty. Sherlock wasn’t sure how he was managing to keep working.

He could have kept interrogating his father. He could have asked him how he came to be addicted to drugs, if he ever really loved his mum, why he ever moved to New York and if he ever tried to
turn his life around when he found out he was having a third child.

But perhaps there were some questions he just shouldn’t know the answer to.

“I think I should rest,” his father mumbled. He let out a shaky breath. “This damn disease…makes me so weak. I dunno how long I’ll be able to keep working.”

Part of him was tempted to offer his father financial help, but part of him was afraid his father would actually take advantage of him if he did. Not to mention he didn’t exactly have lots of money to loan out right now.

“Get some rest,” Sherlock said quietly as he got to his feet. “Is there anything I can get for you before I leave? Do you need anything from the nurses?”

Shaking his head, his father instead grabbed his hand, looked him in the eye and pleaded:

“Just promise me one thing…take care of my daughter.”

Sherlock nodded. A lump developed in his throat again, but he managed to croak out:

“I will. I promise…I will.”

He let his hand drop limply and stiffly turned away from the hospital bed. He heard his father struggled to breathe in a good, deep, breath and a knot formed in his stomach as he reached for the doorknob.

"Thank you, by the way," his father announced, "for taking my case."

He could only nod.

He felt like he was choking on air as he stepped into the corridor and slumped against the closed hospital room door and desperately looked around for John. His lover was sitting in a plastic chair at the end of the hall, mobile in hand and a faint smile on his tired face.

He looked beautiful.

As soon as their eyes met John ended his call and gracefully walked toward him.

Sherlock was grateful when John didn’t interrogate him and instead simply asked:

“Ready to get out of here?”

He simply gave him a stiff nod.

Even as they hit fresh air Sherlock still felt like the world was suffocating him. He just didn’t know how to react, what to think. He had just had one of the only and probably the last conversations he would ever have with his father, and he felt…he felt like he still wasn’t sure what to think about him. He didn’t really feel like he had found much closure. It wasn’t like Sherlock could just forgive his father now.

If possible he was more confused about his past as ever.

The two of them stayed quiet as they slipped into the car. Sherlock let his head fall against the cool window and closed his eyes. The sound of the engine starting up was rather soothing to him: it meant that this was finally over. He needed to get out of Syracuse. He needed to forget this place even existed.
As the car pulled onto the main road and he could feel the stop and go of traffic, and he let the roar of the engine calm his nervous as he began to slip away.
Sherlock shivered in the cold as he sat outside his sister’s house in the wooden swing that hung from one of their oak trees. Thanksgiving was forgotten as Christmas was only a few weeks away. His sister was becoming obsessed with making sure the final Christmas at her house was perfect, and all of the decorating, shopping talk, and overall cheeriness had begun to drive him insane. He had to get out of the house…even if it was cold enough to see his own breath outside.

How could they expect him to be so cheerful about some holiday when his father was dying of cancer just a few hours away? How could they expect him to be so cheerful when he was still so torn about how he was supposed to feel?

The only solution, he thought, was to just let it all slip away. He couldn’t let himself get caught up in these…emotions.

“Oh!” Sherlock jumped at the sound of Greg’s voice. He looked up at his mate, blinking in confusion as Greg handed him a can of American beer. “Drink?”

“It’s barely three o’clock,” he pointed out.

Shrugging, Greg took a long drink of his beer and replied:

“It’s never too early to start drinking when you’re on holiday. Besides, it’s after eight London time. And, you know, I’m still all messed up from the time difference.”

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock reluctantly took the drink from Greg’s hands. After all, at least it would provide him with a distraction.

“Come on, let’s go for a walk,” Greg said.

“Why?” He mumbled.

Greg let out an exasperated sigh.

“Because! Ever since you two got back from that case you’ve just been moping around like a sad puppy or something.”

“How many of those beers have you had?” Sherlock asked, eyeing Greg suspiciously.

“Just one, thank you!” Greg snapped. “Look mate, I’m worried about you. I know what you get all reserved like this it’s not a good sign. I just want you to know that you can talk to me. I know it’s weird, me being with your brother and all, but you can still trust me. We can still be mates.”

The truth was he really didn’t feel like he could trust Greg- especially not with this. It just wouldn’t be right to ask Greg to keep something like this from his partner. He knew Greg would feel like he had to tell Mycroft.

“I’m fine,” Sherlock insisted.

Eyes narrowing, Greg lowered his voiced and asked:
“Did you and John get into a fight?”

Sherlock jumped into his feet. Glaring at Greg, he tightened his hands into fists and spat:

“No.”

“Sorry,” Greg said, holding up his hands in his defence. “I just wanted to make sure you’re okay.”

He tried his best to not blink, to not show any sign that he was lying.

“I’m okay,” he announced.

Greg nodded, but Sherlock knew the DCI didn’t buy it.

“Right, well… do you mind if we take a walk anyway? There was something else I wanted to ask you.”

Raising his eyebrows, Sherlock didn’t protest as he let Greg lead him away from the house. They walked along the woods bordering Laura’s property, far from earshot of anyone back at the house. In fact, Greg walked on the other side of Sherlock, with his shoulders slightly turned toward the house, and he got it.

He knew Mycroft might be watching them, and he didn’t want his partner to read his lips.

“I have no bloody idea what to get Mycroft for Christmas,” Greg finally blurted out.

Sherlock couldn’t help but to let out a laugh and smirk.

“I promise you, Greg, the very last thing Mycroft cares about is what he gets for Christmas.”

“I know,” Greg sighed, “but he’s just going through such a hard time. Losing his job has been harder on him that he’s admitting- I don’t even think he can admit to himself how hard it’s been on him. I really just want to cheer him up.”

“I don’t know why you’re asking me,” Sherlock shrugged. “Have I ever been known for my gift-giving skills?”

Greg bit his lip.

“No…” he admitted, “but you’re his brother. Can you think of anything special? Anything unique that he’s always wanted?”

Letting out another laugh, Sherlock ran his hands through his hair and shook his head in disbelief that he was having this conversation.

“You do remember you’re talking about Mycroft, right?” He said.

He couldn’t help but to wonder if maybe Greg was going through something himself, something that had him convinced he had to come up with the perfect Christmas present or everything would be ruined.

“I thought about maybe taking him on holiday,” Greg sighed. “Not that I’ll have much time off after this trip, mind you, but maybe a get-away for a weekend. I just feel like that’s unoriginal.”

“What’s wrong with a holiday?” Sherlock asked as he shuffled through the fallen leaves. “You two aren’t exactly getting younger. What is it they say? Travel while you can.”
“Thanks,” Greg mumbled.

In all honesty he thought travelling was the perfect gift to his brother. After all, the man could afford pretty much whatever material object he wanted. But if Greg took the time to plan a surprise holiday, he knew Mycroft would be impressed.

“It’s really not a bad idea,” Sherlock insisted. “Besides, this New York trip hardly counts as a honeymoon-“

“That’s it!” Greg exclaim, his eyes lighting up. “We need a honeymoon. I can book us a nice B&B somewhere, maybe France, Spain-“

“Iceland,” Sherlock suddenly spoke up, remembering a conversation he had with his brother when Mycroft was in his late twenties. “He always wanted to go to Iceland in his youth. He’s never gotten to go, even for work.”

“Iceland,” Greg muttered under his breath, considering it. “Do you know anything about Iceland?”

Sherlock simply shrugged.

Slapping him on the back, Greg grinned at him and took one last long drink of his beer. Sherlock had completely forgotten the drink in his own hand.

“Well thanks for the tip, mate!” Greg offered. “Any idea what you’re getting John?”

“We’ve got it all figured out,” he said. A cold wind blew through them, and Sherlock stuffed his hands deep into his coat pockets. Laura had mentioned getting a fire going tonight- that idea sounded amazing after being out in the cold. “We’re doing our own NYC trip. He’s actually taking me to a symphony.”

“Aw, that’s sweet,” Greg mocked. “Want to bet how long it takes him to fall asleep?”

Sherlock snorted.

“Oh I’ve already warned him what happens if he falls asleep,” he said with a wicked grin.

The next night he woke up at one in the morning to find his lover staring blankly at his computer screen.

“John, what’s wrong?” Sherlock mumbled.

“This is it,” John whispered ominously.

Sitting up, Sherlock ran his hands through his hair and blinked, trying to shake himself out of sleep.

“What’s it?”

Swallowing nervously, John waved his hand toward his laptop.

“My final draft of the book is due tonight,” he explained. He just sounded so…scared. Helpless. Sherlock’s heart immediately fell for him; he knew how nervous John had been about sending in that final draft. He had lost count of the number of revisions his blogger had done. The consulting detective himself had read most of the drafts each time when John was finished, and he honestly thought each was better than the previous.
“The book is excellent, John, it’s brilliant!” Sherlock said. He placed his hand on the small of his lover's back. “You’ve done really well. You should be proud of yourself.”

“Yeah?” John asked in a small voice, turning toward him.

“Yeah,” Sherlock smiled. Leaning in, he gave John a soft kiss on the lips. “I’m very proud of you.”

John let out a long breath and then shook his arms and his body, as though trying to shake away his all of his nerves.

“Okay,” the author announced. “I can do this.”

“You can do this,” Sherlock echoed.

“Here goes nothing,” John said, letting out a shaky sigh.

He reached up to stroke John’s hair as his boyfriend sent one final email to his agent. As soon as he did John slammed his laptop shut and slid it under the bed, as though trying to hide away all temptations of doubt.

“I did it,” John laughed. “God this is really happening!”

They both laughed as Sherlock scooped John into his arms and pushed him back down into the bed. John’s eyes shut tightly as their lips smashed together and Sherlock’s arms reached around his boyfriend’s back.

“Have you been up all night?” Sherlock murmured in between attacking John’s neck with his lips.

“Yes,” John breathed, stretching out his neck to give Sherlock more surface to work with.

“Sherlock.”

Sherlock’s hand wasted no time in finding the bulge in John’s pyjama pants and grasping it, making John gasp in surprise.

“I want you,” John whispered. “All of you.”

His hands ran over Sherlock’s face, down his chest, around to his back.

“My blogger,” said Sherlock with a grin as he situated himself with his knees on either side of John’s legs, preparing to take him.

But suddenly he stopped.

It was all hitting him.

John was going to be an author. A published author.

“We could become rich!” Sherlock realised out loud.

“I could become rich,” John said, grinning as he stroked Sherlock’s chest.

Frowning, Sherlock really thought about the money part of this deal for the first time.

“Wait, don’t I get a share?” He whined. “But I’m the star!”

“I might share,” John teased. “Maybe!”
He leaned up and kissed Sherlock on the lips; heat passed between their bodies. John tasted of late night coffee and smelled of mint shampoo. His partner seemed almost giddy as Sherlock’s hands roamed his body, squeezing at his hips and arse, flicking at his nipples. They were both completely relaxed in each other’s arms.

*We need this*, Sherlock thought as he reached again for John’s clothed covered cock and rubbed gently through the fabric of his pyjamas.

“Christ Sherlock!” John hissed as he threw his body back against the mattress.

“Are you okay?” Sherlock asked.

“Yeah,” his partner whispered, nodding nervously as Sherlock tucked his pyjamas down beneath his hips and down to his ankles.

John’s skin felt warm as he ran Sherlock ran his fingertips across his hips. He felt John’s arms wrap around his waist as he inched closer to him. Reaching for the bedside table, John opened the top drawer clumsily with his hands. Sherlock began to roll his hips, teasing John with thrusting motions. His own body was taken over by a comfortable warmth. His breathing began to pick up and his heart began to pound in anticipation of what they were about to do.

Flicking open the bottle of lube, Sherlock poured some on his palm and reached down to begin opening John up. John tensed up on instinct as Sherlock pressed his finger in further; he reached out to brush his hand up and down his boyfriend’s chest, trying to get him to relax. Sherlock hadn’t taken him like this since the shooting. He could tell John was anxious and maybe even a little nervous.

“Is this okay?” Sherlock whispered in the dark as he slipped a second finger in. John nodded desperately. “Does this hurt?”

“It’s fine,” John breathed.

The room fell silent. Only the sounds of their rugged breathing could be heard as Sherlock found his lover’s prostate and stroked, teasing him. A soft moan escaped John’s mouth as he arched his back, pushing his arse upward toward Sherlock’s hand. With a wicked smile on his face Sherlock added a third finger and twisted his hand as he picked up the pace. Another moan resounded from his lover, and Sherlock’s own body was alive with energy. He wanted this. He *needed* this.

“Ready?” Sherlock asked.

His voice seemed to echo in the quiet room. John nodded and let out a long breath as he watched Sherlock line up his cock. Gently he began pressing in; they both let out gasps at the pressure.

“Oh god!” John hissed. His eyes closed tightly, and Sherlock almost pulled out in fear that he hurt him but John grabbed his shoulder to keep in him in place.

Grunting, Sherlock pushed himself in all the way. He paused for a moment to let John adjust. They were both panting, trying to adjust to the feeling, the tightness, after so long. Sherlock learned forward so he could distract his lover with a soft kiss. Their lips locked, their arms wrapped around each other’s body, and Sherlock gently began rocking against his boyfriend. John was gorgeous beneath him: his lips parted ever so slightly, his eyes closed, his breathing coming out in erratic pants.

“Is this okay?” Sherlock gasped as he slowly began to pick up the pace.
“Stop…asking…that…oh god!”

With a groan Sherlock leaned forward so that their chests touched. He sucked just above his ear, enjoying the sounds of panting coming from his boyfriend’s mouth.

Suddenly Sherlock found the spot. John’s eyes flashed open and he let out a scream- which Sherlock muffled with his hand just in time. He was extremely aware of how quiet the house was, of how their family was just right up stairs. His partner cried out again against the palm of his hand, and Sherlock threw himself forward to capture his lips in a kiss. His tongue slipped inside John’s mouth and traced across his teeth, dipped back into his throat. As he moaned against his kisses John thrust up against him madly.

“Fuck!” John hissed, breaking away all of a sudden as he started to come…completely untouched. “Shit.”

“Oh my god,” Sherlock panted.

Seeing his lover come untouched like that was so perfect, so hot that Sherlock’s own body suddenly tensed up. He pressed his forehead against John’s and moaned as he came. Trembling in John’s arms, Sherlock sat there for a moment trying to calm down.

“That was so bloody hot,” Sherlock finally announced quietly in the dark.

Although he was blushing, John let out a laugh and relaxed back into the mattress. His cheeks were pink, and his chest was red with a warm flush. Sherlock’s heart rate finally seemed to come down to a normal speed as he pulled out of John and collapsed in bed next to him.

“Sorry it was over so fast,” John offered.

“Nonsense. Feel free to wake me up every night to do that!”.

They were both grinning wildly as they leaned over for a final kiss. John let Sherlock rest his head on his chest. He wasted no time in running his fingers through Sherlock’s curls; it actually felt rather relaxing.


John was quiet for a long moment as he continued to run his fingers through Sherlock’s hair, but he was content with simply listening to the thump-thump thump-thump of his lover’s heartbeat and feeling the warmth of his body.

“You realise this really will change things,” John announced suddenly, breaking the silence after a few moments. “What if the book really does takes off? What if we really do become world famous?”

“We’ll deal with it,” Sherlock shrugged.

“Yeah but…this could take over my life!”

“…or it could completely fail.”

“That’s nice of you,” John mumbled.

It was obvious to him that John was really, truly, worried about this. He knew his boyfriend had a
bad habit of worrying what other people thought of him, and he had no doubt John was frantic about what people would think of his writing. He wasn’t just writing a blog anymore: this was a published book. A book that would be on hundreds, perhaps thousands of bookshelves across the country - maybe even more across the world! People might even be writing reviews about him in the newspaper and online. John would be completely exposed to the world.

Bloody hell, he would be exposed to the world.

Their friendship, their partnership, their relationship was about to become the public’s interest. This would change their lives, no matter how much they told themselves it wouldn’t.

All he could do was reassure John that he could do this, that they could do this.

“Look at me,” Sherlock whispered as he held John’s chin in his hands and pointed his face toward him. John’s eyes trailed up to him, desperate for his support. “No matter what happens, I’m right beside you. No matter what happens, we will always be together. I will protect you John, I promise I will. But you are strong enough to do this. You are capable of it. You’ve been to bloody war - you can publish a book!”

John let out a hollow laugh and offered him the smallest of smiles.

“I’m terrified.”

The whispered confession sent a chill down his spine, and Sherlock grasped his partner by the shoulders.

“John Watson,” he whispered, “you are brilliant. There’s nothing anyone can say about you or anything you write that will change the fact that you are an amazing person.”

His boyfriend’s smile grew ever so slightly, but it was enough to make Sherlock hopeful that his words had eased his worries at least somewhat.

“Thank you,” John breathed. “You’re pretty incredible yourself.”

His eyes twinkled as they met Sherlock’s. The two shared one final kiss before they settled down into the sheets that were still sticky and sweaty from sex. He wrapped his arms around John and let his partner curl up against him as they both closed their eyes and let themselves be overcome by sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to get this out sooner, but I’ve been so overwhelmed with work and stress that I never had time to write it! And when I did I was in no place mentally to write :( But finally it's the weekend, and I'm able to relax and have some fun...writing smut! LOL! So I hope you had fun reading it! Thanks for all your feedback!!!!!!
“Happy birthday dear Da-an! Happy birthday to you!”

Sherlock’s now five-year old nephew was jumping up and down by the time his family finished singing “Happy Birthday”, anxious to blow out the candles. He wasted no time as he leaned over the table and blew them out all in one breath. Grinning ear to ear, Dan clapped his hands together and looked up to his mum.

“Can I have the first piece? Pleaseee?” He begged.

Laura ran her hands through her son’s hair; his sister had been more relaxed on her son’s birthday than he could remember seeing her in that week.

“Well, technically I think it would be appropriate that the mother who raised you and went through all the pain of labour to bring you into the world should have the first piece,” Laura pointed out. Her teasing only earned her a glare from her son, and she grinned down at him. “Of course you can have the first piece, sweetie.”

Sherlock hung back, letting Laura serve everyone else before he took his piece. Mycroft had baked the cake himself: it was a vanilla cake complete with designs of the planet Jupiter and Saturn (apparently Dan was going through an astronomy phase). Dan dragged Greg into the living room so he could play the racing game the DCI gave him for a present.

“God I wish I could have some of that,” Laura commented, nodding toward the glass of Merlot Sherlock held in his hands.

“Really?” Sherlock asked, feeling a bit guilty. “It seems like you’re handling your pregnancy pretty well.”

“Yeah, well…” Laura glanced down to the floor. The cake sitting on her plate remained untouched. “I just don’t want everyone worrying about me.”

He hated to think of his sister being in pain, being ill, and feeling like she couldn’t talk to anyone about it.

“You know you can talk to John,” he pointed out. “Or me…or any of us. You don’t have to hide.”

“I know.” She paused for a long moment, like she knew she was being silly but didn’t want to admit it. “The present you and John got for Dan was really nice. He’ll love it.”

He and John had picked out a kid’s telescope set and a kid’s astronomy book to help Dan learn more about the stars. This had, of course, earned him a comment from his boyfriend about how perhaps he too could use some schooling about the solar system.

“I started to love science at his age,” Sherlock confessed. “I always wanted to look at the photos in the science books Mycroft had for school.”

With a laugh, his sister admitted:
“I was always a bit of a tomboy. I was really into sports…I started playing softball at Dan’s age. Then soccer. Then basketball. All I cared about was being outside for as long as possible with my friends. I kind of lost interest in all of that as I got older…”

She stopped short, her eyes fell to the ground, and He knew she was talking about her father, about his abuse.

“I never imagined my life would end up like this.” A tear fell down her cheek as she looked up and watched her son play video games with Greg. Mycroft sat on the armchair near them, pretending to read the newspaper but every now and then Sherlock caught his brother looking up at his fiancé, his lips turned with the smallest, proudest, smile. “I never imagined that I’d have such a perfect son, and now I’m pregnant with another child. Oh god…I’m a mess.”

A smile slipped across her face as she wiped the tear away and shook her head.

“I’ve been an emotional rollercoaster,” she went on. “That’s part of why I don’t like to talk about my pregnancy. My head’s just in a hundred different places at once.”

“It’s perfectly alright,” Sherlock said. Biting his lip, he finally decided to admit something that had secretly been worrying him. “I’ve never known anyone who was pregnant- not personally, I mean. I’m not quite…I’m not quite sure what to expect.”

“You and me both,” Laura laughed. “Every pregnancy is different. Every baby is different.”

“That’s reassuring.”

“Yes, I know.”

They both shared a laugh, and suddenly he felt guilty for ever making the confession.

“Don’t worry, you’re already a great uncle to Dan,” Laura offered. “You’ll figure out how to be a great uncle to a baby too.”

She gave him a reassuring pat on the back before taking her first bite of the cake.

“Oh my god this is delicious!” She exclaimed. Her eyes fluttered to a close as she quickly swallowed a second bite. “I’m never eating store-bought cake again.”

A pair of hands fell on his shoulders and lips brushed across his cheek. Sherlock blushed as John revealed himself and reached for his fork so he could try the cake.

“You know there is a whole cake dish right there,” Sherlock complained. “You don’t have to steal mine.”

Ignoring him, John stuffed a bite of cake into his mouth and his eyes went wide.

“That is gorgeous!” John proclaimed. He took the plate from him but instead of keeping it for himself, John sat it on the counter and grabbed his arm. “I need to talk to you.”

His tone was serious, and Sherlock didn’t argue as he let John drag him down the hall to their guest room. After staying at Laura’s for a couple of weeks it was beginning to look like their room back home- clothes were thrown about the floor, Sherlock’s violin sat in a portable stand he had brought with him on the trip, their laptops lay on the bed and the connected bathroom was littered with their toiletries. Instead of sitting down John began pacing the room, signaling the conversation would be about something Sherlock wouldn’t approve of. The consulting detective leaned against the wall,
waiting for his boyfriend to explain himself.

“Soooo that was my agent,” John began, pausing to run his hands over his head and let out a long sigh. “We were talking about how we were going to market the book. You know, I’ll obviously talk about it on the blog. I’ll probably do a few book signings. But…she wants you to be involved too.”

Sherlock swallowed nervously.

Oh how he hated the word *involved*.

“Involved…how?” He cautiously asked.

John turned to him with apologetic eyes and blurted out:

“She wants you to do interviews.”

For a long moment they stared at each other, and Sherlock was too afraid to ask John what he meant.

“You know…like radio, telly,” John explained. His boyfriend seemed to go into panic mode as Sherlock’s eyes widened. Surely he wasn’t hearing this correctly!

“Telly?!” He exclaimed. “Telly, John?! Can you even begin to imagine me doing an interview on *telly* about a book?!”

He felt a bit bad for lashing out- he could tell John wasn’t sold on the idea either—but he felt like he had to stick up for himself here. It was truly starting to hit him that a book was being written about *him*. *His* life. If they weren’t careful John was right- this *could* take over their lives.

“It doesn’t have to be a big deal,” John reassured him. “Most of those types of interviews are five minutes long, tops. And people always ask you the same questions each time. I’ll help you prepare. We can just do this and get it done: like ripping off a band aid.”

“Like ripping off a band aid on live telly,” Sherlock shot.

Letting out a sigh, John stepped up to him and took his hands.

“You trust me, yeah?” John asked quietly.

Sherlock looked him in the eye and replied:

“With my life.”

John squeezed his hands, and Sherlock could understand what he meant without him having to say it. It wasn’t like his boyfriend had suggested this happened…it really seemed like his hands were tied.


They shared a quick kiss, and John draped an arm around his waist as they made their way back to the birthday party.

A week before and a half before Christmas, Sherlock and John took a train back into New York
City for their own weekend get-a-way. Their main agenda was the symphony John got him tickets
to, but would also be a nice romantic holiday for them. Sherlock found himself antsy with
anticipation. It felt like it had been so long since he and his boyfriend had been alone- truly alone
(the case upstate didn’t count). Beside him John stared out the window, in awe of the scenery
passing by them. With one hand on Sherlock’s knee and the other constantly fidgeting with his
coat buttons, his hair, his mobile, he could tell his partner was just as anxious.

They were finally going to get a truly holiday alone.

One that didn’t involve a murder.

Or kidnapping.

In fact, John had made him solemnly swear that he would not take a case this weekend. He was
even required to sign an official document proclaiming his promise.

They were about to be alone and worry-free, work-free, for three days.

And honestly it seemed like neither one of them knew what to do.

“So…” Sherlock suddenly spoke up a half hour into the trip. “Have you done this before?
Romantic holidays? I know you claimed you hadn't been on a proper holiday like this since your
family went to Australia but come on, you're a romantic. Surely there have been a few romantic
weekends with past girlfriends.”

He knew he put his lover on the spot when John’s cheeks turned a shade of crimson.

“Just…once or twice,” John replied, rubbing the back of his neck with his hand.

A smirk formed at the corners of Sherlock’s lips; he knew his boyfriend wasn’t being entirely
honest.

“Care to share any details?” Sherlock asked.

Swallowing nervously, John’s eyes trailed out the window, as though he were trying to imagine
being anywhere but on this train having this conversation.

“I…went to Spain with a girl in uni,” his partner confessed. Sherlock found himself grinning from
ear to ear at the thought of a much younger John sneaking off to Spain with a young girl. Knowing
John, he probably thought he was king of the world during that trip. “We went as mates, actually,
we had a lot of classes together and both of us hadn’t been abroad- like really far, not just to
Ireland, you know?”

“So Spain was far enough?” Sherlock teased.

“Spain was different enough,” John explained, and Sherlock understood. It wasn’t just about the
distance- younger John had truly wanted to experience another culture for the first time. “We
backpacked across the country. It was very-”

“Intimate?” He grinned.

The comment earned him a sharp glare.

“Thrilling,” John finished. “Honestly it was one of the most exciting travell experiences in my
entire life.”
It was a touching story, but somehow, the travelling bit wasn’t what Sherlock was most curious about…

“And the sex?” He pried.

John’s cheeks went red again.

“Are you trying to compare your bedrooms kills to those of my previous partners?”

Lips curling up into a sly grin, John’s eyes twinkled as he turned the pressure onto him.

“No,” Sherlock replied, perhaps a little too quickly. “I’m just curious, that’s all. You don’t have to give me any details.”

The truth was he had always been a bit curious about John’s sexual history. After all, his boyfriend had come home with so many dates during their year of being “just mates”. What must he have been like in uni? How many girls went after young, hot, doctors?

“No, if you want details, I can give you details,” John said in a voice that was challenging him, daring him to pry into his past. “To be honest I was only twenty-one then. I really hadn’t been in a serious relationship yet, nothing that had lasted longer than a few months at least. She was a few years older than me and…well…a bit more experience. I actually quite embarrassed myself my first time with her, if you must know.”

“Oh?”

Running his hands through his hair, John adjusted himself in his seat.

“I was a bit drunk the first time we…you know…”

“Had sex?” Sherlock said with a grin.

John sank down into his seat.

“I couldn’t really perform,” John admitted. Sherlock bit back a laugh, and John noticed. “It’s not funny! It was really embarrassing, alright?”

“Poor young John,” Sherlock sighed, placing a hand on his lover’s knee. “Surely as a medical student you should have known how much wine would cause you to not be able to perform?”

“Yes,” John muttered through gritted teeth. “But I wasn’t actually planning on sleeping with her at the time.”

This time, Sherlock couldn’t hold back his laugh. He often gave his partner the benefit of the doubt, but even he couldn’t believe that young John would whisk a female friend off to Spain without having any interest in sleeping with her.

“I didn’t!” John whined. Crossing his arms over his chest, John glared out the window and declared: “You’re mean.”

He stole a kiss to his boyfriend’s cheek, but John continued to sulk.

So naturally, Sherlock had to continue to pester him.

“So that was just your first holiday with a girl?” Sherlock pointed out.
“Sherlock!”

“What? I thought I was allowed to be curious!”

Letting his eyes fall to a close, John let out a frustrated sigh, obviously wanting to point out how annoyed he was.

“Fine,” John mumbled. “After medical school I took a couple of weeks off and went to the Caribbean with a girlfriend. That was actually a really nice holiday- a really nice, well-deserved, relaxing holiday, and I’m not going to feel bad about it.”

“I don’t expect you to feel bad about it,” Sherlock said, holding his hands up in his defence. He studied John’s foul expression, trying to decide just how far he could take this. “Would you ever take me to the Caribbean?”

His boyfriend’s eyebrows shot up.

“You want to go to the Caribbean?!”

Shrugging, Sherlock confessed:

“Not particularly. I’m just wondering if you would take me if I did want to go.”

At last his boyfriend smiled, met his eyes, and cupped his cheeks. Their lips brushed together in a soft, gentle, kiss, and his partner’s anxiety seemed to ease up as he announced:

“Of course I would, love.”

Not that he would ever in a million years want to waste time sitting on a touristy beach with thousands of other tourists staring at the ocean, but it was nice to know John would want to do couple-ly things like that with him.

If he did want to do that.

Which he wouldn’t.

It was nightfall when they arrived in New York City, just in time for dinner. Their first stop was to their hotel to drop off their bags, but as soon as their cab dropped them off both lovers found themselves gazing in awe at the building before them. The hotel was based in a remolded 1930s building, and as they wondered through the doors held open by the doormen Sherlock felt like he was stepping back in time. Someone was playing classical piano in the lobby, there was a quaint bar seated on the other side of the room. The staff wore classy, traditional, uniforms and each of them greeted them as they strode up to the check-in desk. A twenty foot tall Christmas tree stood in the lobby, decorated with gold and red ornaments and white lights.

“Exactly how much money did you spend on this place?” John murmured to him.

Placing his arm around John’s waist, he tried to not think about the price tag- the price he actually paid for himself, not even with Mycroft’s card.

“Don’t worry about it,” he whispered into John’s ear. “You deserve it.”

“No, we deserve it,” John said. “Especially after all the hell we’ve been through.”
They exchanged smiles before stepping up to the desk to check in.

Even the halls leading to their rooms were lit with models of old-timey lanterns. Sherlock could just imagine the thousands of people who had strode through these halls over the years: the history they had witnessed, the experiences they had.

“This place is like it’s straight out of an old murder mystery film,” John said. He froze before swiping the key card. “Not that I’m asking for there to be a murder mystery. You do remember our contract, right?”

Sherlock only grinned as his boyfriend opened the door for him.

For all of the historic charm the rest of the hotel held, their room was rather modern and sleek. He supposed the average tourist would be swayed by the outside charm but preferred modern living for the price they had to pay for the room. There was, however, a grand electric fireplace across from the king bed that John didn’t hesitate to turn on.

“This room is huge!” John exclaimed, waltzing over to the sliding glass door leading to the balcony.

Without hesitation his boyfriend threw open the curtains, revealing the New York City skyline before them.

“Wow.” John whispered. He stepped back, as though the sheer beauty of the view physically forced him back. “Just…wow.”

Sherlock grinned as he stepped up beside his boyfriend and slipped his arm around his waist again.

“I love you,” Sherlock whispered.

His lips brushed against John’s neck, but his lover hardly seemed to notice as he raced for the balcony door and stepped out into the cold night air.

“It’s bloody freezing out!” Sherlock complained as he followed his partner.

“Wow.”

It seemed to be all John could say as his eyes danced around the skyline, following the twinkling lights of all the buildings. Below them the traffic noise was deafening, but somehow Sherlock managed to tune that out as he followed his boyfriend’s gaze to the skyline.

The view truly was spectacular.

“I just can’t believe…” John turned to Sherlock, clearly at loss for words. “…I can’t believe we can have this. I feel so lucky right now.”

Without warning, John swooped in, grabbed Sherlock’s hips, and trapped him in a breathtaking kiss.

“I love you,” John breathed as they parted just long enough to gasp for air.

The wind picked up around them- they were rather high up at ten stories- but with John’s arms latched around him Sherlock felt like they could stay like this forever. Their lips danced as they held each other, and Sherlock took a leap of faith and pried John’s lips apart with his tongue. His lover moaned as he began to explore his mouth with his tongue, drinking in the familiar taste of
His partner shivered in his arms and they broke apart, laughing.

“It is a bit cold,” John admitted.

Both of their eyes twinkled as they met, and he knew John was hoping for the same thing he wanted.

“Come on,” Sherlock whispered as he took his hand and lead him back inside.

Once they were back inside their warm hotel room, Sherlock wasted no time in shrugging John’s coat off his shoulders and carefully hanging it in the nearby closet.

“We have dinner reservations in an hour and a half,” John reminded him as he watched Sherlock take off his own coat and roll up his shirt sleeves.

“Oh I don’t need an hour and a half to do what I’m going to do to you.”

His lover visibly shivered at the comment. Instead of explaining, Sherlock simply dropped to his knees in front of John. His eyes drifted up to his partner, curious to see how anxious his boyfriend was at what was about to happen.

“Go ahead,” John whispered.

Sherlock first pressed his lips against John’s clothed-covered cock. Closing his eyes, he drew in a deep breath, preparing himself for what he wanted to do.

It was all too, too perfect.

He kissed the growing bulge in his boyfriend’s denims before silently pulling the zipper down and tugging out John’s cock.

“Sherlock,” John whispered, his voice disappearing into a moan as Sherlock’s lips wrapped around the head of his cock.

Grabbing a hold of his lover’s hips, he let John guide them both to the bed so he could lie back in a more comfortable position. A deep, sensual, moan escaped his boyfriend’s lips as his back hit the mattress. He quickly shed his trousers down past his hips to give Sherlock more room to work with.

“Oh fuck!” John gasped as Sherlock licked up and down his shaft.

The salty taste of his lover’s skin melted in his mouth, making his skin prickle and his heart race. His hands dipped beneath John’s jumper, feeling the hotness of his skin. Both of them knew this was only a teaser of the weekend to come.

“Please,” his boyfriend begged, his voice quiet and desperate.

As he took his boyfriend deeper into his throat, Sherlock felt as though they were the only ones in the world at the moment. It didn’t matter that they were in a city filled with millions of people. It didn’t matter that there were probably couples having sex of their own on either side of the walls.

This was their night.

John’s hands grasped the duvet, his eyes squeezed shut, and delicious moans continued to escape
his mouth as Sherlock sucked at the head. Hands squeezing his lover’s hips, Sherlock moaned around his boyfriend’s cock as he took him deeper into his throat once again.

His partner raised up just enough on the bed to allow their eyes to meet. The spark in John’s eyes, the lust, sent waves of heat through his own body. His own cock was hard in his trousers; as he licked up and down John’s shaft he reached down to undo his zip and free himself.

“Sherlock,” John whispered, his eyes desperate, his breaths coming out in sharp pants.

With a deep breath, Sherlock took him in once again, sucking down his cock as far as he could. John let out a cry before his body spasmed. Cum hit his throat and Sherlock moaned, drinking in the salty taste of it. When at last his boyfriend’s body stilled and he let out one last moan, signaling he was spent, Sherlock popped off his cock and climbed over his body. He positioned himself so that his cock hung just over John’s lips. Taking his shaft in hand, he rubbed his hands up and down his length a few times before lowering it to John’s lips. He could tell this wasn’t what his boyfriend was expecting, but John definitely wasn’t arguing as he willingly took his cock into his mouth.

“Fuck!” Sherlock hissed at the feeling of those soft lips wrapping around the head.

He knew it wouldn’t take long to bring him to the edge so he began gently thrusting his hips. Grabbing his boyfriend’s head, he grasped a handful of John’s hair, making him gasp as he fought to take his cock in as deep as he could. Sherlock could already feel his body tensing. Closing his eyes, he let out a roar of a moan as he came. Pulling out, he let the last drips of cum fall over John’s lips.

“Oh fuck!” He breathed as he opened his eyes.

With a wicked grin, he collapsed next to his lover on the bed. Both of them laughed as they shared a kiss, and as he rolled over onto his back and placed his hands behind his hands Sherlock wondered how he’d ever muster the energy to go out to dinner.

“That was a nice surprise,” John announced, running his hand down Sherlock’s cheek. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

They shared another kiss, and Sherlock found himself scooped up into John’s arms and pulled closer.

“I almost wish we could just order room service and stay like this,” Sherlock sighed.

John’s head whipped around; his eyes were glaring, warning him to not even think about it.

“You got us reservations at one of the nicest steakhouses in Manhattan!” John shot. “We are not exchanging that for room service.”

Sherlock only giggled: trust John to take his comment to heart. He was obviously already salivating over dreams of steak.

“However…I wouldn’t say no to a nice lie in and breakfast in bed tomorrow,” his boyfriend admitted.

He kissed Sherlock’s cheek, then his nose, and finally his lips.
When Sherlock researched this NYC holiday he simply went through some travelling blogs and found some expert opinions on some of the best romantic hotels and restaurants in Midtown Manhattan. He took a gamble on the most promising sounding of venues and made reservations, uncertain if he was just being a gullible, clueless, tourist or not.

But to his delight, his restaurant choice proved just as excellent of a choice as the hotel.

“Well done, you,” John said, squeezing his hand as they walked into the warm, cozy, steakhouse.

The lighting was dim and intimate, and though the restaurant was full of patrons the noise wasn’t overwhelming and unbearable.

“God everything smells so delicious,” John commented as they were seated. “Someone had a baked mac and cheese back there that looked amazing.”

Sherlock glared at him as he took a seat and accepted the menu from the waiter.

“I take you to a five star restaurant and you’re thinking about mac and cheese?” He shot.

John swallowed nervously as he opened the wine menu.

“Maybe I’ll get it as a side,” his boyfriend muttered.

He felt a bit bad for the comment, so he reached out for his partner’s hand, prompting John to look up and meet his eyes.

“You can have whatever you’d like,” Sherlock offered. “You deserve it.”

“Thanks,” John said, a smirk appearing at the corners of his lips. He accepted his own menu, and as soon as he opened his eyes practically bulged out of his head. “Forget the baked mac and cheese. Am I really only allowed to choose one thing?”

Sherlock shut his menu abruptly and reached next for the wine list.

“You’ve already decided?!” John proclaimed.

“It’s a steakhouse, John,” he pointed out. “I’m having steak…perhaps with some baked mac and cheese on the side.”

He winked at John, who flashed him a smile in return. It didn’t take him long to select a French Merlot from the menu, and within a few moments they had their salads ordered. Instrumental Christmas music was playing over the restaurant speakers- frankly, Sherlock couldn’t stand it. With a smile still lingering on his face, John went back to browsing the menu. Sherlock found his eyes wandering around to the other patrons, and without meaning to he found himself deducing things about them.

There was a young couple, probably in uni, on their first date. The guy was clearly blowing his budget by going to this restaurant.

There was an older couple on their anniversary. Thirty, no…thirty-five years. They had a dog at home and a daughter who lived out of state. Probably in Florida or southern California, judging by their sunburns- as though they had been in a beach environment.

There were two mates who were tourists from France sitting behind him. If Sherlock stayed quiet
long enough he could make out the woman’s story about how she was worried her husband is cheating on her.

Since he let you go across the pond with a mate of yours for holiday over Christmas, my thoughts are yes.

“Sherlock,” John announced. The consulting detective snapped his head back toward his lover, embarrassed he had been caught. “You were deducing, weren’t you?”

“I…I can’t help it,” he admitted. “It’s not exactly something I can turn on and off.”

“Well maybe gossiping will help,” John suggested. “Any idea on what kind of job your brother will go after?”

He had to admit, the question really did throw him for a loop. To be honest he hadn’t given Mycroft’s career search much thought, and he hadn’t thought much about what kind of job he hoped his brother would seek out.

“I don’t think he’ll go after anything that would put him in the public eye,” Sherlock replied. “He’s always excelled the most at negotiation, so I imagine he’ll try to stay close to the Prime Minister and international politics.”

Folding his hands, Sherlock’s eyes diverted to the table as he admitted what he had only thought to himself and never dared to confess to anyone:

“I sometimes wonder if Greg is holding him back. My brother could work with any international organisation in the world: any government body, any military. He could be the head of the bloody CIA if he so pleased. But he stays in London, and honestly, I wonder if it is because Greg takes so much pride with his job at the Yard.”

He bit his lip, wondering if he should have said that out loud. To his surprise John didn’t laugh. Instead he paused, giving the comment serious though.

“I think you’re wrong,” John finally said a long moment later. “I mean, I’m sure he gives some consideration to Greg and his career, but I think you’re forgetting something…you’re forgetting how much your brother loves you. I think he couldn’t stand being too far away from you for too long.”

Sherlock smirked.

“You mean he couldn’t stand not being able to spy on me,” he teased.

Rolling his eyes, John pointed out:

“Plus Laura and her family are about to move to London. You will both have a new niece or nephew soon. I don’t think he would want to miss out on that. Besides, I think your brother really loves London. He could have moved abroad for work at any point in his life, but he has always stayed.”

“True,” Sherlock offered.

When their dinner came out their conversation turned to chewing and sipping of wine; Sherlock had to admit this was one of the better steaks he had had in quite some time. They opted out on dessert, thinking they might find something on the way back to their hotel- which was conveniently only a couple of blocks away.
As Sherlock took out his wallet for his credit card he couldn’t help but to notice a waiter who was running a payment in a cash register slipping a tiny device out of his pocket. Instead of running the card through the register he ran it through the tiny device.

Sherlock recognised the device immediately as a skimmer.

The waiter was stealing the credit card information.

He thought it was best to not make a scene right in the middle of the restaurant. Instead he paid—using cash—and waited until they were outside before phoning the police.

“What are you doing?” John demanded, frowning.

The dispatcher picked up, and Sherlock ignored his boyfriend, instead announcing:

“I need to report someone stealing credit card information.”

Beside him John’s jaw fell agape: Sherlock wasn’t sure if it was out of anger that the consulting detective was technically working a case or out of shock of his discovery.

As he hung up and pocketed his mobile, he received a glare from his boyfriend that told him his answer.

“You promised me no cases!” John protested, crossing his arms over his chest.

Sherlock stared at him incredulously, wondering if John was seriously angry at him for reporting a crime.

“He was stealing credit card information!” Sherlock exclaimed. “What was I supposed to do, just walk away?”

John hesitated, as though he knew Sherlock was right and there was nothing he could say to prove he shouldn’t have done what he did.

“Whatever,” John sighed. “At least there wasn’t a murder involved.”

They began their walk back to their hotel. Sherlock stayed close to John, seeking his body warmth as cold air blew around them. He kept a vigilant eye on the people around him, mindful of the reputation the city had for pick-pocketers. John didn’t say anything throughout the walk; instead he simply kept his arms stuffed in his coat pockets and his eyes straight in front of them.

“Are you seriously mad at me?” Sherlock asked. When John didn’t reply, he couldn’t help but to let out a chuckle. “Come on, John, I can’t just not report a crime.”

“I know,” John finally sighed. “It’s just…it’s like this stuff follows us everywhere.”

Sherlock blinked.

“Are you saying we’re cursed?”

John looked up at him with a smirk on his face.

“I’m saying you’re cursed,” he teased.

“Well I’m sorry for being so cursed,” Sherlock said.
He wrapped his arm around his boyfriend, pulling him closer. They stopped at the street corner, waiting for traffic to let them pass. Letting out a sigh, Sherlock looked around, admiring the city that was bursting with life around them.

“You know, it’s still early,” Sherlock pointed out.

“We do only have so little time in the city,” John chimed in.

Turning to each other, they both announced their idea at the same time:

“Pub!”

Laura had told them about a great pub a short cab ride away from midtown that was well-worth the trip away from the other tourist. The pub was dark and cozy: its walls were full of mural paintings, instrumental music played underneath the conversation (classical, thank god, not Christmas), and while there was a decent crowd it certainly wasn’t overrun with tourists. Honestly he was quite surprised Laura was a fan of the place- he expected his sister to be more of a fan of livelier, younger, drinking establishments, but he had to admit it was right up his alley.

“God it’s so warm in here,” John said, rubbing his hands together as soon as he took his gloves off. “Thank god.”

They scooted together in around the circular table so that they sat shoulder-to-shoulder with their backs to the wall. A waiter came by for their drink order; they both settled for a jack and coke.

“This is nice,” Sherlock commented as he looked around at the paintings of various historical figures that cluttered the wall behind him.

“Grand hotel, brilliant food, nice pub,” John chimed in. “I approve of this trip so far.”

The two lovers exchanged grins before Sherlock took some long sips of his water, preparing himself for what he was sure would be a long night of drinking. He checked his mobile to find no messages, not even a prying text from Mycroft, but a glance at the day’s date reminded him of just how close they were to finishing off this year.

And what a brilliant year it had been.

He smiled just thinking about it. This year had changed his life, and not just because of the new family members he discovered. He had been brave enough to finally pursue a relationship with John, and now he was happier- truly happier- than he had ever been in his life.

He let out a laugh as the thought hit him for the first time.

“What?” John demanded, a smile still lingering at the corners of his lips.

Shaking his head, Sherlock lifted his eyes to meet his boyfriend’s.

“I was just thinking...this has been the happiest year of my life.”

“Really?” John asked.

Sherlock nodded.

“Yeah, really,” letting out a sigh, he placed his hand over John’s before continuing: “I’ve never
been happier than I’ve been with you.”

They shared a kiss. Sherlock’s hand fell to the back of John’s neck; he massaged the muscles there as he deepened the kiss, allowing their lips to dance together. They were cut off by someone clearing their throat, and both lovers blushed as the waiter appeared again with their drinks.

“Sorry,” both men mumbled, their cheeks red.

Drinks in hand, they both exchanged a quick “cheers” before taking a sip of the whiskey.

“Damn, that’s bloody good,” John muttered, shaking his head at the strength of the drink. Sitting his drink down, he turned the glass in his fingers for a moment before confessing: “This has been a really good year for me too. Really, really good. Really…perfect. Well…except for the getting shot part.”

Sherlock frowned, considering all of the horrible stuff that had happened this year.

“And the getting kidnapped,” Sherlock added.

“Twice, for you,” John pointed out.

The consulting detective winced as he remembered his nightmare meeting with Kirchhoff. He had actually finally managed to put the trauma out of mind- mainly thinks to being preoccupied about being worried about John’s injury- and he took a few long sips of his drink to try to shake the memory away.

“My mum disowned me…”

"I met my father...and he's dying."

They both stared at each other, each of them realising just how terrifying of a year it had been. Sherlock had to force himself to keep remembering all the good things that had happened.

“But we went to France,” Sherlock pointed out.

“You got to meet your idol.”

He blushed a bit, but he was still incredibly proud of himself for the case he solved for Marc Charbonneau, the violinist and his favourite modern day composer.

“Lestrade got promoted,” Sherlock offered.

“Anderson got fired, the git.” Shaking his head, John let out a sigh. “This year has been a rollercoaster. Here’s to hoping next year is a bit calmer.”

“Cheers,” Sherlock agreed.

Knocking their glasses together, they both downed more of their whiskey.

“I can’t wait to spend another year with you,” John announced with a sheepish grin on his face. Sherlock leaned in for another quick kiss. His eyes were twinkling with anticipation and delight as he replied:
“Same here.”

Chapter End Notes

I know I'm failing at updating! The delay is partly because of work and life stress, but also because this chapter seemed to never end! There's actually a lot more I wanted to add to it, but I decided to just split it up. Sherlock and John's NYC adventures continue next chapter...and Sherlock continues to struggle to not get involved with any crimes!

Thanks for reading! I hope you all are still enjoying this :) I know it's been a long right but like I said...I have trouble ending things! hehehe Thanks for all the kudos and feedback!
John had a smile on his face when he woke up the next morning. He stretched, noting how sticky and sweaty their sheets still were from their night of lovemaking. Rolling over, he let out a happy sigh at the sight of his naked lover sprawled out on the bed next to him. He gave his boyfriend a slap on the arse to wake him up. Sherlock moaned as he rolled toward him, glaring at him for disturbing his sleep.

“I thought we were having a lie-in this morning,” Sherlock complained, burying his head into his pillow.

A laugh escaped him as he realised his partner was definitely at least a little hung over.

“Maybe for an hour or so,” John offered, leaning down to give Sherlock a kiss on his neck. He could feel his boyfriend shudder beneath him. “We do have an entire day in New York City. Do you really want to spend it in bed?”

Sherlock rolled over, their eyes met, and a shiver went down John’s spine at the look of pure lust in his boyfriend’s eyes.

“After last night?” Sherlock asked coolly.

The comment sent a wave of warmth through his body that convinced John he wanted nothing more than to spend the morning in bed with his lover. Their lips smashed together, his hands raised to Sherlock’s shoulders, and together they fell back into bed.

“Did you sleep well?” John asked as he climbed on top of his partner.

He kissed first behind Sherlock’s ear, then his lips made their way from his boyfriend’s cheek, to his chin, neck, chest, and finally his nipples.

“Mmmm.” Sherlock moaned as John’s tongue lapped back and forth, teasing one nipple and then the other. “You’re not too exhausted after last night, then?”

A red tint rose on his cheeks as John admitted only to himself that he was a bit sore from being fucked twice the night before, but he was determined to keep up. Yet Sherlock placed a hand on his cheek, his eyes understanding.

“I know that look,” Sherlock said. “We can take a break. Plus…breakfast!”

He laughed; rarely was Sherlock ever excited about breakfast, so if he was today he must really be hungry. Sherlock reached over for the room service menu and opened it so they could browse their options together.

“They serve chocolate sundaes for breakfast,” John announced, his mouth already watering.

“You can have ham, sausage, and bacon all in one meal,” Sherlock chimed in. “With eggs…and toast. And pancakes as side. Christ no wonder America has such an obesity problem.”

“You’re forgetting this hotel is meant for tourists who want to eat like pigs while on holiday,” he
pointed out. “But I’m good with all of the above if you are.”

After eating possibly the biggest breakfast they had eaten since becoming flatmates, the two settled into the jacuzzi tub in their bathroom. The warmth of the water and the steam filling the room almost began to relaxed John’s muscles. His leg was actually beginning to feel rather strong, and a smile was on his face as he and Sherlock started to share another round of kisses. Sherlock’s lips showered his jaw and chin with kisses until he finally pulled away and met his eyes.

“Thank you for this,” John announced softly. “This room, last night…it has been incredible.”

“Thank you for the tickets to the symphony tonight,” Sherlock smiled.

“You should go to the symphony more,” he said, letting his finger trail up and down Sherlock’s chest. “You were so happy at the one in Paris. You’re so excited about the one tonight.”

Shrugging, Sherlock admitted:

“Mycroft used to try to make me go when I was a teenager. I…didn’t really care to.”

“You didn’t want to be seen in public with your brother,” he teased.

His boyfriend shrugged again.

“My mum used to take us sometimes,” his partner admitted, and a pit fell in John’s stomach at the pain in his voice. “It felt like Mycroft was trying too hard to bring some kind of normalcy into our lives. Eventually he got tired of fighting with me about it and just went on his own. I just never went back.”

His fingers wrapped around Sherlock’s forearms, squeezing gently against his muscles.

“Can I ask you something else?” John said. “Why didn’t you go to school for music? You’re such a brilliant violinist.”

With a sigh Sherlock sank down into the water and rested his head against the side of the tub.

“I didn’t want to turn something I love to do into a career,” Sherlock confessed.

John started to nod, understanding what he meant, but then he stopped.

They were in love…

And they worked together…

Would that ever get in the way of a relationship?

“I mean something I love like a hobby,” Sherlock quickly announced, as though realising what that must have sounded like. You, love, aren’t a hobby.”

They both grinned as they shared another kiss.

“I better not be a hobby,” John teased. He kissed him again, this time letting his tongue slip between Sherlock’s lips. He brushed the roof of his mouth, ran his tongue over his teeth. When he pulled away his lips found Sherlock’s neck and he sucked until soft moans began to escape his partner’s mouth.

“I could do this all day,” John whispered as he backed away for air momentarily.
Their lips met again. His hands fell on Sherlock’s shoulder. One of his lover’s hands found his leg and a shiver went down his spine at the combination of the warm water and Sherlock’s gentle touches.

An hour later they found themselves wrapped up in the bed sheets, with John’s head rested against Sherlock’s as they sat in silence, enjoying the peace of the morning. He felt completely, utterly, relaxed.

“God I wish every day could start out like this,” John said, letting out a happy sigh.

Sherlock grinned.

“All we need is to convince Mrs Hudson to install a jacuzzi tub in the bathroom.”

“This is how holidays should be,” John said. “Not a care in the world. Just me, you…”

“The only thing missing is a good murder.”

He playfully hit his lover in the chest. Laughing, his eyes travelled over to the window, where the mind-blowing view of New York City lay in front of them, complete with…

“Snow!” John suddenly said, sitting straight up in bed.

His eyes went wide and his heart raced. He remembered the excitement of the real snow of the season every year as a kid, and that same excitement flooded his body at that moment. He made to slip out of bed, but Sherlock grabbed his arm to stop him.

“You’re naked!” His lover pointed out with a huge grin on his face.

“Right,” John said, his cheeks reddening slightly in embarrassment.

He reached down for the trackpants and sweatshirt on the floor and carefully slipped them on. Beside him Sherlock did the same, and together they stepped outside into the steady snowfall. Far down below them on the streets people walked faster, racing to get to where they were going. The sky steadily became whitewashed, and even as he turned to Sherlock shivered as snow whipped around him. His curls were tinted with white flakes and his skin turned paler than normal.

“If you’re planning some dramatic, romantic kiss in the snow you best hurry-“ Sherlock began to warn.

Before he could finish John planted his hands on Sherlock’s cold cheeks and smashed his lips against his lover’s. They smiled as they kissed; it felt like their faces were frozen in time.

“John,” Sherlock suddenly muttered. “I think our lips are frozen together.”

Despite the snow they still decided to make the most of their day so Sherlock dragged him off to a last afternoon minute wine tasting they managed to get into.

“I don’t really get wine tasting,” John admitted as a glass was placed in front of him. “I know what wine taste like.”

Beside him, Sherlock snorted.
“The last time I sent you out to buy wine you went to the shop and bought the cheapest bottle you saw, and it tasted like cough syrup.”

His cheeks reddened a bit. Okay, so maybe he was pretty awful at picking out wines.

“Well we still got drunk, didn’t we?” He pointed. “Wasn’t that the point?”

“The point is wine drinking is supposed to be an experience,” Sherlock said. “Sometimes there are a half a dozen different taste you can get out of a single bottle of wine. You just need practice.”

“Alright,” the host announced as he finally made to their end of the crowded bar. “First up is a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. You should taste hints of grape fruit and guava.”

John took his first sip and winced.

“That’s strong,” he commented.

“I can really taste the guava in that,” Sherlock said.

“You don’t even like guava.”

“I do when it’s in a wine,” his boyfriend protested.

“Here is a Syrah,” the host said next, giving them two sampler glasses of a dark red wine.

Taking a sniff of the glass, John picked up…nothing.

“I’m terrible at this,” he sighed. “This is why I stick to lager.”

“Blackberry,” Sherlock announced as he sniffed at the wine himself. He took a sip of it and a smile appeared at the corners of his lips. “And…a little hint of licorice, actually.”

John drew in a deep breath and tried to prepare himself mentally to be able to pick out the specific flavors. He took a sip of the Syrah, swirled it around in his mouth, and spit out into the bucket.

“It’s…oak-y,” he noted. Sherlock stared at him, waiting for more. He took another sip, swallowing it this time. “And…yeah, I can actually taste the blackberry.”

It was actually quite tasty, and he made a mark beside it on their cheat seat as a possible on to buy.

“Maybe a hint of pepper,” Sherlock added.

Grinning at him, John shook his head as he reached for the next glass the bartender poured.

“Now you’re just showing off.”

The two came away from the wine tasting with a chocolate dessert wine they both enjoyed, the Syrah, and a bottle of Champagne. After dropping the bottles off at the hotel they took a cab back out to Central Park. The snow had stopped falling, leaving a nice coat of white over the city.

Taking Sherlock’s hand, John led his boyfriend toward the Bow Bridge, which had been at the very top of his to-do list during their entire holiday in New York.

“This bridge is famous,” he announced, enjoying the wide-eyed look on Sherlock’s face as his lover’s eyes scanned the scenery.
Below the bridge the lake was reaching a near-freezing point, displaying beautiful floating chunks of ice. Sherlock’s breath danced in the air before him as his mouth hung agape; he was obviously incapable of describing the beauty around them.

“It was the first cast-iron bridge built in Central Park,” John explained. He could see Sherlock’s eyes skimming over the architecture, taking in every detail. “It was built in the late 19th century. Can you even imagine what this city must have been like then? There’s this magic here in this city that will always be here. I haven’t felt that anywhere else but London. You know…I think I really could live here if I had to."

Suddenly Sherlock’s eyes changed from awe to horror.

“But you wouldn’t?” Sherlock demanded.

Guilt settled in his stomach; he knew how close Sherlock held London to his heart.

“No, of course not,” John said. “Sorry, it was a stupid thing to say. London is home."

Sherlock slipped away from him and rest his glove-covered hands on the snow-covered bridge railing.

“London has always been there for me,” Sherlock announced quietly. John stepped up beside him and placed his hand over his boyfriend’s. “When my mum died Mycroft and I moved into the city and I learned everything about it. Then I lived on its streets, in its alleyways. Part of me was afraid at times, yes…a lot of times, actually. But I always had this feeling that the city had my back."

John grinned.

“That’s why you’re always so confident,” he said.

“Yeah,” Sherlock admitted with a small, bashful smile. “I used my observational skills to learn the city like the back of my hand. Now I feel like I’m truly apart of London; like London is a part of me. I know that sounds crazy. Most people aren’t that obsessed with their home town.”

As his eyes turned back over the lake he thought of the millions of people who lived in New York City, people who had been born there and never left. People who gave up everything to move there. It was one of those special cities where people dreamt of being able to live in, they strived to be able to go there their entire lives- even if it was for just a weekend. He knew people treated London the same way, but he had taken the magic of his home for granted for most of his life.

“I never realised what London meant to me until I went away to war,” John confessed. “I worked so hard in school that I hardly took the time to really discover where I was from. After school I went straight into working at the hospital. I worked horrible A&E shifts- sometimes for sixteen, seventeen hours. Some days I just never went home. I lived for my career."

“You lived to save people,” Sherlock corrected.

“Yeah,” he agreed. “I did. Whenever I was at home I felt useless. For the longest time I couldn’t just have a night out because I knew they could probably use me at the hospital. Then I went to Afghanistan and it was just such a culture shock. I can’t even begin to describe it. Just…I missed it. I missed London. That was the first time I truly understood what home meant."

Sherlock’s eyes lit up in a familiar look that John was certain he was one of the only people who got to witness on the consulting detective’s face:
Impressed.

Sherlock Holmes was impressed with his confession.

Wrapping his arms around John, he let the doctor rest his head against his body as they snuggled close together in the cold.

“I miss home,” Sherlock sighed. “This is the longest I’ve ever been away.”

How had he not realised that? Of course Sherlock had never done much travelling, not on this level, with the way he had grown up. He hadn’t truly considered how big of deal this trip was. The last thing he had thought of about this holiday was that Sherlock might get homesick.

But John had to admit, even as he drew in a deep breath and took in the peacefulness of the park around him, as he thought of yet another perfect night they had ahead of them, that he had to agree. In just a little over a week they would be back to their usual routine at home, and part of him was really looking forward to that.

“I miss home too.”

Just as they began to settle against each other’s bodies the sound of feet pounding toward them jerked their attention toward the path to their left. A man who looked to be in his late twenties, with dirty blonde hair and tattoos on every visible part of his body, was racing away from the other side of the park carrying a woman’s purse. He and Sherlock took one look at each other, and they both knew they were dealing with a thief.

“You phone the police, I’ll tackle him,” Sherlock murmured.

Nodding, John turned away and pretended like he was innocently talking on his mobile as he phoned the police and began giving them a description of the purse snatcher. It took Sherlock mere seconds to charge at the criminal and knock him to the ground. When the police informed him they were on their way John snapped a few photos of the criminal just for good measure, in case he got away. But Sherlock sat on top of the man, holding his arm against his chest to help keep him pinned. John couldn’t help but to let a smile escape the corner of his lips at the sight of his boyfriend so flawlessly taking someone down like that.

“Did you really think you would be able to exit the park carrying a woman’s purse and no one would think it odd,” Sherlock snapped. “Who is she, the woman you stole from? Did you hurt her?”

“No!” The man cried out, his brown eyes widened as he frantically looked from John to Sherlock, clearly worried what they would do to him. John simply kept his cool as he crossed his arms over his chest and stood over the two men on the ground. “I didn’t hurt the bitch, she was too easy of a target. Took her a full ten seconds to even realise someone had stolen her bag right off her own shoulder.”

The comment earned the criminal a sharp slap to the face from Sherlock. John’s heart leapt as he silently pleaded for his partner to not do anything stupid. The consulting detective grabbed the victim’s shirt and lifted him slightly off the ground. Just when John expected him to punch the guy in the face Sherlock simply shoved the guy back down and held him down as they waited for the police.

After eating an early dinner at the park so they could avoid rushing around before the show, they
returned to the hotel to get ready. John let Sherlock shower first so he could check his emails. He was surprised to find one from his publisher called “Book Cover”. He knew they would be having discussions soon on the book cover, but he didn’t expect it to happen this soon.

John clicked on the attachment that read ‘first draft’…and froze.

The “artwork” was a sketched photo of the two he and Sherlock, clearly modeled after a photo taken from the newspapers. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was written across the top and “by Dr John Watson” was written underneath. While a smile settled across his face at the sight of his name on a potential book cover, he knew Sherlock would never go for the cheesy artwork.

He heard the bathroom door open and tried to shut his laptop before Sherlock could see, but his boyfriend was too quick. Towel wrapped around his waist and his hair a wet mess, Sherlock leapt onto the bed beside him.

“What’s that look on your face for?” Sherlock demanded.

With a sigh, John turned the laptop screen toward him. He bit his lip as Sherlock’s mouth fell agape and disbelief flashed in his eyes.

“No!” Sherlock announced. He slipped off the bed and stormed back into the bathroom. He lost his towel as he did, revealing more than a bit of his arse. John bit back a laugh as he watched his lover disappear into the bathroom to throw his temper tantrum and finish getting ready. “No, you will not let them use that! That doesn’t even look anything like us!”

This time John couldn’t help it, he let out a laugh and shut his laptop closed. Getting to his feet, John waltzed into the bathroom himself and grabbed his toothbrush while Sherlock began acting his tangled curls with a comb.

“It does look a *little* like us,” John admitted.

“It’s from some paparazzi shot,” Sherlock grumbled as he angrily ran the comb through a stubborn tangle.

“Bad hair day?” John teased through a mouthful of toothpaste. Sherlock glared at him in the mirror. “Come here.”

If someone had at the beginning of the year that he would be standing in the bathroom of a hotel in New York City at Christmas time helping Sherlock Holmes with his hair he would have laughed in their face. And if they had really insisted on it he probably would have said a few swear words and thrown a drink in their face.

“What are you smiling about?” Sherlock insisted.

“You hair *does* look pretty ridiculous,” John grinned. He could tell his boyfriend was completely embarrassed. “Do you still have any more of that hair gel?”

When at last they were climbing out of the cab in front of the symphony hall John’s heart was racing. Sherlock’s eyes were lit up in wonder, in complete awe like he was living out a lifelong dream. His boyfriend hadn’t said anything the entire cab ride as he soaked in the towering skyscrapers and hoards of cars and people surrounding them.

_Sometimes you have really brilliant ideas, John Watson,* he told himself.
“This is…” Sherlock finally said, swallowing nervously as he turned to meet John’s eyes. “It’s amazing.”

Swooping down, he gave John a quick kiss on the cheek. His eyes twinkled as he stepped back and flashed John another one of his gorgeous smiles. John was afraid his hand was entirely too sweaty as Sherlock took it and led him inside the hall.

Their seats were in the left of the grand tier. Besides their case in France, John hadn’t been to a proper symphony performance since some fellow doctors had dragged him along in his second year of working as a doctor. He accidentally laughed out loud at the memory, which immediately caught his boyfriend’s attention.

“What?” Sherlock demanded as they sat down.

“Besides France, the last symphony I went to was my second year working as a doctor. I was in the A&E and desperate to network as much as possible, so when a group of doctors invited me to a performance I was too afraid to turn them down. The night we went I had just gotten off a fourteen hour shift…and I fell asleep after the second song.”

Sherlock’s eyes narrowed.

“But you aren’t going to do that tonight, right?” Sherlock shot.

John shook his head, not daring to suggest otherwise.

“Good,” he replied.

They both turned to the stage as the orchestra began to take their seats.

“I read up on the first violinist,” Sherlock mentioned. “He was adopted into a middle class family. He paid his own way through university by working multiple jobs and basically slept on his mate’s sofas while he worked his way through auditions.”

“Sounds like you have a new admirer.”

He had a feeling Sherlock was looking too deeply into John’s questions of why he didn’t pursue a career in music, but it was nice to see his lover so interested in something besides experiments and cases. Sherlock had begun connecting with people on a more human level than ever before this past year, and John was rather proud of how far he had come.

“It’s pretty amazing,” Sherlock simply commented quietly.

Honestly John didn’t have must interest in seeing the New York Philharmonic play classical music for two or three or however many hours, but seeing Sherlock’s eyes filled with such admiration, such inspiration was enough to keep him engaged. The symphony stared out with frantic, chaotic movements that reminded John of a summer storm. Then the movements quickly shifted into quiet, dark pieces that were clearly meant to take him to a place he just didn’t understand. He couldn’t master all the emotions, all the depth of classical music that Sherlock could.

But just seeing the look of pure awe on his lover’s faith was enough for him.

Sherlock clutched his hand as they filed out of the music hall a couple of hours later, and as soon as they stepped into the freezing night air he was pulled toward his boyfriend so that they stood face to face.
“John,” Sherlock announced as he held him close.

Instead of explaining, he was pulled into a sharp kiss. John closed his eyes as he froze, drowning out the hustle and bustle of the crowds around them. All he wanted to feel at that moment was the warm body against him and the lips that were upon his lips.

“I love you,” his partner breathed as he pulled away. Sherlock let out a laugh, glancing to the ground quickly as though he were trying to gather his thoughts. “I don’t know what I’d be without you.”

John found himself beaming, completely ignorant of the people rushing around them trying to get to cabs, to pubs, to restaurants. They were two people in a city of millions, but they might as well have been the only people on earth.

A smile slipped across his face as he took Sherlock’s hands and confessed:

“Same here.”

With a content sigh John turned back to the sea of cabs on the street in front of them. He thought of all the Christmas movies set in New York City he watched growing up, where everything always ended happily ever after.

“It’s not really my thing,” John began, “and I know it’s definitely not yours, but you know what we should do?”

Sherlock looked at him, seeming rather frightened, as though he knew exactly what John was about to suggest.

“We should see the tree at Rockefeller Center,” he finished.

His partner hesitated, as though he had a sarcastic remark right at the tip of his tongue but was afraid to make him angry. They had both agreed there needed to be compromises on this holiday: they needed to do things they should both get to do things they wanted to do, even if it was completely out of the other’s comfort zone.

From the look on Sherlock’s face his boyfriend was remembering that conversation as well, which must have been why he finally sighed and gave in.

“Fine. Let’s go see the bloody Christmas tree.”

John grinned as he led him to the street so they could catch a cab.

Truthfully no movie could have ever prepared him for how majestic Rockefeller Center really was at Christmastime. Hundreds of people surrounded them as they gazed up at the twenty-three meter tall tree.

“I read the star alone is almost three meters tall,” John said, shaking his head in awe.

Beside him Sherlock looked like he didn’t know what to think. John couldn’t tell if he was secretly amazed by the beauty before him or if he was desperate to get back to their hotel. He couldn’t help but to ask him straight out; he couldn’t enjoy this if Sherlock was going to be miserable, even if John thought he should be able to compromise.
“You want to go back to the hotel, don’t you?” John sighed.

Sherlock blinked as he turned toward him, looking like John had just snapped him away from his mind palace.

“No…no, I…” Sherlock swallowed nervously, unable to find words to describe what was thinking. He was pale-faced from the cold, his lips were chapped, and John could feel him shivering slightly as they stood shoulder-to-shoulder. Wrapping his arm around John’s lower back, Sherlock leaned in to kiss his cheek and whispered: “Happy Christmas, John.”

And then it hit him:

This was their first Christmas as a couple.

He had experienced very few relationships where he shared a first Christmas with someone, and none of those were anywhere near as serious as his relationship with Sherlock. Maybe that was what was going through Sherlock’s mind at that moment. Maybe that’s why he looked like he was both taken away by the energy and magic of Rockefeller Center and at the same time looked like he was slightly in panic mode.

“Happy Christmas, Sherlock,” he whispered back. He glanced down at the ground for a moment before turning his eyes back to his lover. “It’s our first Christmas together.”

His partner smirked, and John knew what he was going to say:

“We’ve experienced Christmases together.”

John shook his head.

“You know what I mean.”

Looking him in the eye, Sherlock actually looked a bit nervous as he nodded.

He thought back to being in France with Sherlock and standing on that bridge- the Love Lock Bridge. Sherlock had made a lot of promises to him lately about spending the rest of their lives together. But John realised now this was the rest of their lives. There was nothing to wait on. It felt so right being with Sherlock, it was everything he had ever dreamed of his life becoming. Saving lives, falling in love…being happy.

“What’s wrong?” Sherlock asked.

He shook his head again and laughed.

“Nothing,” he replied. “Absolutely nothing is wrong. Everything is perfect.”

His eyes gazed up the length of the Christmas tree; its sparkling lights lit up the entire complex. Kids raced around them, taking in all of the decorations and singing carols. Couples skated together in the ice rink, holding hands with content smiles on their faces.

“Sherlock…remember in France, when I woke up thinking I had proposed to you at the Love Lock Bridge?”

Sherlock snorted and nodded.

“I can ever forget that,” his lover teased.
His teasing somehow made John feel even more anxious. Knots were forming in his stomach, and he wasn’t even sure why. He was terrified of saying anything else- terrified of saying something wrong- and yet he was even more afraid of not saying this while he had the chance.

“Yeah, well, remember how you said you would marry me, if that’s what I was looking for?” He asked.

Sherlock froze. John reached out to hold onto his arm, just to make sure he didn’t fall back.

“I want that,” John said softly. “Every day I spend with you makes me realise just how much I want that. And I was wondering if you’d like, if you’re ready, if you would marry me?”

He was pretty sure he had broken Sherlock. His boyfriend’s eyes had gone completely hollow, like he had mentally slipped so far away he wasn’t even aware of where he physically was. Part of John was afraid Sherlock hadn’t even heard him. He was afraid maybe Sherlock was just being nice in Paris, when he said he would marry him. Maybe Sherlock was just saying what he thought John would want to hear; maybe he never thought the scenario would actually come up.

“Are you okay?” John asked carefully. Sherlock still didn’t say anything. He didn’t even blink.

“You don’t have to answer me right now, you know. It’s all…it’s all a bit fast, I know.”

Sherlock still didn’t say anything.

He had to step back and remind himself that as little as a year ago- even nine months ago- marriage and civil partnerships would have meant absolutely nothing to Sherlock. While this relationship had been quite the journey for the both of them, it had been a tremendous personal journey for Sherlock, who hadn’t been in a relationship since his last partner was killed. Maybe Sherlock was breaking through too many barriers at once; maybe this was all moving too fast for him.

“You know being engaged doesn’t mean we have to get an official civil partnership right away,” John pointed out. “It’s totally normal for couples to have a long engagement period, sometimes even up to a year.”

Sherlock didn’t say anything.

“Sherlock,” he pleaded, stopping and forcing his boyfriend to turn and face him. His partner looked utterly lost, and John was afraid he had permanently lost him to his mind palace. Part of him wanted to demand to know what was going on in Sherlock’s head, but he knew that wasn’t fair. What Sherlock really needed was time; he needed time to be lost inside that mind palace and figure out what he wanted to do. So instead John placed his hand against Sherlock’s cheek. “You don’t have to say anything. I only want to do this if it’s what you want to do too. Don’t agree to it just for my sake. Whatever you choose we’ll still always be together, okay? I will always love you.”

He pulled Sherlock in for a soft kiss, but his boyfriend’s lips were completely stiff.

Sherlock was still simply staring at him. Glancing down to the ground, John ran a hand over the back of his neck and tried to fight away every thought in his head that sad he was making a huge mistake.

“John,” Sherlock abruptly, grabbing his hands. At last his partner smiled at him. His eyes were wide, almost as though…almost as though he were fighting back tears. “It was a beautiful proposal. A bit out of the blue, yeah, but I did already pre-propose to you. Of course I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Of course I want to marry you. Civil partnership you…whatever. I just…feel a bit guilty because you know Greg and Mycroft just took that step. Which of course is massive for
my brother. I just don’t want to…”

“Steal their limelight?” John guessed, grinning. The thought hadn’t crossed his mind, but he found it endearing that Sherlock was thinking of his brother. “We’ll keep it a secret then.”

Leaning forward, he kissed Sherlock again. His heart was pounding so fast as their lips danced together that he felt a bit dizzy, and he was grateful Sherlock was still holding onto him when they broke apart. He looked around again at the families taken photos, the skaters going round and round in the rink, laughing and singing along with the Christmas music and smiled to himself.

Nobody knew.

It was their secret.

And knowing that they had this amazing, life-changing, secret all to themselves felt a bit...sexy.

“You’re not going to ask me to go ice skating, are you?” Sherlock demanded.

John had to laugh at the anxiety in Sherlock’s voice—obviously he had been worried about the very idea the entire time they were standing there.


“So you’ve tried it before?” Sherlock replied, his eyebrows shooting up.

“I…no, actually.”

They found themselves looking around awkwardly, not quite sure what else to say. John had just bloody proposed. He couldn’t even believe he had done it himself!

“So…” Sherlock said, rolling back nervously on his heels with his hands behind his back. “Back to the hotel room for sex, then?”

John let out a bark of laughter before leaning forward and kissing Sherlock on the cheek and murmured into his ear:

"Yes. And I believe this round it's my turn to take you."

Chapter End Notes

Sooooo.....?!?!?!?!?!
Soooooooooo......?!?!?!?!?!
Soooooo000000000.......?!?!?!?!?!

I'm really curious to know what everyone thinks! This chapter was a bit out of my usual comfort zone, but I wanted to push myself. When I started writing I didn't like writing romance at all, so it's funny to post this chapter, full of dating and even a proposal. Don't worry, this isn't going to turn into a gushy wedding story. (or I dunno, maybe that's what some people want? lol!) To me this next step in this story, and in their lives, is really about John wanting to take his future into his own hands. He wants to give himself the happiness he's always dreamed of- and Sherlock not only wants to give John that happiness but is realizing that he himself deserves (and wants!) to be
happy too.

Anyway...would LOVE to know your thoughts! Thank you so much for reading!! All of your comments and kudos put a huge smile on my face!
“So…” John turned to look at him, his breath dancing in the cold night air as he breathed out heavily. “We’re going to do this?”

For a long moment the two simply stared at each other. They stood on the front porch of his sister’s home, surrounded by multiple feet of snow that had fallen while they were away. There was a snowman out front, rather expertly crafted by a five year old with the obvious help of an adult. Christmas lights were strung over the porch and a red and green wreath hung on the door. Sherlock could hear the faint sounds of instrumental jazz Christmas music playing inside the house.

At last he reached out for John’s hand and took it.

“Yes,” Sherlock replied. “Are you sure you’re okay with this?”

Letting out a long sigh, John nodded.

“Yeah. Yeah. I’ve been thinking about it and you’re right about Greg and Mycroft. This is their moment. We should wait to announce about us.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock echoed. Part of him felt guilty for asking John to keep such a big secret, but part of him also wanted more time to wrap his mind around the concept of getting engaged. Swallowing nervously, he glanced up at the door and shivered in the cold. “We should probably go inside.”

“Right,” John said quickly, nodding.

Sherlock rang the doorbell, and it only took a few seconds for the door to swing open and for his nephew to throw himself into his arms.

“Oh! Uncle Sirlock!!” Dan exclaimed. Grinning from ear to ear, Dan pointed to the yard. “We got snow!”

“I can see that,” Sherlock grinned. “It was snowing in New York City too.”

“Really?”

He nodded, reached into one of the bags he was holding and withdrew a snowglobe that held inside it a tiny model of the skyline of New York City. His nephew’s eyes lit up as he took it in his hands and shook it.

“I wanted you to always have a little bit of New York City with you,” Sherlock explained. He winked at the little boy. “Early Christmas present.”

“Thank you!” Dan cried, throwing his arms around him once again.

“Let’s get inside,” Sherlock suggested, noting how much his boyfriend-fiancé was shivering in the cold.

Warm air immediately greeted them as they stepped into the foyer. He could smell the smoke from the fireplace, laced with the scent of peppermint candles.
“Mommy they’re here!” Dan announced as he ran into the living room. Laura appeared from around the corner, beaming as he son ran up to her with the snow glove in hand. “Uncle Sirlock got me this!”

“Wow!” Laura said as he shook the snow globe. “How nice of Uncle Sherlock.”

She looked up to him and offered him a grateful smile; she knew how much it would mean to her for her son to have things to remember New York by.

“Come here, you,” Laura said, giving him a hug. Sherlock allowed himself a quick moment to close his eyes as they embraced. A small smile crossed his face as he thought of how she would react when she found out he and John were engaged, but when they broke apart he made sure to appear straight-faced again. “Thank god you two are back. Jason's spent the entire weekend in bed sick-"

"What's wrong?" John asked, in his doctor's voice, frowning. "Want me to take a look at him?"

"He's fine, it's just a cold," Laura replied. "I think most of it's just stress from work, honestly. It's probably doing him some good to be stuck in bed. But I’m about go crazy being stuck here with Greg and Mycroft."

Laura gave John a quick hug next before stealing a glance back toward the living room.

“Greg has gotten Dan obsessed with those video games,” she explained. “Mycroft is clearly stressed out over his career situation, but he’s barely talking- and I caught him smoking last night.”

“Dammit,” Sherlock mumbled.

“Do you think I should give him the lung cancer lecture?” John offered.

Shaking his head, Sherlock replied:

“Trust me, he’s heard it. We both have.”

A small smile crossed John’s face.

“Yeah, but at least you listened.”

Sherlock could understand what his brother was going through- at least as far as the smoking was concerned. While nothing was as difficult as giving up drugs, giving up smoking was its own kind of hell. It was like he had to completely reset his mind. Smoking had somehow seemed so much less harmless than the drugs; he had always told himself he could have the smoking if he could give up the drugs forever.

Then John moved in and showed him the slide show of all his patients who had died of lung cancer.

And that was enough for him to finally work up the courage to quit for good.

He wondered if Mycroft knew their own father was battling lung cancer- that cancer ran in their family- if he would make more of an effort to quit for good.

But he knew his brother would be more upset about him going back to Syracuse and lying to him about it.

“And you?” Sherlock asked, trying to get his mind of it.
“I’m fine,” Laura shrugged.

Her eyes went dark for a split second, and Sherlock had no doubt she was lying.

“Anyway,” his sister sighed, “enough about all that. We have cheesecake! And leftover grilled pork, if you’d like.”

His stomach grumbled at the thought of eating. They had sandwiches on the train and breakfast at the hotel in the morning, but a home-cooked meal sounded lovely.

Laura shuffled them from the foyer into the living room, where Greg was sitting a controller down onto the coffee table.

“Oi!” Greg greeted with a grin. “Who knew video games were so great for stress relief? I should have never stopped playing after uni.”

He stepped forward to shake both his and John’s hands. He noticed Greg was starting to grow a bit of a beard; it wasn’t exactly an appealing look on him. Sherlock wasn’t sure if it that was an indicator that he was having a row with Mycroft or just a sign that he was having a bit too relaxing of a holiday.

Glancing around the living room, he noticed the Christmas tree had a rather large stash of presents underneath it. Over the fireplace hung seven stockings that hadn’t been there before, and he couldn’t help but to smile as he walked over to a brick red stocking with his name stitched onto it.

“I haven’t had a stocking in years,” Sherlock admitted.

He noticed John’s stocking had a stethoscope stitched onto it.

“Is this so Father Christmas knows you’ve been good?” Sherlock teased, grinning at his boyfriend.

“Doctors get good presents from Father Christmas by default!” John protested. “It’s just the way of the world.”

Sherlock winked at John, thinking to himself: and this year you’re getting the best gift of all- a partner for life.

After discarding their bags in their room, he and John took their seats at the kitchen table to help themselves to the leftovers. Since they were there to help watch Dan, Laura went upstairs to check on her husband. Mycroft still hadn’t come downstairs to say hello; according to Greg he had been on his mobile with someone for the past hour. It didn’t take long for the DCI to join them for a slice of cheesecake and beer.

“Is everything okay with you two?” John asked, taking the words right out of Sherlock’s mouth. “You just seemed a bit stressed for someone who’s on holiday.”

“Yeah, well…” Greg hesitated as he stuffed a bite of cheesecake into his mouth. While Mycroft tended to bake or cook when he was stressed, Greg tended to eat. Sherlock didn’t have a doubt that this wasn’t his first piece of cake that night. “He hasn’t talked to me much this weekend. I don’t think it’s because he’s angry at me or anything, I think he’s just hiding something.”

“A job related something?” Sherlock suggested.

The DCI nodded.
At that moment Dan bounced into the room, carrying a colouring book and Crayons, and the adults quickly pretended to act like nothing was wrong.

“What do you have there, Dan?” Sherlock asked, letting his nephew climb into his lap.

He noticed for the first time that Dan had gotten taller in the last few months. He had only just turned five years old, but he was already growing fast.

“Colouring book!” Dan explained. “It has Christmas pictures! See?”

He turned to the first page where he had coloured in a photo of Santa and his Reindeer.

“Do you want to colour with me?” Dan asked.

“Oh course,” Sherlock replied, taking one of the crayons from Dan. He turned to the next uncoloured page, which was of different types of Christmas candies.

“You too!” Dan said to John, tearing out a piece of the colouring book that had a picture of a Christmas tree and presents on it.

“What about me?” Greg asked, pouting.

The five-year old tore off a page that had a picture of a gingerbread house, complete with a candy cane lined front yard.

“Great, I get the complicated one,” Greg mumbled.

John and Sherlock went back to finishing their meal as they began to colour. He couldn’t help but steal a glance over to his partner’s work to see how he was doing.

“What?” John demanded the third time Sherlock looked over at him.

“Just admiring your colouring skills,” Sherlock replied with a smirk.

Truthfully John had begun to colour outside the lines, and he couldn’t help but to let out a laugh. He himself was able to help Dan figure out how stay inside the lines; their picture was turning out rather lovely.

“Don’t make fun of my colouring skills,” John shot. “It’s been over thirty years since I’ve had to colour!”

A grin crossed his face at how frustrated his lover was getting over this. Leaning over, he planted a quick kiss to John’s cheek.

“What I meant was you’re doing fine, love,” he promised.

“Sure,” John muttered.

Footsteps entered the kitchen, and Sherlock immediately recognised the sound as at of his brother: his footsteps were always swift, yet he always walked purpose. He looked up to find Mycroft wearing his usual three-piece suit and a worried expression on his face. He was staring at them as though he had some terrible news to tell them, yet he forced a smile as he sat down next to his partner.

“He gave you the complicated one,” Mycroft teased.
“I know,” Greg replied. He gazed at his partner for a long moment. It was obvious Greg wanted to yell at him, to shake him and beg him to talk to him. But Sherlock supposed Greg was just happy Mycroft was finally gracing him with his presence. “Wanna help?”

Mycroft raised his eyebrows at the sight of the crayons on the table and turned his nose up, as though he distrusted them.

“There’s more cheesecake,” Greg pointed out, knowing it would entice him to join.

“Oh alright,” Mycroft gave in.

He threw a glance toward his younger brother as he sat down and served himself a piece of cheesecake and grabbed a crayon. Sherlock wasn’t sure what he was trying to say, but he figured it was under the lines of ‘don’t ask any questions’.

“Is there wine?” His brother sighed.

“We actually brought back a Syrah,” John said, turning toward Sherlock as though asking if it were okay to open it.

“I’ll go get it,” Sherlock offered.

Dan hopped off his lap to let him go fetch the wine from his suitcase. He poured a glass for the four of him, and part of him felt a bit disappointed when he realised that would be most of the bottle. Why didn’t they buy two?!

“Can I have some?” Dan asked innocently as he passed around the glasses.

The four adults looked to one another, completely caught off-guard. Sherlock had never even considered they were being a bad influence by drinking around Dan; he had also never even considered Dan had no idea that what they were drinking was nothing more than grape juice.

“Hasn’t your mum taught you the dangers of drinking alcohol as a child?” Mycroft finally asked.

Greg snorted.

“Of course she bloody hasn’t!” He shot. “Did your mum teach you about not drinking at five?”

Both Dan and Mycroft frowned.

“Alcohol is for adults,” John explained to Dan, stepping in as the only adult that seemed to have a clue what to say. “It can be very dangerous for kids, so it’s important to not drink it until you’re much, much older, okay?”

“How much older?” Dan demanded.

John looked up to Sherlock, who shrugged.

“Well the proper age for drinking is different in different countries,” John said. “But it starts when you are an adult.”

“Oh,” Dan replied quietly, looking rather hurt. Clearly he still didn’t fully understand he wasn’t allowed to at least try it.

“You know your mum has some grape juice for you in the fridge,” Mycroft said, getting to his feet. “It’s better than wine anyway.”
Even though he was lying through his teeth, Mycroft winked at his nephew, and his nephew grinned back at him. Sherlock watched as his brother waltzed over the fridge and paused, letting his head rest against his hands for a moment, like something was weighing so heavily on his mind that it was beginning to take a physical toll. With a sigh, Mycroft threw open the refrigerator door and poured his nephew a glass. Instead of sitting down himself as he sat it on the table, Mycroft announced:

“I need to make a phone call.”

Yet instead of going upstairs he headed for the door that led to the garden. Greg looked over to him, his eyes pleading for help.

“I’ll be right back,” he said. He nodded at Greg, letting him know he would try to help best as he could.

Sure enough, when he stepped outside after his brother, Mycroft was already taking a pack of cigarettes and a lighter out of his pocket.

“Can I have one?” Sherlock asked, his voice reeking of sarcasm.

When his brother looked up to him he instantly reminded Sherlock of teenage Mycroft. Back then there always seemed to be a look of fear in Mycroft’s eyes, like he was constantly afraid of something going wrong. Like he was constantly afraid he was failing Sherlock. Over the years he had simply gotten better at hiding that fear, but Sherlock knew it still ran thick through Mycroft’s veins. The fear wasn’t only of letting down Sherlock now, but Greg too.

“Go ahead,” Mycroft sighed. “Tell me I’m a coward. Tell me I’m an idiot.”

“Well clearly you know these things already. Just…why?”

He didn’t protest when Mycroft lit the cigarette and stuck it in his mouth. He knew arguing with him would only make his brother even more angry and would push him further away.

Of course Mycroft didn’t reply.

“Is it the job search?” Sherlock asked. “Are you not getting the offers you thought you would?”

Mycroft let out a cold laugh and kicked at the snow.

“I’ve gotten thirty offers in the past week,” his brother replied. “But none of them are right.”

“Thirty?!” Sherlock exclaimed. “Most people would kill just to get one!”

“Most people didn’t just get fired from the job I just got fired from,” Mycroft mumbled. With a heavy sigh, he explained: “I’ve just done it all before: the CIA, MI-5, MI-6. I’ve also gotten calls from varying political campaigns and local governments across the globe. Not to mention the non-profit organisations and universities. I could do most of those jobs in my sleep.”

“Universities?” Sherlock asked.

In a way he could imagine his brother choosing the quiet life of a scholar, teaching students about politics and heading departments of some of the greatest universities on the planet.

…and on the other hand he knew Mycroft would be bored out of his mind within a few hours of having such a job.
“If none of the jobs offered to you are what you want,” Sherlock began, “what kind of job do you want?”

Mycroft simply took a long drag of his cigarette. When he let out his breath Sherlock shuddered at the smell of smoke that filled the air. While at one time he yearned to be able to breathe in that smell simply for the hope that he could get some kind of second-hand high off of it, the smell now repulsed him. It reminded him of all the torture he had put his body through, and when he thought of all he went through to quit he knew he would never dare to pick up the habit again.

“I thought I wanted to do something new, but now…” Mycroft shook his head and hesitated for a long moment before confessing: “I want my job back. I know the strain it put on my relationship with Gregory before, and I know that it seemed at first like it might benefit me to move forward with my career, but I just feel like there’s no further I can go after that job. Any move would be a step backward. There is nothing else I want to do. No other job would compare. No other job would give me the responsibility I had, the power I had. It was a job I created, a job I trust only myself to do. Our country needs me, more than our leaders realise.”

“I know we need you,” Sherlock replied quietly. “What are you going to do?”

A smirk appeared at the corners of his brother’s lips and he put out his cigarette.

“I’m working on it.”

His brother gave him this look when he walked away: a look that said “don’t ask questions”. A look that said he was going about getting his job back in a not particularly legal way; in a way Sherlock imagined had to deal with blackmail.

But he knew whatever it took it would be worth it if Mycroft had the power he once had. Although he had spent much of his youth denying that his brother was important at all, he had to admit now that England owed much of its stability to the eldest Holmes sibling.

“Whatever you need to do, I have your back,” Sherlock announced. He looked at the burnt out cigarette stuffed in the snow. “Just…do you have to do the smoking bit too? We’ve been through this before: you and me, me and Greg, you and Greg. We’ve all been through quitting smoking. I know you can do it again. You’re better than this.”

Mycroft looked longingly at the ground, as though he’d secretly love nothing more than to quit but felt like he couldn’t, felt like he was a slave to it.

Felt like he deserved it.

“We don’t know what kind of medical history our family has,” Sherlock pointed out, wishing that he could tell his brother everything he knew. “For all we know cancer runs in our family, maybe even lung cancer.”

His brother simply stared at him, as though warning him to not go there.

But Sherlock couldn’t hold back. Maybe he did have to argue, even though it would push his brother away. After all, would he have given up drugs if it not for the support- and insistence- of the two people who supported him the most.

“I’m weak,” Mycroft said quietly. “Is that what you are trying to say?”

Sherlock shook his head. The last thing his brother needed was to know everyone else was angry at him for taking up smoking again.
“No,” he replied. “I think you’re in a bad place right now. I think you’re pushing everyone away, and I think you need to stop.”

His brother paused for a long moment, and he could only hope that somehow he was listening to him. At times Mycroft seemed just as determined as Sherlock had been in the past to turn people away.

“What has Gregory said?” Mycroft asked.

Looking his brother in the eye, Sherlock confessed:

“He’s worried about you, and for good reason. It's obvious you're going through a really difficult time after losing your job.”

If Mycroft cared- if Mycroft even heard him- he would never know.

But he couldn’t let Greg down.

“Greg’s worried about you,” Sherlock stated quietly. “Talk to him, please. He’s your partner- your fiancé. You can’t make marriage work if you don’t communicate.”

Mycroft took one look at the ground and hesitated. For a split second Sherlock was afraid he would light another cigarette.

“And what do you know about marriage?” He spat. “I can’t even marry Gregory in our country yet because of bloody outdated laws. This…this…it’s not what he wanted.”

Now Sherlock was angry.

Now he was practically convinced Mycroft had been possessed.

“What on earth are you talking about?” He demanded. “All Greg wants is you.”

“Greg wanted a family!” Mycroft exclaimed, placing a hand to his forehead as though he had a headache. “He wanted children! That’s what he has always wanted all of his life. Gregory dreamt of having a grand wedding. He didn’t dream of having a bloody civil partnership with an unemployed bloke.”

Before he realised what he was doing he grabbed Mycroft by the collar and shoved him back.

“Are you insane?” Sherlock shot. “Greg loves you. You can’t just push him away like this. He would want to know that you’re feeling this way. He’d be the first to tell you that you’re insane.”

To his surprise, his brother let out a deep, cold, laugh.

“Did you know that gay couples can marry in New York now?” Mycroft asked. Sherlock froze; he had a feeling of what Mycroft was getting at, and his brother had no idea how close to home it hit. “If we wanted we could get married- properly married- under religious law here. Yes, it would only be acknowledged in the United States but we could have a real wedding right here. Yet neither one of us has brought it up. I think Gregory wants to, but he knows I’m not exactly the religious sort. But what kind of man am I to deny him that? Who am I to try to make my job work again and ask him to go through all of that secrecy, all of that stress again?”

Instead of yelling at his brother, Sherlock suddenly found himself wondering what John truly wanted. It was no secret his boyfriend had spent so much time dating, presumably in search of a
mate to marry and spend the rest of his life with. Did John want children? Did he prefer a religious wedding?

Perhaps Mycroft would listen to him if he admitted that he was going through something similar. His brother clearly needed guidance, and he clearly felt like there was no one he could turn to.

“I know what you’re going through better than you think,” Sherlock said, “and I’ve learned enough about relationships to know that you have to communicate in order for them to work. If you’re considering going after your old job again you have to talk to him about that. But I don’t think you have to worry about how he feels about marriage. After all, he was the one who proposed to you. Still though, talk to him.”

With his lips pressed in a firm line, Mycroft gazed up at the sky. They were far enough from the center of the city that they could see more stars than Sherlock could ever see in London. The moon was full and cast a brilliant glow over the sea of snow covering the garden. It might have been freezing out, but it was still quite peaceful.

“That’s a bit of a foreign concept for us, isn’t it, communication?” Mycroft said. Sherlock didn’t say anything. Stuffing his hands inside his pockets, his brother decided to change the subject: “How was your trip?”

“It was very…relaxing,” Sherlock replied, choosing to leave out the details about the amount of time he and John spent in the hotel room.

“And the symphony?”

“Brilliant,” he grinned. “John even managed to stay awake the entire time.”

Mycroft chuckled.

“I think he’s a bit more into the music when you’re playing it,” Mycroft chimed in.

“Yeah.”

Suddenly snow began falling again. Sherlock’s eyes lifted up to the sky and he breathed in deeply as he let the snowflakes fall on his face. It was really finally hitting him that the year was almost over, and the next one would be very, very different. He wouldn’t be the same person next year that he was at the beginning of this year. His life was changing in ways he could have never predicted, and there was no turning back now.

“Next year’s going to be different,” Sherlock breathed.

“That it will,” Mycroft sighed. He hesitated for a long moment before finally asking: “I haven’t been very fair to Gregory, have I?”

“I think he just wants to know what’s going through your head,” he offered. “I think he’s afraid you’re pushing him away. Then again, I’ve hardly talked to him.”

He was surprised when his brother placed a hand on his shoulder and patted it.

“We are far too lucky, baby brother,” Mycroft announced. “I suppose we should both be thankful for how this all somehow turned out.”

No truer words could have been spoken. Sherlock supposed he needed to stop questioning it all, needed to stop doubting himself, and just be thankful for what he had. People dreamt of being in
relationships as strong- as fun- as his relationship with John. So why was he wandering around, asking himself if he deserved this?

Of course he deserved this.

This was his.

He helped build this.

Just as Mycroft had helped built what he had with Greg.

“You shouldn’t doubt yourself,” Sherlock said. “You deserve this. You deserve to be happy, to live the rest of your life with someone you love. You’ve worked hard for your relationship with Greg. You deserve this, and I’m proud of you.”

His brother’s body was stiff, but he could tell by the flicker of hope in his eyes that Mycroft needed to hear that.

“One more thing before we go inside,” Sherlock said. He looked up to his brother, meeting his eyes with a look at that said you better listen, or else. “If I ever catch you smoking again I’ll make you watch John’s slideshow about all his patients who died of lung cancer.”

He still wanted to tell Mycroft about their father, but he knew that would only make things worse. It would only make Mycroft angrier- it would possibly only push him away even more.

Sherlock was grateful when his brother let out a laugh, nodded, and replied:

“Fair enough.”

They were both shivering as they stepped back inside, grateful for the warmth of the home. Sherlock smiled as he heard his nephew leading Greg and John in a chorus of “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer”. The three of them still sat around the table colouring. Greg had yet another piece of cheesecake in front of him.

“Then one foggy Christmas Eve, Santa came to say-”

“Ho, Ho, Ho!” Dan cried loudly, above everyone.

Greg burst out laughing as he placed his crayon on the table and stood up to greet his lover. Mycroft looked his partner in the eye, obviously trying to find some way to express everything he was thinking, feeling, and fearing with that one look. “Care to join me upstairs? There are some things I should probably talk to you about.”

The DCI swallowed nervously. He was sweating slightly, and Sherlock could only imagine the things he was afraid Mycroft was going to tell him.

“It’s alright,” Mycroft promised. “I just think I haven’t been very fair to you. I think we need to reconnect.”

Nodding, Greg glanced down to the ground momentarily before his eyes flashed back up to meet Mycroft’s.

“Yeah…yeah, that sounds like a good idea.”

As Mycroft placed his arms around his lover and led him toward the stairs, he turned his head back around to Sherlock and mouthed:
“Thank you.”

Sherlock only nodded.

“So,” John said, appearing behind him. “Do you think they’re okay?”

“Yeah,” Sherlock replied as the couple disappeared up the stairs to have their long-overdue heart-to-heart. “Yeah, I think they’ll be fine.”

He turned to John, remembering what Mycroft had said about New York marriage laws.

“Did you know gay couples can legal marry in New York now?” Sherlock asked.

John had a twinkle in his eye, and Sherlock wasn’t sure if it was because that struck him as a brilliant idea or because he was well aware of the law.

“Yeah?” John said, a smile appearing at the corner of his lips.

“Yeah,” Sherlock nodded.

His fiancé lifted up his left hand, brushing his fingers particularly across his ring finger. John opened his mouth, ready to say something about it, but they were interrupted by Dan:

“Can you read me a bedtime story?” His nephew asked.

Looking down at the five-year old, Sherlock took in his candy cane-pattern pajamas and the blanket he had wrapped around him that had a picture of Father Christmas on it. It was amazing to think that Dan had no idea just how much anxiety and stress his uncles were feeling. He had no idea how hard his mum and dad were working to make the move to London a seamless one. He had no idea how hard pregnancy was on his mum. All he knew was that it was Christmas, and all that meant was having fun.


His nephew’s face lit up, and he pumped his fist in the air as he dashed up the staircase. Sherlock turned back to his partner.

“Go ahead,” John said, nodding toward the stairs. “I’ll be in our room.”

He leaned forward to plant a kiss to Sherlock’s cheek; his hand fell behind the consulting detective’s neck, and his lips raised to whisper into his ear:

“I love you.”

His eyes were still twinkling as he pulled away, and Sherlock had to force himself to take his own eyes off him and go upstairs after his nephew.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for another delay :( This time it was actually because I was working on another Amelia story. Hopefully I’ll have that ready to update soon!

Keep in mind this story takes place a bit in the past, since I started it in the earlier
years of the Sherlock series. Hence same-sex marriage just then being legalised in New York.

Thank you all for continuing to ride this longgggg journey with me! Sometimes I look back through these chapters and think it's insane how huge this story has become. But it's just been SO much fun to write it! Let's just say I did have one ending in mind that I've already scratched because I think you guys would have killed me for leaving the story there ;) So this story will stick around for a little longer because I think it has more room to grow!

Thanks for all your kudos and feedback! As always, I'd love to know what you thought!
The guest room was freezing when John woke up on Christmas morning, but that didn’t stop the smile from spreading across his face as he stretched and rolled over to face his lover. Sherlock was still asleep, curled up in the fetal position, facing away from him and hugging his pillow. It was still a couple of hours before the rest of the family would be up to open presents, and John was hoping that he and Sherlock could spend some time alone before the festivities began.

He ran a hand across Sherlock’s chest, and let his head rest against his back. Sherlock was still fast to sleep.

John rocked gently against him, hoping to entice him out of his dreams. His lips danced across Sherlock’s neck, down his back…

And Sherlock was still fast asleep.

Rolling his eyes, he decided he would have to be a bit more straightforward.

“Sherlock,” John murmured, kissing his back once again. “Happy Christmas.”

At last there was a grunt from his lover, but that was all he received as Sherlock buried his head into his pillow.

“Come on, love,” John pleaded. “We have two hours before opening presents, and I want to…”

“John!” Sherlock whined as he threw himself around toward him. He glared at his partner for a long moment, long enough for John to notice that he looked like he was sweating and his face was a bit pale.

“Are you okay?” John asked carefully, raising a hand to his face. His skin felt hot.

Sherlock simply groaned in pain and threw himself back into the mattress. As he did he let out a rough round of coughs, and John finally understood: Sherlock Holmes was sick.

“I think I caught Jason’s cold,” Sherlock mumbled.

“Yeah, or you could have caught something worse in New York City,” John pointed out. “Let me look you over.”

His partner muttered something that sounded like a mixture of ‘no’ and ‘go away’.

“Sherlock!”

“John!”

He coughed again, and John forced him to roll over toward him.

“It’s just a cold,” Sherlock insisted.

“You sound awful.”
“That’s what happens when you have a cold.”

Clearly Sherlock was having trouble breathing through his nose. John couldn’t help but to reach down and run his hand through Sherlock’s curls; he felt so bad for him being sick on Christmas.

“I’ll go see what kind of cold medicine Laura has,” John offered. “You stay here and rest. Can I get you anything else? Maybe some tea?”

“Tea would be nice,” his partner mumbled.

“And some water,” John added, “it will help clear up some of that drainage.”

He kissed the top of Sherlock’s head before slipping out of bed and putting on his dressing gown. Before he could reach the door it flew open, and Dan dashed into the room. The five year-old raced right passed him and jumped onto the bed beside Sherlock.

“It’s Christmas, it’s Christmas!” Dan exclaimed, jumping up and down. “Santa came! It’s time to open presents!”

Sherlock simply let out a painful groan and pulled a pillow over his head.

“Time to get up, Uncle Sirlock!” Dan said, falling down onto the bed. He tried to shake his uncle awake, but Sherlock just batted his hand back toward him.

“Sherlock’s not feeling too well,” John explained as he walked to the bed and picked Dan up off it. “Why don’t you come help me find some medicine to help him feel better?”

“I’m sorry Sirlock,” Dan said, patting Sherlock on the head. His face was crestfallen; the poor kid genuinely felt guilty for bothering his uncle like that.

“It’s okay,” John promised.

Dan skipped ahead of him as they made their way down the hall and through the main living area. He wasn’t surprised to find Mycroft awake and making breakfast, but he was surprised to find Laura was up and sitting on the sofa, looking at a photo album.

“Oh John!” Laura greeted with a smile on her face. “Come look at these. It’s Dan on his first Christmas!”

He planted a smile on his face as he leaned over the sofa and looked down at pictures of a little baby with brown hair that was already beginning to become curly. He was sitting in Laura’s lap while she helped him open a present.

“He was just one there,” Laura sighed. “It was my first Christmas as a parent. I didn’t have a clue what I was doing, of course.”

Seeing the photo of the young woman holding an anxious baby reminded him of just how young Laura had been when she had Dan. He thought he didn’t give her enough credit for raising such a great kid—especially when she spent so much of Dan’s early years as a single mum.

“You two look happy there,” John said. “Merry Christmas, Laura.”

“And a Merry Christmas to you too!”

He placed a hand on her shoulder and she grinned as she turned the page in the album.
“I’m surprised you’re up so early,” he admitted.

“Well Dan was banging on my door by six-thirty shouting about how Santa had visited us,” she looked up at him and winked. He knew for a fact Laura had snuck downstairs at eleven too put Dan’s biggest presents under the tree; Greg had been her lookout to make sure Dan didn’t sneak out of his room to try to find out what was going on. “And my stomach’s been kind of messed up this morning so I was never going to be able to go back to sleep.”

“Is there anything I can do for you?”

“You’re sweet,” she smiled, “but no, I’m fine. Mycroft’s already making me breakfast and tea. Speaking of which, where’s that other brother of mine?”

“Well…” John hesitated. Everyone was already in such a good mood over the festivities: he felt bad to have to bring bad news. He felt even worse that Sherlock wouldn’t feel up to having as much fun as everyone else. “Sherlock’s a bit ill this morning. I think he caught Jason’s cold.”

Laura’s eyes went wide. She snapped the photo album closed and jumped to her feet, obviously ready to help out.

“Poor Sherlock,” she sighed. “I thought by keeping Jason in bed it would help stop his germs from spreading.”

“He could have just as easily caught something in the city,” John pointed out. “He’ll be fine; he’s just out of right now. Do you have any cold medicine he can take?”

“Yeah, of course.”

She led him into the kitchen and opened one of the top cabinets to reveal a sea of medicine. John’s jaw dropped; she practically owned the entire cold medicine isle of Tesco’s.

“Wow,” he breathed. “Erm…thanks. I think this will work just fine.”

He pulled out a bottle that was a combination of cough syrup and nasal decongestants.

“Did you say Sherlock was sick?” Mycroft asked, frowning as he scrambled a skillet full of eggs.

Oh great, he thought. Having everyone nagging at him and panicking over him was definitely not going to make Sherlock feel any better.

“Yeah, just a bit, but he’s fine,” John promised. “I think he just needs to get some more sleep and get some cough medicine in him.”

“Take him this,” Mycroft instructed, pulling a couple pieces of toast out of the toaster and tossing it on the plate. “He gets nauseous if he takes medicine on an empty stomach.”

A half-smile crossed his face upon hearing Mycroft talk about his brother like he was still a little boy, but at the same time it was endearing to hear him express so much concern from Sherlock and to be able to offer that kind of advice.

“That was my toast!” Dan whined.

“I’ll make you some more,” Mycroft said with a smirk.

Dan crossed his arms over his chest and hesitated for a long moment.
“Actually…I want some waffles!” He declared.

Mycroft let out a sigh as he scooped the eggs onto the plate.

“Before toast you wanted pancakes,” Mycroft pointed out. “Are you sure you want waffles?”

“Yeah!” The five-year old exclaimed, punching his fist in the air.

“Thanks for the toast,” John offered to Mycroft.

“Tell my brother to take care of himself,” Mycroft said, letting out another sigh.

“Yeah, we can put off opening presents for a few hours. We’ll let him and Jason get some more sleep,” Laura offered.

“What?!” Dan cried out, his eyes going wide. “But Mommy!!”

“Dan, sweetie,” Laura said, kneeling down in front of her son. “I know it’s Christmas, but when people are sick they’re sick. Sherlock and Daddy both don’t feel well, so we should try to help make them feel better, okay?”

Honestly John could remember what it was like to be a kid on Christmas, and he could remember how exciting it was to know there were presents waiting for you under that tree.

“Maybe you guys can go ahead and open one,” John suggested, winking at Laura.

“Sounds like a plan,” Laura agreed.

Dan grinned as he jumped up in down and ran out of the kitchen, presumably to take stock of his presents and decide which would be most exciting to open first.

“I feel like I’m spoiling him,” Laura admitted as she got to his feet. “He shouldn’t be that excited about getting some presents.”

“You’re only five once,” Mycroft pointed out, handing Laura her breakfast. “When Sherlock was five he wanted a pirate ship for Christmas: an actual pirate ship.”

He found himself bursting out laughing, as was Laura.

“Mummy got him a pirate ship toy,” Mycroft went on. “It was actually a pretty nice one. Of course Sherlock was upset because he couldn’t actually sail away in it.”

He could just imagine a five year old Sherlock feeling heartbroken when he learned that the pirate ships he read about in books didn’t exactly exists anymore. He could only imagine the brain that could now catch serial killers based on recognition of their smell or tell where someone had been travelling from based on the rain on their coat being inside the body of a five year old. Of course Sherlock would have had such an over-active imagination as a child.

“What happened?” Laura asked.

A half-smile that could only be described as a smile of pride crossed Mycroft’s face.

“I took him out to the garden and convinced him there was a pirate ship outside our house. We played pirates for days, even in the freezing cold weather.”

John laughed as he imagined five year old Sherlock (whom looked almost exactly like Dan in his
mind) running around a garden waving around fake swords with Mycroft.

“See, that’s why I wish I had a brother when I was younger,” Laura announced, patting Mycroft on the arm.

“Yeah…he’s leaving out the part where he stalks Sherlock with security cameras and kidnaps his new flat mates,” John quipped.

“But he did that out of love,” Laura said, throwing her arm around her brother’s shoulder.

Rolling his eyes, John left to give Sherlock the toast and medicine. When he pushed the bedroom door open to find Sherlock with his dressing gown on sitting on the side of the bed with his hands on his knees most of him wasn’t even surprised. But when his partner looked up at him with his face as pale as a ghost and his breathing clearly uneven, John didn’t have the heart to lecture him.

“You look awful,” John sighed.

“I’m fine,” Sherlock mumbled. His voice was so nasally John could barely understand him.

“Okay, that’s it,” he announced as he stormed over to one of his suitcases and dug out his medical bag. The look in Sherlock eyes clearly said ‘you brought that?!’ so he admitted: “Yes, I brought the bag. A month long holiday in America during winter is a recipe for at least one of us being sick or injured. And I don’t regret bringing it. Right then…breathe in deeply.”

He snaked the stethoscope under Sherlock’s pyjama top. His fiancé shuddered as the cool metal touched his skin. John placed one hand on Sherlock’s arm to help calm him down as he listened to him breathing. To his relief, Sherlock’s lungs sounded clear.

“I don’t hear any wheezing,” John told him. Next he brought the stethoscope around to Sherlock’s chest to his listen to his heart. As he heard the thump-thump, thump-thump that indicated his lover’s heart was beating strong he smiled. “Sounds good.”

Sherlock didn’t seem to feel as sentimental about John hearing his heartbeat.

“Good,” he mumbled. “Let’s go.”

“No!” John shot.

Grabbing Sherlock by the shoulders, he forced him back down into the bed and pulled the duvet over him.

“Your lungs sound fine now, but if you don’t take care of yourself a cold can easily turn into bronchitis.”

“You sound like a pamphlet in a doctor’s office instead of a real doctor.”

“Yeah, well, I was the one who went to medical school,” John replied. “I’ve dealt with loads of patients who ignore their health when they’re sick. Most of them end up in the A&E on breathing treatments and fluids for dehydration. It’s not worth it. Now sit up.”

Sherlock groaned in response as John helped him sit up and shoved the plate of toast into his lap. He put the tea in Sherlock’s hands and forced him to raise the mug to his lips.

“Are you going to feed the toast to me too?” Sherlock muttered after taking a few sips of the tea.

“If I have to,” John smiled. “Save your voice. In fact, let me look at your throat.”
“But-“

He took advantage of Sherlock’s mouth being open and stuck the tongue dispenser in. Ignoring the whines, John peered down his throat and once again was relief to see it was mostly clear aside from a lot of drainage.

“I do think it’s just a cold,” John confessed, “but please take it easy today.”

“But it’s Christmas,” Sherlock complained.

He raised his eyebrows. If there was something Sherlock was never sentimental about, it was holidays. In fact he was surprised Sherlock wasn’t pleased to have an excuse to get out of celebrating a holiday. The comment showed how much Sherlock had secretly looked forward to spending Christmas with his family, and he hated having to be the bad guy that had to tell him to stay in bed.

“But you’re sick,” he mocked. “You’ve got to take care of yourself, no matter what day of the year. I don’t care if it’s just a cold right now, you’re clearly feeling awful. I love you and I care about you- I just don’t want to see you getting any worse.”

Sitting the plate of toast aside, Sherlock ran his hands through his disheveled curls and let out a sigh of frustration. He waved toward the door and explained:

“My whole family is out there waiting to open presents,” he let out a round of coughs, followed by a deep breath. “I can’t let them down by staying in bed.”

“That’s sweet of you,” John said, placing a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder, “but we’re only here for a couple of more days, and trust me, you don’t want to fly on a plane if this cold turns into something worse.”

“But John-“

John held up a finger to his lips to silence him.

“Eat the toast. Drink the tea. Take the medicine. Sleep another couple of hours. I’m begging you.”

Sherlock glared at him for a long moment before snapping a piece of toast off of the plate. With a satisfied smile on his face, John crawled back into bed beside his partner and snuggled down into the mattress. He had to admit, a couple of extra hours of sleep didn’t sound like a bad idea.

But even as he hugged his pillow he couldn’t help but to gaze up at his lover and feel bad for him. He knew Sherlock could care less about Christmas, but he did care about his family. If Sherlock didn’t get better soon he would never forgive himself.

He watched as his partner ate the last of the toast and downed the cough medicine.

“Happy?” Sherlock mumbled.

“Yes.”

His partner stared at him for a long moment. John couldn’t help but to think back at Rockefeller Center; he smiled to himself as he thought of how gorgeous looked there under the sparkling Christmas lights that lit up the plaza. He thought of Sherlock’s face as he proposed to him: how his eyes went wide, his body went so stiff. How he had obviously never in a million years pictured a scenario in which someone would have proposed to him. John would never forget how that
moment looked, how it smelled, how it sounded. He could distinctly remember the smell of hot chocolate that a woman nearby was drinking and the smell of pizza from a nearby shop. He would always remember kids nearby were singing “Frosty the Snowman”.

He would always remember that stunned look in Sherlock’s eye.

“What?” Sherlock demanded, letting out another round of coughs.

“I was just thinking about you at Rockefeller Center,” John admitted. “You looked so beautiful.”

Sherlock gazed at him with glossy, helpless, eyes.

“John,” he breathed.

“Yeah?”

“I have a headache.”

Another smile crossed his face; he knew he would never get tired of having to look after Sherlock. No matter how insufferable he got.

“I’ll get you some Paracetamol,” John offered, planting a kiss to Sherlock’s forehead.

“Shouldn’t you not be kissing me or touching me?” Sherlock asked, sniffling as he did.

As he threw his legs over the bed and grabbed his dressing gown, John admitted:

“We’ve been sleeping together. We made out last night before bed, in case you forgot.”

“Nope,” Sherlock replied quickly.

He let out a few coughs, and John offered him a sympathetic smile.

“If I’m going to catch your germs I already would have caught them,” John said.

His partner simply like out an “hmm” before he planted his face against his pillow, closed his eyes, and drifted off to sleep.

For three more glorious hours Sherlock slept. In fact, when John shook him awake to see if he felt like opening presents with the family Sherlock actually groaned in protest.

“Feeling any better?” John asked as he handed Sherlock another cup of tea.

“It’s been three bloody hours,” Sherlock moaned.

“Uncle Sirlock!” Came the cry from Sherlock’s nephew outside the door. “Uncle Sirlock it’s presents time!”

Sherlock only glared as John let out a sigh and threw his legs over the bed. He let Dan into the room, and the little boy wasted no time in jumping on the bed.

“Please Uncle Sirlock!” Dan pleaded. “Maybe you’ll feel better after presents!”

John was surprised when a smile actually crossed Sherlock’s face, and his partner made a pathetic attempt at sitting up…only to fall back onto the bed again.
“Why don’t you go get everyone ready for opening presents,” John suggested to Dan. “I’ll help Sherlock get ready.”

“Yay!” Dan exclaimed as he leapt off the bed and ran out of the room.

He wasted no time in rolling over and helping Sherlock sit up.

“How’s the headache?” John asked, wincing as he noticed how much worse for wear Sherlock looked.

His partner let out another moan as he set up, holding his head in his hands as he did.

“I can do this,” Sherlock announced. “It’s just some present opening and-

Before he could finish he broke into yet more horrible, productive, coughs.

As much as John hated to admit it, it was ten in the morning and there was only so much longer they could postpone the Christmas celebrations.

“Fine,” John sighed. “But if that cough gets any worse-

“I’m fine!”

His proclamation was followed again by more coughs. John felt terrible as he walked alongside his partner down the hall and into the living room. He knew he was doing the opposite of helping Sherlock right now, but it was Christmas. Maybe an hour of present opening wouldn’t hurt.

“Sherlock!” Laura exclaimed.

She leapt off the floor to greet her brother, but when he saw just how ill he looked she stopped.

“Oh god, you really do look terrible,” she said. “Are you sure you feel up for this?”

Sherlock simply glared at her, and Laura stepped aside to let him sit down with the rest of the family around the tree. The consulting detective took a seat in one of the armchairs; Jason was in the other, looking equally worse for wear.

“How are you feeling?” John asked him.

Jason sat with his elbow rested on the arm of the chair and his head rested in the palm of his head.

“Wonderful,” Jason muttered. “Merry Christmas.”

“He was up most of the night coughing,” Laura explained as she handed her husband a cup of tea.

“It’s the cold that will never end,” her husband complained. “Sorry I got you sick, Sherlock.”

The consulting detective just waved his hand toward him, as though he was feeling too weak to reply.

Their Christmas morning turned out to be rather relaxing. John nursed a cup of coffee as everyone opened their presents in turn- Dan of course, being the most excited to open gifts. Even Sherlock’s face lit up as he watched his nephew tear through his gifts; Dan seemed to love each one more and more. John didn’t think any of their gift ideas were too original: Sherlock got him a kid’s chemistry set, John got him a doctor’s kit, Greg got him a detective play kit. Mycroft probably had the most creative idea at all- a real football jersey for the team Greg supported (and had turned Dan into a
“An authentic Arsenal jersey?” Greg announced, his eyes wide with disbelief. “I’ve always wanted one of those! But I could never bring myself to pay the cost of the real ones.”

“If you really are that jealous, maybe you should go ahead and open up your gift from me,” Mycroft said, winking at his fiancé.

Greg eyed his partner, as though he didn’t quite trust opening a box from Mycroft. The eldest Holmes brother sat back in his chair with his legs crossed and a smirk on his face as Greg tore through the wrapping paper, threw aside the lid to the box and-

“No way!” The DCI was positively giddy as he pulled out an official Arsenal jersey of his own-complete with a signed autograph on the back. “No bloody way! And it’s signed?! Mye, this must have cost a fortune!”

“I bought it at a charity auction,” Mycroft confessed, “the proceeds went to a good cause.”

“Well this jersey will go to a good cause too,” Greg said.

He was already beginning to tear off his pyjama top, completely forgetting everyone else in the room, so he could try it on.

“Gregory!” Mycroft scolded. “You can’t possibly be thinking of *wearing* that shirt! It cost a fortune! It has an autograph on it. I don’t want some punk teenager mugging you over it.”

From the look on Greg’s face Mycroft might as well have just told him football was cancelled for the next season.

“But…well…” Greg hesitated, obviously trying to find a way to still appear grateful. “I suppose it will look cool hanging up in a frame in my office.”

“Why don’t you open your next gift from me?” Mycroft suggested, his eyes twinkling.

Once again Greg looked suspicious, but nonetheless he didn’t argue as he tore open the other box with his name on it from his partner. Another grin crossed his face as soon as Greg pulled an identical Arsenal jersey, sans autograph.

“You’re the best, love!” Greg declared as he leaned over to plant a kiss right on his fiancé’s lips. Mycroft blushed as Greg pulled away and he suddenly seemed very interested in his own fingernails.

After opening presents John was relieved to find the rest of their Christmas would be rather relaxing. Laura put on a children’s Christmas movies for Dan, but he quickly got bored of them and walked up to John with his new medical kit.

“Can you show me how to play with this?” He asked in an innocent voice that instantly put a smile on John’s face.

“Of course!” He replied. “Do you want to help me check on your daddy?”

Jason was sprawled out on the sofa, napping while Sherlock slept sitting straight up in the armchair. They would give him a checkup next, he decided.

“One of the first things a doctor does when they have a new patient is take their temperature,”
John explained. He unsnapped the medical kit so Dan could see all the tools inside. “You do that with a thermometer. Do you know which one that is?”

Nodding, Dan pulled out a toy thermometer.

“I’m going to take your temp-ture Daddy,” Dan announced, very matter-a-factly.

“Oh, okay,” Jason said, winking up at John as he opened his mouth.

The five year-old waited a full ten seconds before pulling out the thermometer.

“Beep beep beep!” Dan cried. He held the thermometer out to John. “What does it say?”

He had to bite his lip to keep from laughing.

“It says that he doesn’t have a temperature,” John said. “Now after you take his temperature it’s important to check his blood pressure.”

“Blood pressure,” Dan repeated with determination, as though he was storing this information in the back of his mind to remember forever.

“That’s what this is for,” John explained, taking out the blood pressure cup, “you put it around a patient’s arm like this.”

The blood pressure cup was really meant for a child so it was a bit small for Jason’s arm, so John pretended like he was closing it tight.

“You use this pump and look at the monitor to see how their blood pressure is,” he went on.

He wished in reality it was that easy to learn how to take a patient’s blood pressure. He let Dan pump the toy a few times before announcing that it looked like his blood pressure was fine. While Dan was putting the toy back into the bag, Jason grabbed his arm and leaned up to his ear.

“Actually my blood pressure’s been kind of high, and I’m supposed to start monitoring it. Can you help?”

Though he was surprised at the confession, John nodded in agreement, careful not to draw Dan’s attention toward them.

“What’s next?” Dan looked up at him with the eagerness of a first year medical student.

He actually reminded John a bit of himself when he was a kid: he was always interested in medical science. He got his very own play medical kit when he was around John’s age, and he could clearly remember ‘playing doctor’ with everyone in the family.

“Next we listen to the patient’s heartbeat,” he said, taking out the stethoscope. He remembered he had his real one in the medical kit he brought on the holiday (just in case…one never knew with Sherlock. It would be much more exciting for Dan to learn about the human heart with the real deal. “Actually, hold on.”

John disappeared to the bedroom to grab the real stethoscope, and when he returned to the living room he carefully placed the buds into Dan’s ears.

“This is a real stethoscope,” he explained. “It’s the one I used, in the army, and it’s the one I use now whenever your Uncle Sherlock is hurt or sick.”
Sherlock grunted in his sleep, like heard the comment even in his dreams.

“You place the metal part here,” he said, placing it carefully over Jason’s heart. “Can you hear that? The thump-thump, thump-thump?”

Eyes wide, Dan nodded. He almost looked a bit freaked out, like he was being introduced to a whole new world. John remembered his grandfather showing him how to use a stethoscope, and the moment he heard his granddad’s heartbeat at the age of six years old that he wanted to be a doctor.

“Yeah,” Dan whispered. He placed his hand over Jason’s heart, and Jason placed his own hand over his. “Thump-thump, thump-thump. Is that what all hearts sound like?”

He didn’t want to introduce Dan to the horrors of heart problems, so he kept it simple:

“Most of the time.”

For a long few minutes Dan kept listening to his father’s heart; then he turned around to listen to John’s.

“How does it sound?” John asked.

Grinning, Dan replied.

“Strong! You must eat a lot of vegetables.”

That time he couldn’t stop himself from bursting out laughing. In reality he could probably eat a few more servings of vegetables each day, but he decided to keep that to himself.

“Do you feel better, Daddy?” Dan asked, turning back to his father.

Jason reached down to lift Dan up into his lap, even though Dan was a bit big to still be able to sit in someone’s lap.


“You’re welcome,” Dan replied bashfully.

At that moment Sherlock stirred from his sleep. Blinking, he looked confused as he glanced around the room and tried to figure out what was going on.

“Dan is offering free checkups,” Jason explained.

It seemed like it took Sherlock a full moment to figure out what he was talking about.

“Are you feeling okay, love?” John asked.

“I want to take his temp-ture!” Dan cried, rushing over to Sherlock before John could get to him.

“Hang on,” John said, grabbing him before he could stick the thermometer in Sherlock’s mouth. Even though it was a toy, after pretending to take Jason’s temperature with it there could still be some germs on it. “Why don’t I go get my thermometer?”

Sherlock looked so out of it and so uncomfortable that John was starting to worry that he might actually have a fever. As he walked back to the guest room once again, he didn’t noticed Sherlock had started to follow him until a hand landed on his shoulder.
“John,” his partner announced feebly; his voice was even more weak and raw than earlier. John swallowed nervously as he turned around and saw the worried look on his lover’s face. If Sherlock was actually concerned about his own health, he must really feel terrible. “My chest hurts a bit.”

He let out a round of coughs that were even deeper and more frightening than his coughs from this morning. Perhaps his fears were true—hadn’t just caught a cold from Jason, maybe he really did pick something up in New York City.

“Why don’t you go lay down?” John offered, trying his best to maintain his calm, empathetic doctor’s voice.

But in his mind, he was beginning to worry about bronchitis.

Sherlock was curled up in the middle of the bed when he returned with his stethoscope. He held his own breath as he checked Sherlock’s lungs once again, and a pit fell in his stomach when he detected the faintest bit of wheezing that wasn’t there earlier.

“Do you feel like you’re breathing okay?” He asked. Sherlock simply shrugged and coughed. “You don’t sound too good. Honestly, love, I’m beginning to think you might already have bronchitis.”

“I used to get bronchitis,” Sherlock mumbled. “When I was in uni…and after…’tis awful,” Sherlock added.

John was sure the smoking, drug abuse, and living on the streets didn’t help, and he could tell Sherlock was aware those were the reasons behind his repeated bouts of bronchitis.

“Yeah,” John agreed. “It’s pretty nasty stuff. I’ll keep an eye on you, okay? Just keep taking care of yourself.”

“It’s Christmas,” his fiancé replied into the pillow. “Not fair.”

It broke his heart to hear Sherlock make such a statement. Never did Sherlock care about holidays like that, but he knew how much it meant to have a family to celebrate with now. He didn’t want to miss out—and he didn’t deserve to miss out. But John knew he would feel so much worse in a few days if he didn’t start taking care of himself now.

“I know,” John said, placing a hand on his lover’s back. “But there will be other Christmases. Plus you’ve got to remember Laura’s pregnancy: you can’t risk her getting sick.”

Sherlock simply grunted, like he didn’t want to say John was right.

“If we take care of this now you’ll feel better a lot sooner than if you push yourself,” John said. “I promise. Take it easy love, please.”

Leaning forward, he planted a kiss to Sherlock’s curls. His partner turned around, pale-faced, and grumbled:

“Won’t you get my germs?”

With a laugh, John said:

“Like I said earlier…I’ve probably caught them already.”

He winked at Sherlock before leaving the room in search of medicine that would help clear his chest congestion. He was surprised when his mobile rang as he stepped into the hall; he was even
more surprised when he saw the caller ID read ‘Dad’.

“Hey Dad,” John said as he answered, trying to not sound too stunned.

Suddenly he felt guilty for thinking so little of his own family on Christmas. He knew his mum didn’t want to hear from him, and usually if Harry wanted to talk on holidays she would phone herself. But he really should have phoned his father. He could only imagine the tension in that household on Christmas morning, and while part of him again felt guilty for not being there part of him was relieved he wasn’t there.

And again…he felt terrible for feeling that way.

“Happy Christmas, son,” his dad greeted. John was relieved to hear his father sounded so strong and well, in such a good mood.

“Happy Christmas to you too,” John replied. A smile fell across his face as he walked down to the end of the hall and shut himself in a cupboard for the sake of not wanting to be overheard. “It’s so good to hear from you.”

“It’s good to hear your voice,” his dad said. “How’s America?”

“It’s great!” He blurted out, a bit fast. His dad chuckled. “I’m having a really good time. Sherlock’s family lives in upstate New York…it’s really beautiful up here. I wish you could see it.”

“Oh, I’ve been,” his dad admitted.

His eyebrows shot up; that was news to him. He knew his father had done quite a bit of travelling around Europe, but he never thought he went to America.

“Really?” John asked. “When was that?”

“Your grandparents took me when I was a lad,” he explained. “We went to New York City and drove up to Canada. I was quite young…perhaps eight years old. I don’t remember much of it, except for a lot of skyscrapers in the city and lot of trees in the country.”

“Yeah, there are a lot of trees here,” John agreed. “Oh, and we have snow!”

“That’s nice,” his father said; it sounded like he was smiling. “A white Christmas is always nice.”

“Yeah.”

As his voice fell John still found himself smiling. He wanted to hear more about his grandparents and more about his father’s travels. He wished he could have some of his mum’s pumpkin pie she made every Christmas, he wished he could open up another one of Harry’s lame last minute gifts (last year it was socks, though in her defence they were rather nice socks).

“I’m sorry I’m not there,” John offered. “I should be there.”

“Nonsense, you’re on the holiday of a lifetime!” His father said. He sounded so excited for him that John could tell he truly meant it, and that was a great relief. “How is Sherlock?”

“He’s okay,” John said. He hesitated a moment before confessing: “Actually he’s a bit under the weather. I’m worried he has bronchitis. He’s really heartbroken that he’s missing out on the celebration.”

“Well it’s a good thing he has such a great doctor to look after him,” his dad said. He could just
imagine his dad winking at him after saying that.

Silence fell between them. There was so much John wanted to say when he knew they had so little time. If he had a normal family he would be bragging about his engagement news right now, but he could only imagine the treatment he would get from his mother if she found her son was going to enter into a civil partnership with another man. She might actually end her silent treatment just to scream at him.

But he would like to think his dad would be proud. He would like to think his dad would want to know if he got engaged.

“Dad…if I tell you something can you promise to keep it a secret?” He asked. “You can’t tell Harry, and you especially can’t tell Mum. In fact…”

“I won’t tell anyone,” his father promised, sounding a bit amused. “I promise, son. You can trust me.”

Taking a deep breath, John forced himself to smile, hoping it would help relax him.

Instead he only felt more anxious. He ran a head over his head as he sighed again, and it was a full moment before he finally brought himself to confess:

“I proposed to Sherlock.”

Silence.

A pit fell in his stomach.

He shouldn’t have done that.

Sure his father could be content with the thought of his son being in a relationship with another man, but in a civil partnership? Or even married, if they were to get married in a country where same-sex married was legal, or if it became legal in England? Perhaps that was just going too far.

“You proposed?” His father finally breathed.

He nodded, and then remembered his dad couldn’t see him.

“Yeah, I did.”

More silence.

And finally:

“Can gay couples get married in England?” His father asked, genuinely confused.

John let out a laugh, though his stomach was in knots.

“No,” he admitted. “No, we would have to get a civil partnership. We could get married in a country that recognises same-sex marriage, but it wouldn’t be recognised in England. But still…a civil partnership…it’s…”

“It’s forever,” his dad finished for him.

“Yeah.”
More silence.

“That’s a big commitment, son,” his dad said quietly.

“Yeah, I know.”

His eyes fell to the floor. He just wasn’t sure what else to say. He didn’t have the strength to say anything else, not when deep down he was terrified he had just ruined his relationship with his father forever.

“I’m really happy for you.”

John’s heart skipped a beat as he picked his eyes up off the floor.

“Really?” He asked; suddenly his heart began pounding.

“Of course,” his father said. “My son is getting married! Well, he’s getting a civil partnership. You’ve found someone to spend the rest of your life with, someone you love, unconditionally. I’m happy for you, John, and I’m proud…so very proud.”

A tear fell from his eye even as he found himself beaming.

“Thank you,” John said, his voice breaking. “That really means a lot.”

“You’re so strong,” his father told him. “You became a doctor, joined the army, got shot and overcame that…and now you’ve found love. You’ve found love in another man which, if you don’t mind me saying, I’m sure you never expected.”

“No,” John admitted, laughing a bit. “No, honestly, I did not.”

He actually hadn’t thought about that: all those times he had insisted that he was not gay, all those women he went out with and all the years he assumed he would spend his life married to the woman of his dreams.

Instead he found a man. He found the perfect man, a man he wouldn’t trade for the world.

And he was happier than he ever could have dreamt of being.

“I’m not sure what is wrong with your mother, and honestly I think she will regret acting this way eventually. But I’m proud to call you my son.”

More tears fell from his eyes. He hadn’t realised just how much it would mean to hear that his father was happy he was engaged, that he was proud of him.

It meant the world to him.

It made him feel like he wasn’t living this secret life, this life his family didn’t really understand or even cared about.

“So will there be a ceremony?” His father asked. “How does that work?”

With a laugh, John admitted:

“I’m not really sure. We haven’t gotten that far into planning yet.

“Well whatever you decide I’m sure it will be brilliant,” his dad said, “and if there is a ceremony I
would like to be there, if you’ll have me.”

“Of course,” John said with a smile. “I love you. I’ll visit when I get back home. And like I said, please don't tell anyone my news. We're keeping it a secret for now.”

“I promise I won't tell. And yes, please visit. I love you too. I really am proud, John.”

John was still smiling- and crying- as they hung up. Breathing in deeply, he wiped at his face and tried to pull himself together before stepping back out into the hall.

He felt strong, as he pocketed his mobile and went in search for medicine. He had never felt more confident in his decision to propose.

And he couldn’t have asked for anything better on Christmas than to hear his father say how proud he was of him.

Chapter End Notes

Naturally while I complain about retail industries forcing Christmas on us earlier and earlier each year, I write a Christmas chapter! I do hope I haven't overwhelmed you with all the fluff!

Our journey with the boys in America is coming to an end. Soon it’s back London, back to cases, back to Baker Street, and back to Mrs Hudson, of course!

Thanks so much for all the feedback! Your comments mean so much to me! I still can’t believe I get them after this long LOL! I know this is an insanely long story...but I get even more inspired to continue it when I hear all of your support!
Sherlock breathed in deeply, letting the steam rising up from the chicken and rice soup ease his congestion.

It wasn’t exactly working, but all the same soup was all he felt like eating the past few days. His bronchitis was taking its sweet time in improving, and he had to admit he wasn’t looking forward to getting on a plane tomorrow on a long flight across the ocean. John had been stricter than Sherlock had ever seen him about getting as healthy as possible before their flight, insisting that he stay in bed as much as possible. While he loved seeing “Doctor Watson” in action (it did make his heart flutter whenever John used his stethoscope on him), being sick was bloody boring. He was happy to get out, even if it were just for a bowl of soup. Of anything it was a good measure of how ready he was to travel tomorrow.

So far he was seriously considering beginning Mycroft to buy him a plane ticket for a later date.

If he wasn’t so desperate to get home, he might actually ask.

The idea of going home was more and more welcoming by the moment. He felt guilty for it; he knew his family would miss him and of course he would miss them.

But at the same time he yearned for normality.

He wanted to eat at Angelo’s and work on experiments in the flat.

He wanted to work on a case.

Of course right now, he mainly wanted to breathe normally.

“How’s the soup?” Laura asked him.

All he could do was offer her a feeble smile and nod. Along with dealing with a worsening cough, horrible headache, and mucus he had lost his voice.

“I kind of like him this way,” Mycroft teased with a smirk.

“Ha,” Sherlock whispered.

“Thanks for having lunch,” Laura said. “I just can’t believe you guys are leaving already! This whole trip went by so fast and...well the next time I see you it will be in London.

There was a smile on her face but her eyes were filled with fear and anxiety.

Obviously sensing this, their brother asked her:

“How is the new house coming along?”

This time it was Laura whose eyes diverted to her food.

“Well we have to get a new roof,” she admitted. “And to replace some windows...you know, normal house-buying stuff.”
“Normal expensive stuff,” Mycroft said. “Listen, Laura, if you need anything—”

With a wave of her hand, Laura shook her head.

“We have it covered,” she said in a voice that sounded like she really wanted to say ‘my husband is a lawyer’. “It’s just stressful.”

She poked around at the salad on her plate, clearly waiting for someone else to take the conversation into their own hands.

“You should have seen the renovations our parents’ house needed,” Mycroft spoke up. Sherlock looked over to him, surprised. Not only had he never heard Mycroft talk of this before, he didn’t remember seeing any renovations being done. His brother raised his eyebrows when he saw his surprised look and remarked: “What? It did. The windows were rotting, there were cracks in the walls, the floors were ancient- and that’s just the start of it all. I didn’t know the first thing about renovating homes, and I was afraid to mess with a building that had been in our family for ages. And it cost a lot of money. More than once I questioned if I should just sell it.”

*I’m glad you didn’t,* Sherlock thought.

“But it was worth it,” Mycroft admitted, sipping at his coffee. “Plus it helps if you have the ability to hire contractors. Now Gregory wants to repaint some of the rooms and take out of some of the walls to open the place up a bit. And when I say Gregory wants to do it I mean he actually wants to do the work himself. I think it’s some sort of mid-life crisis.”

“Some men buy cars, some men quit their jobs, some men re-do their fiancé’s ancestral homes,” Laura teased.

Smirking, Mycroft replied:

“Well he’s crazy if he thinks I’m going to allow him to take an axe to a wall,” he said, “although some new paint colours might be nice.”

“I can see—” Sherlock’s whispering stopped short as he broke out into a round of coughs. He hated forgetting he didn’t have a voice.

*I can see you two painting walls together,* is what he wanted to say.

“What was that, baby brother?” Mycroft asked, a smile peering from the corner of his lips.

Sherlock simply glared at him and sipped at more of his soup. Shaking her head, Laura raised her coffee cup, as though preparing to make a toast.

“Well,” she announced, “to new homes and new adventures.”

The two brothers humoured her by clinging their mugs together.

“Right,” Laura said, running her hands through her hair. “I just wanted to tell both of you how much it meant to me to have you here over the holidays. It was really the best Christmas I’ve ever had, and I know Dan really loved having you here too.”

“Of course,” Mycroft smiled. “Thank you for having us. I’m sure you’ll be grateful to have the house back to yourselves, without having to be a hostess day after day.”

Blushing, Laura insisted:
“It was no trouble, really. It was actually nice having guests around. Can you believe we set up that house for guest rooms and you guys were the only people we’ve only had stay over, besides Jason’s parents, of course?”

That’s why I don’t believe in guest rooms, Sherlock wanted to say, that way you have no long-term visitors.

Nevertheless, in the back of his mind he was wondering if it might be a good idea to clear out John’s old bedroom, just in case Dan ever wanted to stay the night.

“No one uses guest rooms, except for family,” Mycroft mused. “When is the closing date?”

“We close on our current home on January 10th,” Laura said. “And the new house on the 20th.”

She diverted her eyes again, and Sherlock realised she didn’t just invite them here to say goodbye.

“You’ll need a place to stay,” Mycroft commented. Laura froze, obviously embarrassed. “Well of course, you’re staying with me and Gregory then.”

He had to admire his brother, if he had any reservations about having family stay at his home for another ten days, he didn’t show it.

“Are you sure?” Laura asked skeptically, her eyes shifting up to her eldest brother. “Maybe you should talk to Greg first.”

There was a flash of realisation on Mycroft’s face, like he was remembering oh yeah, I’m engaged now, perhaps I should consult my partner on decisions like this.

“Alright,” he agreed, “though I don’t foresee it being an issue.”

“Thank you,” their sister said with a smile. “Thank you, really. I will really miss you guys.”

“And we will miss you,” Mycroft replied. Eyes narrowing, he turned to Sherlock, as though suggesting that he better agree.

But of course he would agree.

The following day was utter hell.

No one could prepare him for how horrible it was flying with an illness. He knew now why John had been so hard on him about taking it easy and forcing him to down more cold medicine than he could ever remember taking in his life. Just been shuffled through the airport alone made him feel like collapsing. His head pounded, his throat was still raw, he had a cough that made people turn away from him in disgust, and his chest was still tight not only from congestion, but anxiety. If being on the ground made him feel this uncomfortable, he couldn’t imagine what it was going to be like riding in a plane.

“Take this,” John said as soon as they sat down in their terminal. Sherlock only stared at him, eyes glazed over, wondering how his body was supposed to handle more medicine. “Taking decongestants before flying will make you feel better while you’re in the air. There’s also a cough suppressant in that, and even though I think it’s good for you to be coughing all this stuff up, I’m sure everyone on the plane will think differently. Oh- and this will knock you out in about five minutes. Hopefully you’ll just sleep through the flight.”
Now that sounded promising.

He offered his fiancé a grateful smile and took the pills without further question. When he gave John the pill bottle back he took his hand and squeezed it— one of the only ways he had been able to show him appreciation in the past few days.

“You’re welcome,” John grinned.

John wasn’t lying when he said the drug would knock him out. By the time they boarded, he had to lean on John’s shoulder just to keep upright. He stayed awake long enough to put away his carry-on bag and put on his seatbelt, and then he was out like a light.

When he woke up again it was morning. Brilliant rays of yellow and orange light beamed through the window beside them. He could see Mycroft and Gregory sleeping across the aisle from them, Gregory with his head rested on his lover’s shoulder. As he sat up and stretched, Sherlock realised he had fallen asleep the same way, using the shoulder of John’s leather coat as a pillow. John stirred awake when Sherlock moved, but instead of being angry his fiancé flashed him a smile.

“How did you sleep?” John whispered, mindful of the other resting passengers.

Sherlock tried to reply, but his throat was too dry to speak. John handed him a bottle of water, and he immediately downed some of it.

“Well,” he finally managed to whisper back.

Reaching up, John pushed a curl out of his face before running his hand through his hair, as though trying to comb it. He looked over Sherlock to Mycroft and Greg and grinned.

“They look like they’re sleeping well too,” John commented.

Sherlock couldn’t help but to whip out his mobile and take a photo of the two.

“Come here,” his fiancé said suddenly, wrapping his arm around his shoulders and pulling him close. John took his mobile out of his hands and held it in front of them to take a photo of the two of them. He handed him back the mobile and explained: “One last holiday photo.”

An announcement came from the pilot letting them know they were preparing for landing. Sherlock swallowed nervously; he wished the medicine had knocked him out through the landing. His ears were already beginning to pop as the descent began— which didn’t help how stuffed up he already felt.

“Are you okay?” John asked, seeing the discomfort on his face.

Sherlock motioned to his ears.

“The plane is just…not helping,” he explained.

He was pleased to find he had at least somewhat of a voice. His throw still hurt, and he had to swallow and drink some water. On cue, John took some tablets out of his bag and handed them to him.

“They won’t make you drowsy,” his lover promised, “but they’ll help, at least a bit.”

“Thanks,” he muttered as he quickly took the pills and downed them.

Sherlock didn’t hesitate to rest his head on John’s shoulders again and gaze out the window. The
brilliant sunset turned to foggy blue skies as they drew closer to the earth. Soon London came into view— he noticed the Eye first, and his heart skipped a beat. The rest of the city slowly presented itself next: Big Ben, the bridges, all the buildings and roadways.

The close they came to the ground the more his heart yearned to be back in the city. He could just taste Mrs Hudson’s tea on his tongue, and just smell the Indian food cooking in the small restaurant down the block.

Across from them Mycroft and Greg stirred awake as the plane began a further descent. His brother yawned and stretched before looking over to Sherlock.

“How do you feel?” Mycroft asked him.

Sherlock simply shrugged and closed his eyes, and let his head rest on John’s shoulder for the rest of the landing. He tried to block out the sensation of falling during the descent, but all the same his stomach dropped and nausea began to set in. He was never one to suffer from motion sickness, but he was certain if he didn’t get on solid ground soon he would throw up. Beside him John squeezed his arm, as though reminding him that it was okay, he wasn’t alone and it would be over soon.

When he stood up the sensation got so much worse. His head was spinning, it felt like his ears might pop off, and his stomach was in knots. He could feel the bile beginning to rush up his throat. Anxiety built as they fought their way out of the plane, and his body felt hot as they entered the terminal.

“Sherlock…are you alright?” John asked him.

All he could manage was to shake his head no before racing toward the nearest loo. He couldn’t think about being embarrassed. All he could think about was this is the sickest he could remember feeling since his days of withdrawal. He just wanted to be home, in his own bed, but he did feel some relief at being able to sit on the solid ground.

His body shook as he lowered himself to the floor so that he could sit with his back against the stall. John’s feet pounded into the restroom; Sherlock reached up to open his stall for him. Gazing up at him with helpless eyes, he simply shook his head.

“I’m so sorry, love,” John whispered, reaching down to run a hand through his curls. “Taking a plane ride while you’re sick is the worst. Do you think you can stand?”

Sherlock offered him a weak nod.

John helped him stand; Sherlock swayed on his feet as he did.

“My ears,” he croaked, wincing in pain as he touched his left ear. “They feel…funny.”

“The change in pressure does that to you,” John explained. “But it’s possible you have an ear infection too.”

Closing his eyes, Sherlock tried not to lose it at the thought of being diagnosed with yet another illness. Wasn’t he supposed to be getting better by now— not worse?!

“I think we should go to a clinic tomorrow if you don’t feel any better,” John confessed. Sherlock glared at him, but his lover wasn’t fazed: “Ear infections can get really bad if they’re not treated, and all of this could turn into pneumonia if it’s not treated correctly. I’m doing my best, but I don’t have all the proper equipment to examine you. I promise I’ll go with you.”
“Yes, Doctor,” Sherlock mumbled.

They parted ways with Mycroft and Greg as they caught a cab to go home. Sherlock felt so drained that he fell asleep during the ride through rush hour traffic; he actually thought he was still dreaming when John nudged him awake and softly announced:

“Well, we’re home.”

His chest felt tight as his eyes batted opened to find they were parked in front of a very familiar doorway. A bright smile crossed John’s face, and his fiancé seemed to suddenly be bursting with energy as he hopped out of the cab and started collecting their bags. Sherlock’s body still felt heavy as he stepped out of the cab and breathed in the blend of smells from nearby Italian, Indian, and Chinese restaurants.

“It’s good to be home,” John confessed as he stood next to him and gazed up to 221B.

They didn’t even have to open the door themselves- it was thrown open by a beaming Mrs Hudson.

“Oh, boys!” She exclaimed.

Without warning she threw her arms around both of them. When she pulled away there were tears falling from her eyes.

“Mrs Hudson!” John greeted. “Was it that boring without us?”

“Oh dear,” she laughed. “It has been so quiet without you two! I would wake up in the middle of the night thinking something was wrong because I didn’t hear the sounds of Sherlock experimenting. But everything’s just as you left it…well, perhaps a bit cleaner. I couldn’t help myself.”

He and John exchanged smiles as their landlady led them inside- they had expected as much.

“Would you two like some breakfast?” Mrs Hudson asked.

Her voice was anxious, like she was speaking to two sons who had come to visit her. Sherlock found himself feeling comforted in her presence: Mrs Hudson was one of the few people he could consider family before he found out about his sister and her family. Something about being around Mrs Hudson made him feel like everything would be okay, like he didn’t really feel as bad as he thought he did.

“I dunno, Sherlock, do you think you could stomach it?” John asked.

His cheeks reddened, he didn’t exactly want his being sick in an airport restroom to be the topic of conversation.

“Are you feeling ill, dear?” Mrs Hudson asked.

“He’s had bronchitis,” John explained for him. “And the plane ride just shook him up a bit.”

Now he just felt like a child who was being talked about by his parents.

“Oh I never did well on planes,” Mrs Hudson confessed, waving her hand at them as she led them through the foyer.

The warmth of the flat building hit Sherlock immediately, and he couldn’t help but to let a smile slip across his face. Yes, he was definitely home.
They followed Mrs Hudson into her flat and shuffled into her tiny kitchen. He was grateful to be able to sit still, but he still find himself leaning over against John’s body for support.

“We’ll have a nice breakfast, love, and then you can go rest up,” their landlady offered.

He simply let out a hum of approval. He had to admit, it was quite nice to have a mother-figure around while he was ill. Sherlock had no problem letting Mrs Hudson making them both a nice cuppa. There was toast for him and eggs and sausage for John. His fiancé took the liberty of telling Mrs Hudson as many details about their holiday as he could through mouthfuls of food.

“I must admit, New York City really is pretty magical at Christmastime,” John said, his eyes twinkling as he stole a glance toward Sherlock.

“Did you get to see the tree at Rockefeller Center?” Mrs Hudson asked giddily, beaming from ear to ear as though relieving memories of her own days in New York.

John’s eyes continue to twinkle as he held his gaze with Sherlock’s. The consulting detective finally decided to take a bite of toast to prevent himself from spilling their secret.

“We passed by it,” John lied coolly, “but you know Sherlock, he’s not much one for touristy things.”

“Yes of course not,” Mrs Hudson teased. Clearly the lie worked; Sherlock stuffed more toast into his mouth to keep from grinning. “I’m so glad to hear you two had such a wonderful time. You deserved to get awhile for a while, you know. A long holiday like that can work wonders for the brain. You’ll be completely rested for the New Year. Now- who needs more tea?”

Sherlock helped himself to a second cup of tea (it was really the only thing that helped soothe his sore throat) while John helped their landlady do the washing up. When Mrs Hudson excused herself to go push some laundry in the dryer, John turned back to him with a sigh.

“It feels wrong to lie to her,” his fiancé confessed. “It feels like I’m lying to my mothe, except worse because Mrs Hudson is actually nice to me. And she’s done so much for us- for you, especially.”

Swallowing nervously, a pit of guilt settled in his stomach as he thought of how much Mrs Hudson had done for him. For starters, she had offered him a flat in a fairly exclusive neighborhood for far less than it was actually worth and without him having any proper credit or a good rental history. Of course that was because he helped her with her case, but she still didn’t have to continue to be so giving all these years. She picked up after him, cooked for him, and scolded him like she was his own mother. In fact, he always had the feeling that Mrs Hudson had sensed he truly needed a mother-figure in his life.

He couldn’t lie to her. She would be devasted to know they kept their engagement from her for. He thought she would understand why, but he couldn’t stand the idea of hurting her.

“I suppose it couldn’t hurt to tell her,” Sherlock spoke up hoarsely.

A huge grin crossed John’s face, signaling his relief and approval of the suggestion.

“Are you sure?” John asked, clearly eager to tell someone their secret. “Do you think she can keep a secret? Then again, what will she do, phone Mycroft and gossip about it?”

Sherlock smiled- truly smiled- for the first time in days.
“Mrs Hudson!” John called. The two were grinning like school girls as their landlady rushed back in, perplexed. “We have something to tell you. You may want to sit down for this.”

Taking her hand, John led her to the table so the three of them could sit down together. He held her hand, much like a son would when telling his own mother about an engagement.

“Mrs Hudson we lied when we said we didn’t go to Rockefeller Center,” John confessed.

Frowning, Mrs Hudson held her half-smile, trying to figure the two of them out.

“Why would you lie about that, dear?”

John held a hand to his chin, clearly attempting to cover up how much he was beaming.

“Well,” John said. He took a deep breath and grabbed Sherlock’s hand. Stealing a glance to him, his eyes pleaded to Sherlock’s final approval. Nodding, Sherlock gave it to him. “You know we’ve been very close this year. In fact this year has been pretty…pretty incredible. Both us have been talking about how we know we want to spend the rest of our lives together so…we decided to make the decision permanent.”

“Permanent?” She echoed. Her eyes flashed between the two of them, and John finally let his other hand fall to hers, revealing how he was smiling like an idiot.

“I proposed to Sherlock while we were at Rockefeller Center. We’re getting married!” John exclaimed. “Well, we’re getting a civil partnership. But all the same!”

Silence fell as their landlady stared between the two of them for a full moment and then…

She broke out into a scream of joy.

“Oh boys!” She cried out, jumping to her feet faster than Sherlock had seen her move in a long time.

Mrs Hudson didn’t hesitate to run around to the other side of the table and throw her arms around both of them.

“I always knew you two were meant to be!” She went on as she squeezed them both tightly. “I’m so proud of you two. And so happy! I knew it the moment you two moved in together.”

“Did you really?” John asked, his eyes shifting toward her suspiciously as she let them go and sat back down.

“Of course!” She took a sip of her tea before continuing: “You two were so trusting of each other. There was a connection there, I knew it. I am so happy for you. And you, Sherlock, I’m so proud of you. For so long you pushed people away, but this…this is truly meant to be your future.”

Face reddening, Sherlock squished the crumbs of his toast with his thumb and finger as John threw his arm around his shoulder.

“So tell me everything!” Mrs Hudson said, clapping her hands together.

As much as Sherlock wanted to talk to Mrs Hudson and make her happy, he was also still desperate to collapse on his own bed and sleep for the rest of the day.

“Why don’t you go rest, love?” John suggested, patting him on the arm. “I’ll tell her the whole story.”
Flashing John a small, grateful, smile he picked himself up and sluggishly made his way to their flat. He left his bags behind, figuring John wouldn’t mind. Sherlock hardly wasted a sentimental moment considering he was entering his flat for the first time in a month. Later he wouldn’t even remember climbing into the familiar warmth of his own sheets, pulling the duvet over his head, and passing out.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the delay! I wanted to finish this much sooner, but ironically enough I ended up getting really sick while writing the sick!fic storyarch and wasn't about to do much of anything :( 

There hasn't been nearly enough Mrs Hudson in this story. I've never even written her character too much, but I have to say, that was fun! She needs to be around more!

Thanks for reading and for all of your feedback! You guys are the best!
After Christmas the year began to wind down rather quickly. Sherlock thankfully ended up not having an ear infection, and once he was back in the comfort of his own home (meaning having Mrs Hudson wait on him hand and foot), his bronchitis began to get a lot better. On New Year’s Eve John decided to get out of the house and keep his promise of seeing his father. He made sure to give his father warning he was coming over- mainly so his dad could make sure he could come at a time his mother was out of the house.

Nevertheless, his heart was still racing with nerves when he stepped out of the taxi and stood in front of his childhood home. He could still remember sitting outside on these very steps and studying for tests. He could remember taking walks down this street; he could still remember the smell of his neighbor’s barbecue in the summer.

Now the house meant…virtually nothing to him.

He had no place here.

And the worst part was he had gone a long time now pretending like that didn’t bother him.

But it did bother him. As angry as he was at his mother, as frustrated as he was with his sister, he didn’t want to be okay with not being a part of his family anymore.

Taking in a deep breath, he forced himself to walk up those steps and knock on the door.

*You can do this,* he told himself, *it’s just dad.*

When the door opened to reveal his father’s kind smile, his disheveled white hair, and the cane he now sported, John felt a lot more at ease.

“Hi Dad,” he announced.

His father didn’t hesitate to throw the door open wide and throw an arm around his son.

“It’s so good to see you, John,” his father said quietly.

“It’s good to see you too,” John said, patting him on the back. “What’s with the cane?”

“Oh, it’s just my old knee,” his father said, waving away his concern.

Even as he did he still limped as he led John into the house. John knew his dad didn’t wanted to be hounded about his health so instead he took a look around, noticing there were…absolutely no Christmas decorations hanging up.

“Did Mum already take the Christmas decorations down?” He asked.

“No, she never put them up,” his father sighed. “Listen, I was just about to eat some potato soup, would you like some?”

He knew his dad was trying to distract him from what he just said about his mother, but still John’s stomach growled. His father’s baked potato and cheddar cheese soup was one of his favourite
comfort foods from his childhood; he was sure it was no coincidence that his father had made some on the same day he was coming over to visit.

“Oh, I’d love some!” He confessed. “But…why didn’t Mum decorate? Putting up the tree is one of her favourite parts of the holidays.”

They had made their way into his parents’ small kitchen. The white appliances, the tile countertops, the dark, chocolate brown stained kitchen table, even the tea kettle— it was all the exact same from his childhood. He watched as his father swallowed the last of a glass of water that sat beside the sink. His hands shook ever so slightly as he held onto the countertops and announced quietly:

“She’s depressed, John. I think she knows how wrong she is for the way she treats you. I believe she secretly wants us to all be a family again, but she’s just so wrapped up in her misguided beliefs that she’s just confused.”

“She doesn’t want to admit she’s wrong,” he realised, shaking his head in disbelief. “Not even if it means bringing her family back together. That is just so like her. It’s just so wrong!”

“I know,” his father nodded. “She’s making herself sick. She hardly talks to us; she rarely gets out of bed. I was the one that suggested she see her old friend for brunch, and not just to get her out of the house while you are here but because she needed to get out and…see people.”

John felt a bit lightheaded as he sank down into a seat at the table.

So did his mother really loved him after all…and just couldn’t admit it? Or did she just realise how much she destroyed her family— and how bad that made her look?

And if she did admit to him that she loved him, that she was sorry for what he did, would he be able to forgive her?

Did it make him a terrible person if he couldn’t?

“Deep down, I know she still loves you,” his father said as he appeared by his side and sat a bowl of soup in front of him. “You are her son, and nothing can change that.”

“Thank you,” he muttered.

He closed his eyes as he took his first sip of the soup and savoured the creamy goodness in his mouth for a long moment before finally swallowing.

“Wow that’s…that really good!” He exclaimed, his eyes snapping open.

“There’s plenty if you’d like to take some home to Sherlock,” his father offered. “How is he feeling, by the way?”

“A lot better,” John told him.

He allowed himself a few moments to swallow as much of the soup as he could as quickly as possible. His father looked on with a bemused smile on his face, clearly enjoying having him at the dinner table for a change.

“Well, let’s hear it,” his father finally announced a few moments later. “Tell me all about the proposal.”
John began to blush: for someone who was supposed to be keeping his engagement a secret he felt like he had been discussing it an awful lot. Mrs Hudson cornered him whenever she got the chance to run ideas by him about possible ceremonies, parties, and even dinners (“you have to have an engagement party!”). Truth be told he just hadn’t given their engagement much more thought. John felt like he needed time just to wrap his mind around the fact that he had proposed to Sherlock and this really was happening. He wasn’t ready to rush into anything and he certainly wasn’t ready to start planning parties- and he knew Sherlock felt the same.

“Oh it was nothing too fancy,” he began. “It was all a bit spur of the moment, really. We’ve just grown so close this year, and I got to the point where I knew I wanted to spend the rest of my life with Sherlock- and I had a pretty good feeling Sherlock was at that point with me. We had this big romantic weekend planned in New York City, just the two of it. It was really nice: Sherlock got us a nice hotel and we got to do some exploring on our own. I talked Sherlock into going to Rockefeller Center- you know, to see the tree. It was just so gorgeous and he…he looked so perfect standing there. And it just slipped out. I didn’t get down on one knee. I didn’t have a ring for him. I just…asked him. I told him I wanted to be with him for the rest of our lives, and I wanted to make it official, even if it had to be a civil partnership and not a marriage.”

“That was incredibly brave of you, son,” his father said, beaming. “Marriage is the biggest commitment you’ll ever make. Even with this…civil partnership, as they call it, it’s going to be the biggest commitment you’ll ever make.”

“I know, Dad,” John said quietly. “And I know I’m ready.”

“I know you are.”

His father winked at him before turning to his own lunch. John couldn’t help but to wonder if his father ever thought his own marriage would turn out like this: the father of two children, one of whom his own wife barely approved of and one who she disowned altogether.

Which made him think for the first time…

Harry was living with them!

How was it okay that she was in and out of same sex relationships all the time and she got to live with their parents? Meanwhile he was in a stable, strong relationship and he was disowned?

The thought was enough to make his hands curl into fist; his body shook ever so slightly.

“Dad, can I ask you something?” He said, sitting down his spoon. “How’s it going with Harry living here?”

His father swallowed uncomfortably, as though sensing where this was going. He distracted himself by eating a few more bites of soup before finally admitting:

“It’s not like it used to be, you know? It’s not like my little girl came home and it’s like she’s a kid again. Her relationship with your mother is still…not the best. In fact, Harry really hardly speaks to either of us, unless she and I are alone in the room. I’m pretty confident she really has given up the booze, but she has started smoking again.”

“Dammit.”

Closing his eyes, John held hid hand to his forehead and drew in deep breaths to stop himself from freaking out.
“She hasn’t phoned in a while,” John admitted. “Then again I haven’t exactly reached out to her either. I suppose I could make a better effort to be a part of the family, at least with you and Harry. Maybe she’s been so distant because she feels we’re all so torn apart.”

His father placed a hand over his hand and assured him:

“No one blames you, John.”

“I just don’t get why Harry can live here,” John blurted out. He could see the hurt in his father’s eyes at the comment, and he felt bad because he wasn’t even sure if his dad would have the answers he was looking for, but he knew he had to get this off his chest. “I don’t get why Mum accepts her as her daughter. Harry’s a lesbian. She’s been out for a lot longer than I have, and frankly she hasn’t made very good decisions about any of her relationships. Oh…and she’s an alcoholic!”

“Recovering alcoholic,” his father cut in.

Ignoring him, John closed his eyes briefly before going on:

“Mum’s disapproval toward me started long before she found out I’m gay. When I went to Afghanistan it was like her view of me completely changed. She didn’t want me to go to war- I mean, I can understand it, she was worried- but it was like she had a vendetta against me for it! It was like she blamed me for wanting to fight for my country and save lives. She wanted me to live a nice, safe, life in suburbs. She wanted me to be a doctor and make a lot of money. She wanted me to get married to a wife and have kids. Going to war was the first thing I did that went against her plan for me, and ever since then she has treated me differently. I just don’t get it. I don’t get how she can hold this much of a grudge against her own son who has done nothing bad to her. So what if I’m gay?! I’m in the most stable and the strongest relationship I’ve ever been in. Not to mention one of the longest I’ve had in a long time. I could have never adjusted to life after war without Sherlock in my life. Frankly Sherlock’s the only person who has truly been there for me since I came back! You lot act like you don’t even know me anymore. And…wait, I’m sorry, I’m sorry that was completely uncalled for. You actually tried. You actually phoned me on Christmas. You actually still look me in the eyes.”

He stopped himself before he could say anything else he would regret. His eyes diverted to the table, where the rest of his soup was getting cold.

“It’s just not fair,” he whispered. “I am accepted into Sherlock’s family- who live across the bloody ocean- and all of them are so caring of each other. Which is crazy to say because trust me, everyone in that family carries a lot of baggage. Yet they still forgive each other, and they still love each other. They would still do anything for each other. And I would do anything for any of you but…unfortunately I just don’t think the rest of the family would say the same about me.”

A long moment of silence fell between them as John breathed slowly in and out, trying to pull himself together. He knew there wasn’t anything his dad could say that would make him feel better. He just simply needed someone in his family to listen to him.

“I can’t begin to understand what goes on inside your mother’s head,” his father finally confessed. “I don’t think there’s anything I can say that can make things right. But please, believe me when I say I have tried to talk her out of this absurd thinking. She’s just…very set in her ways. Honestly, John, sometimes I…sometimes I wonder how I’m still with her.”

Eyes widening, John’s pulse quickened as he understood the meaning behind his father’s words. He knew his father meant well, but the confession only made him feel like he was tearing his
family even further apart. Now not only had his mother disowned him but his father was contemplating divorce?

“I would never ask you to do that,” John said quickly. “I would never want you to—”

“Oh, no,” his father, said waving away his concern. “I could never leave her. For starters, look at me! I don’t get around very well on my own. No, I do think things will get better. I think your mum will realise just how wrong she is. I just hope she realises it sooner rather than later. Life is so short, and it’s just silly to waste time over…”

He trailed off, trying to find a gentle way to put it.

“Homophobia?” He shot.

His father’s eyes narrowed, but all the same he did not argue.

“I love you, John,” his father said softly. He put his hand over his son’s hand, and John forced himself to offer a small smile to convince his dad that he was okay. “Enough of this. I have something I want to show you.”

John raised an eyebrow as he stood and followed his dad up the stairs and into no other than his own childhood bedroom, which had long-since turned into a storage room. To say it was surreal to be back in his old room was an understatement. The room didn’t even look like the room he’d spent so much time in as a kid, but nevertheless he smiled at the memories of all those nights he stayed up reading and studying. His room was his hiding place: it was the one place in the house where he could lock the door and forget about the drama of his life. He could forget about the kids at school that picked on him, his sister who ever so slowly was drifting away from the family, or his parents who were caught up in the stress of paying bills.

“It’s been awhile since you’ve been in here, hasn’t it?” His father asked, the corner of his lips turned up in a smile.

He was surprised to see his dad came up here to fish around in some old jewelry boxes. John recognised them as the boxes they took out of his grandparents’ house when his granddad passed away when John was just starting uni. At last his dad revealed a single black velvet jewelry box and opened it to reveal a gold wedding band.

“It was your granddad’s,” his father explained.

“I remember,” John whispered as he accepted the box and held it up to observe the ring. There were no engravings, no design. It was simple and elegant. It was very…Sherlock.

“I want you to have it,” his dad said with a kind smile.

Eyes widening, John slowly began to shake his head. He knew almost everything in these boxes were things his dad inherited from his granddad’s estate. They were his keepsakes to keep.

“I can’t,” John said. “Granddad passed all of his and gran’s things to you.”

“And he would want you to have it,” his dad promised. “Please, take it. Your granddad loved you, John, and he would be so proud of you- and so happy.”

A smile crossed John’s face as he carefully took out the ring to examine it closer.

“It actually looks like it’s about Sherlock’s size,” he commented. “Thank you. Really, thank you.
This means a lot.”

Throwing his arms around his dad, he hugged him tightly for a long moment. His father wiped away a tear as he pulled away.

“You’re welcome,” he whispered. “I love you, John.”

John let out a laugh even as he felt his own eyes start to water.

He was really doing this- he was getting married.

Well, he was getting a civil partnership.

And best of all, at least someone in his family approved.

He ended up staying with his father for the rest of the afternoon, telling him all about his holiday in America. He and Sherlock didn’t really have any big New Year’s Eve plans, but as he left in the taxi he decided maybe they should do something special. After all, they were about to embark on what was sure to be the year of a life time. Reaching into his pocket, he took out the ring box and examined it once again. His heart skipped a beat every time he looked at the gorgeous golden band. He was still in disbelief that the ring was his- but he was so honoured his dad would consider giving it to him.

Yes, he decided, he and Sherlock needed to do something special for New Year’s.

So he pocketed the ring box, took out his mobile, and phone someone he knew he could count on to help him make romantic last-minute plans.

That’s how he found himself holding the door open to Angelo’s restaurant for Sherlock a few hours later.

“This was actually a good idea,” Sherlock commented as they entered the mostly-empty restaurant. Angelo’s was great, but it wasn’t exactly a pre-New Year’s Eve party type of place. John was right in thinking it would be the perfect restaurant for a quiet, romantic, dinner. “It feels good to get out.”

“You needed to get out,” John replied, “but I know you don’t feel like going out to a pub or party so…Angelo’s! Plus, we actually haven’t been here in a long time.”

They barely got through the door before Angelo rushed out of the kitchen with a vase full of roses.

“John! Sherlock!” Angelo cried as he deposited the flowers onto their usual corner table before rushing to the door and placing a hand on each of their shoulders. “It is so good to see you two, my favourite customers! Happy New Year to you both!”

“Happy New Year to you too, Angelo,” John said with a grin.

“You two came at a good time,” Angelo said as he led them to a table. “Everyone is already headed to their parties and to drink. But in my opinion the best New Year Eves are spent in a quiet place with your love.”

He left them alone at the table with two menus and a wine list.

“Dinner’s on me,” John announced. Sherlock raised an eyebrow. “Really! You invited me to your
family’s house for an entire month. It was truly the holiday of a lifetime. I owe you.”

A sheepish smile peered out of the corners of his lover’s lips.

“You don’t owe me anything,” Sherlock promised. “But if you are paying…can I get the steak and pasta combo?”

Chuckling, John nodded.

“Yes, and I’ll get us some wine.”

It was actually really nice to have dinner with just Sherlock— and it was especially nice since his fiancé had his voice back.

“Oh, Greg thinks he has a case for us,” Sherlock told him.

“That was quick.”

“Yes, thankfully. I’m itching to get back to work. Anyway, a young man was murdered outside a pub. I imagine it will be over drugs or something rudimentary like that. Shouldn’t take more than a few hours. You can sleep in if you’d like.”

Honestly, John was also excited about the idea of having a case again (a case not involving Sherlock’s family that was).

“No, it’s fine, I’m looking forward to it,” he said with a smile. “I’m ready for a new case too.”

While Sherlock ordered his steak and spaghetti combo, John stuck with a simple Alfred and chicken dish. He was too distracted to focus on food. The ring was burning a hole in his pocket, and he hardly heard most of what Sherlock said as worried instead about finding the right moment to reveal the ring to his fiancé.

At last after the food arrived and Sherlock dived into his steak, John could no longer take the anxiety.

He had to do it now.

“Sherlock,” he announced abruptly. His legs were shaking as he got to his feet and awkwardly stood by Sherlock. “I want to give you something.”

“You’ve given me more than enough—“

John cocked a smile as he got down on one knee. His knee was shaking so badly he grabbed onto Sherlock’s hand in part to keep himself from falling over. So many times in his life he had imagined getting down on one knee to propose, and now that he was actually getting the chance to get down on one knee and present a ring to Sherlock his head was spinning.

“I’m sorry I didn’t have something to give you when I proposed at Rockefeller,” John began. Now his hands were trembling more than his knee and he wasn’t sure why. After all, Sherlock had already said yes, so why was this so frightening?! “But I want you to have a proper engagement ring. You don’t have to wear it until we tell people, or not at all if you’re not comfortable but… here. I love you, Sherlock.”

He reached into his pocket, revealing the ring box, and opened it. Sherlock’s eyes went wide as he carefully reached out and took the ring into his own hands. Slowly he raised it to eye-level and
turned it so he could examine it.

“John,” he finally breathed. “It’s… I… you really didn’t have to.”

“It was my grandfather’s,” John confessed. “My dad wanted me to have it. He says my grandfather would have been really proud of me. I think he would have really, really liked you.”

A sincere smile draped across Sherlock’s face as he slipped the ring onto his finger.

“I never expected,” Sherlock began. He swallowed nervously and shook his head. He was clearly as overwhelmed as John, which made him feel a bit better about still being freaked out. “I would have never asked… but I love it.”

“Really?” John asked, letting out a laugh as he got back on his feet to hug Sherlock. “I know you’re not really one for wearing jewelry.”

“Yeah but this… this is one of your family heirlooms,” Sherlock replied. “I’m honoured to wear it.”

They shared a quick kiss before John sat back down.

“We should invite your dad over for dinner sometime,” Sherlock offered as he turned back to his steak.

“Yeah!” John said with a grin. “He would love that.”

He reached over the table so that his hand fell on Sherlock’s. Eyes twinkling, his fiancé squeezed his hand.

“Happy New Year, John,” Sherlock said quietly.

“Happy New Year,” he echoed, a brilliant grin spread across his face. “It’s going to be a bloody fantastic one.”

Chapter End Notes

I must admit, I really enjoyed writing this chapter. I really love writing John’s dad! I hope you enjoyed it too! I hope those who celebrate it had a Happy Thanksgiving! Thanks as always for reading and for all of your feedback! :D
Sherlock had to admit it felt good to put on actual clothes, take a cab through London, and walk through those old familiar streets again. The corners of his lips turned up in a satisfied smirk as his loafers hit the pavement on the way to the crime scene. The streets were crowded with people rushing around on their lunch breaks; a mixture of British accents filled the air.

It felt great to be back to normalcy.

He knew he was getting close to the crime scene when he overheard Greg barking orders.

“Oi!” John shouted behind him. Sherlock’s heart leapt; he was so absorbed in taking in all of the sights, sounds, and smells of the streets that he had completely forgotten his fiancé was with him. “Wait up!”

John rushed to catch up with him and was a bit out of breath when he reached him.

“Christ I’m out of shape,” John admitted. “I need to exercise more.”

The consulting detective couldn’t help but to let out a laugh. There had been gym adverts all over the telly and radio for those making their annual resolution to “get in shape”. Of Course John would fall right into their trap.

“What?” John demanded.

“I didn’t expect you to be one of these New Year’s resolutions gym sheep,” he teased.

His fiancé furrowed his eyebrows, opened his mouth and quickly closed it, as though trying to prevent himself from saying something too harsh.

“I’m not a sheep,” his fiancé protested. “I’m just a procrastinator.”

Sherlock’s grin broadened as they reached the crime scene and it was only when John nudged him in the ribs that he remembered smiling at a crime scene was actually frowned upon.

“Any more word on what the case is about?” John asked him quietly.

He simply shook his head as the two entered the alleyway. A few coppers cleared out as they walked toward Greg, who was staring down at the body of a young blonde man. The man was rather tall and skinny; he couldn’t have been older than seventeen.

He wasn’t wearing any shoes or socks.

His toes and bottoms of his feet and toes were covered in bruises and blisters.
Greg looked up as they approached him, and Sherlock could tell by his grave, pale, face that this case was nothing to take lightly. Now wasn’t the time for his jokes, his sarcasm.

“Sherlock-” Greg began, hesitant.

“Dancer,” Sherlock announced. He pointed at the victim’s feet. “He has the feet of a ballet dancer.”

The DCI let out a sigh as he raised his hands to his head. They were trembling ever so slightly, possibly from caffeine or possibly from anxiety. The crime scene was emptied saved for the three of him, and Sherlock realised Greg must have ordered everyone out once they arrived.

“Greg,” he said, lowered his voice. “It wasn’t drugs, was it?”

Shaking his head, Greg wordlessly knelt down beside the victim and pulled back the man’s unbutton shirt to reveal knife wounds. Multiple knife wounds.

“Jesus,” John whispered.

“Do we know who he is?” Sherlock asked.

Greg nodded but still did not speak as he handed Sherlock the kid’s wallet, which contained an ID that read “Jonathon Simmons”. He was in fact 17 years old. Sherlock recognised his address as one that was in a fairly nice suburb. More than likely he still lived with his parents in the summers and went to dance school in the city.

“Have his parents been notified?” He asked.

“Yes,” Greg replied. His voice was strained, as though it physically pained him to speak. “You are right Sherlock, he is a dancer, he’s currently going to school for dance. And...there’s something else.”

Sherlock had a feeling of what he was going to say, but he had gained too much respect for his friend to cut him off now. Greg met Sherlock’s eyes, revealing just how hurt he was, just how personal he was taking this. Just how sickened he was.

“Jonathon Simmons had just come out to his family and friends,” Greg explained. "He told his family first, then his closest mates, and then he made a post on Facebook. He received eighty different comments, almost a third of which were hateful, homophobic rants. He deleted his account last night.”

A sour feeling consumed his insides as he briefly closed his eyes, just long enough to force himself to hide all emotions. He could tell Greg was struggling, he could tell by John’s silence that he was uncomfortable, and he had to be the one to step up and remind them both that they could solve this. They could bring the murderer to justice- they had to.

But he also knew enough about Greg’s morals and appreciation of police procedure that he also felt like he had to be the one to ask:

“Are you sure you should be working this case?”

Greg looked crestfallen as he replied:

“What choice do I have?”
It was like he knew technically he shouldn’t work the case but he desperately wanted to. And of course, Sherlock knew the true meaning of his answer: he could never reveal to his superiors- to anyone at the Yard- that he was gay. He would have no excuse to give them as to why he shouldn’t work the case.

“Are you sure…” John suddenly spoke up, but he had to stop and swallow hard to pull himself together. “Are you sure he didn’t commit suicide?”

Sherlock glared at John.

“If you wanted to kill yourself would you do it by stabbing yourself to death multiple times in an alley?” He shot. “There are so many quicker, more efficient, less public, ways to kill yourself.”

John actually rolled your eyes.

“Please spare us any further explanation,” he muttered.

“We have an interview with the parents this morning at their home,” Greg sighed. “Sherlock, can you promise me you’ll behave?”

He was so taken aback he had to pause for a moment to realise just what Greg meant. Did the DCI, his friend, actually think he would cause a scene while talking to a set of parents about the death of their gay son? Sure he’d had some bad moments during interviews in the past but this…this was personal.

This felt personal.

“Look,” Greg announced, lowering his voice so just they could hear. His eyes glanced between the two of them, as though seeking their assurance this stayed between them. “If either of you aren’t comfortable working this case I understand. But I was hoping you two would share my interest in this case, and I was hoping that you two would be just determined to bring this case to justice as I am.”

“Well we always want to bring cases to justice,” John admitted. “But yeah, of course. We’ve got your back.”

Sherlock nodded.

“We’ve got your back,” Sherlock echoed.

An hour later they found themselves sitting in the living room of Mr and Mrs Simmons. The first thing that struck Sherlock as odd were his parents were older, probably in their early fifties. His father had graying hair and stains on his fingers that looked like they were from ink. While Jonathon Simmons’ father had the same blonde hair his son had, his mother’s hair was bright red. Her skin was also far fairer than her son; it gave Sherlock the impression that Jonathon was a child from another marriage of his father’s.

But he remembered Greg’s warning about “behaving”, so he kept his deductions to himself.

“When was the last time you saw your son?” Greg asked gently.

Mrs Simmons simply held a hand to her forehead and squeezed her eyes shut. She was still clearly in so much shock she hadn’t even processed that her son was gone.
“Sunday,” Mr Simmons finally said, his voice shaking. “He told us that he was going to come out to all of his mates. We supported his decision, but we should have warned him…”

“Should have warned him what?” Sherlock demanded.

The father looked up at him with sorrowful eyes, pleading for his sympathy.

“We should have warned him that your mates aren’t always who you think they are,” Mr Simmons finished coldly. “When Jonathon began dancing, of course his mates teased him about it, but he really enjoyed it so he stuck with it.”

“He was so good at it,” his mother added, choking back a sob.

“When he dropped out of his school to go to ballet school, it got worse,” his father went on. “He has some good friends at the school, friends who were more open-minded and accepting. But this…this is unacceptable.”

“The parents of these kids…” the mother said, shaking her head. “I can’t imagine raising my child to hate that much.”

“Sometimes they just don’t know what they’re saying,” John said quietly. He too was pale; his hands were fidgety, and Sherlock knew his fiancé was thinking of his own mother. “They just want attention, or to be cool, or they’re just repeating what they’ve heard their parents say.”

“That’s no excuse,” Sherlock mumbled. His eyes widened, burning with deep disdain for these teenagers he had never even met. “None of those are excuses.”

“No,” John sighed. “They aren’t. I’m sorry, Mr and Mrs Simmons.”

The tension in the room had become far too much for Sherlock, and he didn’t think he could stand sitting her and pretending this case wasn’t bothering him any longer. He needed space.

“Do you mind if I take a look around?” Sherlock asked.

“Oh Jonathon only lives at home over the holidays,” his mother said. “I don’t think you will find anything useful in his room, but you’re welcome to take a look.”

Even as he stood up and straightened his coat he felt a weight being lifted from his shoulders. John stayed behind with Greg- he must have sensed he needed the moral support- while he headed toward the stairs.

“Mr Holmes,” Mrs Simmons announced suddenly. He turned around, and she pleaded: “Please…be careful. I’d like to leave everything as he left it.”

He nodded.

“Of course,” he muttered.

“It’s the second door on the right,” she called after him as he descended the stairs.

The staircase walls were full of photos that showcased the progression of Jonathon’s life: from newborn to his schoolboy years. The kid had had a truly supportive family, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to feel grateful that he at least had that.

When Sherlock pushed open the bedroom door he was taken aback at how plain the room was. It really did look like no one lived there. The bed was made, the night stand was cleared off, and the
desk was empty save for a stack of books that Jonathon probably read in school. Mrs Simmons was right: there was nothing to be discovered here.

Not on the surface, anyway.

Reaching down, Sherlock carefully lifted up the mattress enough to peer underneath it for hidden items. Sure enough, there was a journal that would certainly have to be bagged for evidence. He turned his attention back to the desk and began opening the drawers. The second one, there was some loose photographs of Jonathan and his mates—mainly of him and a male friend.

“That was Patrick.” Sherlock turned, startled by the sudden presence of Mrs Simmons. A sad smile fell across her face as he leaned against the doorway, pulling her sweater tighter around her body. “They were best mates— they met on a football team when they were just kids. Is it bad of me that…well…I mean as far as I knew Jonathan didn’t have any boyfriends but I had sort of hope if he did…he would pick Patrick. He’s such a sweet boy. He sent us flowers this morning and made me a cup of tea.”

So a friend from his non-dance life that Jonathan was still in-touch with…or at least a friend who cared enough to mourn with his parents after his death. That might be a start in the investigation.

“Does Patrick live nearby?” Sherlock asked. Mrs Simmons looked skeptical, so he reassured: “Sometimes friends know things about other friends…or they sense things. It just might be helpful to talk with him, that’s all.”

He peered in the other drawers but only found some pencils and spare scraps of paper.

“You two are together, aren’t you? You and the Doctor” Mrs Simmons suddenly asked, ignoring his question. Sherlock stared at her, his breath caught in his throat. He wasn’t sure why he was so nervous to admit it—after all it was pretty much known publicly he and John were together now. But he didn’t want it to interfere with the case. “I saw the rumors in the tabloids…and I can see it, in the way you two look at each other. I’m…I’m glad you’re working my son’s case.”

“Because I’m gay?” Sherlock challenged.

Mrs Simmons’ eyes darkened and narrowed, and he instantly felt guilty for making the comment.

“Because I know you care about your cases,” Mrs Simmons insisted. “At least, you care about finding the murderer. You aren’t just pushing paper around or wanting to make yourself look good for the press.”

Sherlock actually found herself really appreciative of her words. He had never considered detective work as a passion of his before, but maybe that’s what it was. After all, he had long since passed the point where he needed cases as a distraction from his drug habit. He certainly didn’t solve cases to make himself popular.

He just…he liked it. He liked the puzzles. He liked working with John and even Greg.

He liked being trusted.

“Thank you,” he replied quietly. “I promise you, I will find out who did this and bring them to justice.”

Mrs Simmons placed a hand on his arm, squeezed it, and offered him a small, grateful, smile.

“Thank you,” she whispered back. “I’ll get you Patrick’s phone number.”
After a quick glance in Jonathon’s closet (empty save for some old dance clothes bundled on the floor and some shirts hanging up he followed Mrs Simmons back downstairs. Greg was still talking to the father, who was pacing the floor, face blood red.

“I don’t care what you say.”

“There are procedures-” Greg cut in, his hands curled into fists at his sides; he was clearly fighting to remain calm and professional.

“it’s a hate crime!” Mr Simmons exclaimed. “It’s a bloody hate crime. My son was killed because he was gay.”

“Look, in the police’s defence we don’t even know who did it yet,” John said calmly, jumping up to stand beside Greg. “It could have been a random mugging.”

Sherlock closed his eyes and held his breath, wishing he had just imagined John saying that, for John’s sake. Though he understood where Greg was coming from, there was nothing any of them could say that would only cause them to lose his trust.

“You cannot honestly tell me that you don’t believe-“

“There’s a fine line between belief and evidence!” Greg cut in. He let out a long breath and placed his hands on his hips, hesitating before he went on: “I assure you, any time there’s any suggestion a crime might be a hate crime we take that very seriously. Trust me…trust me, I will handle this case with care.”

The father stared at the DCI long and hard, and for a moment Sherlock thought he was going to hit him. Instead he simply shook his head and spat:

“Well I hope you mean it. I have interviews with three major news outlets including a television interview with BBC news this afternoon, and those are just for the people whose calls I’ve returned. The public is already demanding justice for my son. Perhaps not his so-called mates, but the general public sees this as a hate crime.”

Beside him, Mrs Simmons’ eyes fell to the ground, and Sherlock had a feeling she didn’t agree with taking the case to the press. She was still trying to accept that her son was gone; the last thing she would want was a media circus outside their home.

“You’ve just lost your son, Mr Simmons,” Sherlock announced coolly. “Obviously you want to do whatever it takes to find his murderer, to get justice. But the truth is there is no justice, is there? Even if the murderer goes to prison for life your son will still be dead.”

“Sherlock!” John hissed.

Sherlock ignored him and went on:

“My point is your life will have to go on, and not the entire public will want to treat this case like a hate crime. The entire population of the general public won’t be sympathetic to your son’s sexual orientation. Hate crimes are an invitation for your life to become a media circus and not everyone will be on your side. I suppose what I’m trying to say is: is this really what your family needs right now?”

Mr Simmons glared at him, meeting his eyes for so long Sherlock swallowed nervously, knowing he had crossed a line.
“I want my son’s story to get out,” Mr Simmons shot. “I trust you to handle his case, I do. But even after you find his murderer there will be a trial and…I just want my son’s story to get out.”

“I will put security detail on your home,” Greg offered. “If anyone comes by, if anyone starts asking questions or starts harassing you, if anything doesn’t feel right, phone me.”

The other man nodded and accepted the business card Greg handed him. Without further word Sherlock followed Greg and John out the door and into the DCI’s car. Once the three of them were inside and the doors were shut Greg sank down into the driver’s seat and threw his head back against the headrest in defeat.

“Dammit,” Greg muttered. Then he hit his head again. And again. And then he punched the steering wheel. And he punched it again. “Dammit, dammit, god dammit!”

“Greg,” Sherlock said calmly, touching his friend’s arm gently.

But the DCI jerked his arm away and ran his hands over his heads.

“This case is about to blow up in our faces,” Greg breathed. “Once the media gets ahold of this we’re going to have a matter of a couple of days to solve this before most of the public hates us. Christ…”

“Greg,” Sherlock said again quietly, sympathetically, hoping to get his friend to admit what was really going on.

“He was just a kid,” Greg whispered. His eyes were hollowed as he stared at the dashboard. His face was still pale, he looked a bit shaky. “He was just a kid. He was just a kid and his mates hated him so much for being gay that they left horrible messages on his Facebook wall. They humiliated. Now he’s been murdered and…and this is why I can’t tell people about me and Mycroft. You know how conservative half of my department is, not to mention my superiors. I’d…I’d be lynched.”

The word hit him like daggers being driven through his heart.

“You’d have a bigger number of people routing for you,” John spoke up from the back seat. “You’d have a bigger number of people who would be proud of you.”

“You can’t hide this for your whole life,” Sherlock muttered. “It’s not fair to you. You’re getting a Civil Partnership. You should be celebrating. If these people can’t be happy for you, if they can’t support this, they shouldn’t be in your life.”

Sighing, Greg slammed his head back against the seat one final time.

“It’s not that easy,” the DCI mumbled under his breath.

Greg closed his eyes tightly, and after a few long moment of silence Sherlock wondered if he had forgotten where he was. He knew the only thing they could do was keep their minds on the case and get it solved as quickly as possible, so he took the piece of paper Mrs Simmons gave him out of his pocket.

“Simmons had a best mate named Patrick,” Sherlock said. “It sounds like he was pretty close to the family. I think that should be our next step.”

After another long moment of silence Greg finally opened his eyes, took the piece of paper from him, and nodded.
“Yeah,” Greg sighed, his voice riddled with defeat. “Yeah, that sounds like a plan.”

Chapter End Notes

As you can tell already, this case will be a very important one for Greg personally.

As always, thank you all for your support! :D I really appreciate every single one of your reviews and kudos!! I will try my best to update again before Christmas, but just in case I don't it's only because of being busy with the holiday season. And if I don't update before Christmas I hope you all have a wonderful holiday!! (but hopefully I will have time to get something up before then!!)
The Royal Ballet School

Chapter Notes

I use the Royal Ballet School as a setting in this chapter. I debated on if I should just make up a school, but honestly I hate it when that's done in TV and movies because everyone knows what place the writer's are basing things off of!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“John I don’t say this very often,” Sherlock muttered under his breath, “but I’m completely out of my depth here.”

Nodding, John swallowed nervously as he looked up at the entrance to the Royal Ballet School.

“I can say the same,” John confessed.

Greg stepped up beside the two of them, looking equally as uncomfortable.

“Yeah, me too,” Greg breathed. He took a sip of his coffee and shivered in the late morning cold. Jonathon’s best mate had classes all day, and they were hoping to catch him in between classes to speak with him. “Right, well…let’s do this.”

Entering the Royal Ballet School was like entering a whole new world: a world full of teenagers running about in tights and tutus, whose heads were all filled with the same exact dream. Sherlock wasn’t sure if he detested them for that or envied them. He never had the guts to have any real dreams. He hadn’t as much as thought he’d ever fall in love. When he was a teenager all he wanted was to get through his teenage years as quickly as possible so he could be on his own. He hadn’t even had any plans when he entered university. University was just a distraction, a means, somewhere for him to be and something to do.

“Remember we’re guests here,” Greg muttered, “and these are just kids so…don’t say anything to them.”

“Don’t say anything?” Sherlock mumbled back. “You mean don’t say something like ‘your dreams are all rubbish, you’re asking your family to waste loads of money on something that probably won’t happen’?”

John nudged him hard in the ribs, but Sherlock only laughed.

“Yes, exactly like that!” The DCI scolded. “These kids are in shock. The media has been all over this place- more so than usual- and the last thing any of them needs is for you to waltz in here insulting their dreams.”

Yet as he looked around at all of them as they filed into their classrooms, chatting and fretting with their hair, he somehow felt like not a single one of them were thinking of their dead classmate.

“Patrick’s is in a private rehearsal,” Greg went on. “The studio should be just around the corner…here.”

The three of them stop at a glass window overlooking a rehearsal studio where Jonathon Simmons’
best mate was dancing a ballet routine.

“He’s not bad, is he?” John commented.

Sherlock didn’t answer. He was suddenly swept up by a memory of a Christmas when he was six years old and Mummy dragged him and Mycroft off to the city to see the Nutcracker. The show was exactly what Mycroft had warned him it would be: long and dull. But he would always remember the look on his mother’s face during the whole production. She looked like she was a child again.

Now that he saw one of those dancers in person, practising the same few steps over and over again just so one day they might make someone feel that same childlike magic…well, he could admire them for that.

Of course he would never admit that.

Patrick suddenly looked over toward the window and nodded to them, acknowledging them. Feeling entirely too out of place, Sherlock and John followed Greg into the studio.

“I think the problem is your back leg,” Patrick was telling his partner. “You’re putting too much weight on it. It should be more like…”

He stepped in front of the dancer to show her what she meant, but it was clearly a step that was meant for two people, and it was obviously awkward for her to try on her own.

“Excuse me,” Patrick suddenly called, pointing to Sherlock. “Would you mind just coming here and just…”

Smirking, John pushed Sherlock forward, and reluctantly the consulting detective took his place behind the ballerina.

“Take her hand here,” Patrick instructed, raising Sherlock’s hand above the ballerina’s head. “And Carmen, when you do the turn it should be lighter. I just think it’s…”

“ Forced?” Carmen suggested.

“Yes,” Patrick sighed.

“That’s because you’re squeezing my hand like you’re holding on for dear life,” the ballerina said with a sympathetic smile. “See, look?”

Sherlock was relieved when he looked into the mirror and saw his cheeks actually weren’t bright red, even though they felt very hot. Carmen simply held onto her hand and spun, kicking her leg out after every spin. The movement was, in a word, flawless.

“You need to relax, Patrick,” Carmen said as she came to a stop. She placed a hand on her dance partner’s arm. “It will be okay.”

The victim’s friend stared at the floor for a long moment before he finally nodded.

“I’ll leave you guys alone,” Carmen offered. “Are we still on for practise again at eight tonight?”

Patrick simply nodded. He waited until the dancer had left the room and closed the door before turning to the three men.

“Thanks for meeting me here,” he offered. “The new term has only just begun and already
everything’s crazy. Every hour of rehearsal counts.”

“The death of a friend doesn’t help either,” Sherlock blurted out before he could stop himself.

He intended his comment to be sympathetic, reminding Patrick that it was normal to feel this stressed and overwhelmed after someone’s death. The dancer took a moment to drink a long sip of water.

“Dancing is the only thing stopping me from going completely insane right now,” Patrick confessed. “I just…I haven’t processed it yet, I can’t process it yet.”

“We can start simple,” Greg said. “Do you know what Jonathon was doing at that pub? Was he meeting someone?”

Shrugging, Patrick turned toward the mirror and began to stretch.

“Jonathon didn’t really drink,” he said. “If he went to a pub then he was probably meeting someone.”

“So he didn’t tell you he was going?” Greg asked.

“No he…he was a bit distant after we came back from the holiday,” Patrick said. “We hadn't gotten a chance to hang out yet. But honestly I was a bit surprised he would pick that pub because that’s where the guys at his old school hung out.”

He exchanged glances with John and Greg, who took down a few notes. Sherlock had no doubt Jonathon’s old classmates were responsible for most of the nasty comments on the kid’s Facebook page so why would Jonathon go there willingly?

“Do you have any names or contacts of any of the guys who might hang out there?” Greg asked.

Patrick simply shrugged.

“Sorry mate, I haven’t talked to those guys in years.”

“Right, well, thanks for your time,” Greg said, handing the dancer his business card. “If you think of anything else, please give me a ring. We might need to ask you more questions, depending on how the case goes.”

“Sure,” Patrick said. He turned back to the mirror and began to practice turns as the three of them filed out of the studio. Just before they exited, the young man spoke up: “Oi!”

They turned around, and Patrick stared at them for a long moment before he drew in a deep breath and finished:

“To be honest I’m not…I haven’t been…as close to Jonathon as I used to be. Not for awhile now, actually. I think I’ll probably regret that forever. His mum probably sent you to me I suppose; she doesn’t know we've drifted apart. But anyway, Jonathon was a good guy…he had a really bright future ahead of him and someone just…people can’t just…I suppose what I’m trying to say is…please find them. Whoever did this, please find them.”

Greg turned to Sherlock, looking a bit helpless in the eyes.

“We will,” Greg promised the teenager, nonetheless.
“No need to look so lost,” Sherlock told Greg as they climbed into his car. “We’ve got plenty to go on.”

“Plenty?” Greg snorted. “Our one lead knew nothing.”

“There were about twenty horrible comments on the Facebook wall,” Sherlock pointed out. “Twenty possible suspects.”

“Only twenty,” Greg sighed. “Wonderful. I have a press conference on this at three, you know.”

“So soon?” John asked from the backseat.

“If Mr Simmons is going to the media we don’t want to look like we’re sitting around twiddling our thumbs.”

“What are you going to say?” John said.

“I haven’t the faintest idea.”

There was a sudden ringing in the car, and it took Sherlock a moment to realise it was Greg’s mobiles. The letters ‘MH’ flashed on the screen; a grin spread across Greg’s face. He looked almost relieved, and Sherlock knew the feeling: it was the same feeling he had whenever he heard John’s voice on a bad day.

Or any day, really.

“Hello love,” Greg announced as he answered the call. “You’re on speaker phone by the way. John and Sherlock are in the car.”

“How sweet, they miss us already,” Mycroft teased. Sherlock rolled his eyes. His brother paused for a long moment, and when he finally spoke again his tone was much more serious. “Are you working the Simmons case? I just read about it in the news.”

Greg hesitated; his fingers gripped the steering wheel tightly. Obviously he thought Mycroft was phoning him to warn him about taking the case, and Greg didn’t need or want anyone else telling him what to do. But Sherlock knew his brother better. He threw a glance toward Greg, trying to tell him silently to not overreact.

“Yes,” Greg finally replied. “Are you phoning me to warn me about being too biased?”

“No,” Mycroft said quickly, almost sounding insulted. “I think you’re perfect for this case.”

A spark of surprise twinkled in the DCI’s eyes, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to smile to himself. Yes, that was exactly what Greg needed to hear right now.

“Really?” Greg asked, flattered.

And of course Greg would need Mycroft to explain it to him out loud, just to boost his confidence even more.

“A personal connection can hurt a case or help it,” Mycroft offered. “In this case I can’t think of anything I’d rather have looking for the murderer than you.”

Cheeks reddening in embarrassment, Greg repeated:

“Really?”
“Is there anyone else you would trust with this case more than yourself?” Mycroft asked.

“No,” Greg answered without hesitation. “No, you’re right, it has to be me. I can do this.”

“Yes, and now that you’ve got your confidence back can we please start with our list of suspects?” Sherlock interrupted.

“Play nice, Sherlock,” his brother warned.

Rolling his eyes, Greg started up the car.

“I should be home around seven,” he told his partner. “I love you, Mycroft.”

The was a short pause before Mycroft quietly echoed:

“I love you too, Gregory.”

The call ended, and Greg was all grins as he pulled onto the road.

They took a cab back to their flat while Greg went back to the Yard to prepare for his press conference and begin to round up anyone who had made a homophobic comment on the victim’s Facebook page.

"Greg said it would take at least an hour to get everyone to the Yard to be interviewed," John said as they climbed the stairs to their flat. "That’s just enough time for us to eat some lunch."

“I’m not hungry.”

“I don’t care.”

There was a frantic knock at the door downstairs, and the two of them looked at each other. He didn’t notice any other cars pull up behind their cab, and he wasn’t expecting any visitors.

“That couldn’t be Greg already,” he muttered.

“I don’t see his car,” John replied as he glanced out the window, “I’ll get the door.”

His fiancé darted down the stairs, and it wasn’t thirty second before he shouted back up the stairs:

“Sherlock!”

He rushed over to the staircase, where John was helping a pale-faced teenage boy up the stairs.

“He has a stab wound,” John explained. “It's bleeding again; we should call an ambulance.”

“No!” The boy hissed, his eyes tightening in pain as he grasped his left side. “Please Dr Watson.”

So the boy knew exactly who they were.

John quickly began to unbutton the teenager’s shirt and pulled it open to reveal a bloodied wad of gauze that was taped to his skin.

“It’s not that bad,” the kid insisted. “It’s not why I’m here.”

“Yeah, you just have to turn up on a doctor’s doorstep with a bleeding knife wound,” John
muttered. “Sherlock, go get some clean towels and a bucket of warm water.”

He didn’t hesitate to obey John’s orders, but he also snuck in sending a text to Greg letting him know the second victim was at the flat. Thinking quickly, he sent a follow up text telling him they had it all under control.

“You were there when Jonathon was stabbed,” Sherlock announced as he handed John the supplies. “What is your name?”

“Samuel,” the kid replied, shivering as John pressed the warm towel against the wound. “Sam. I…I’m sorry I didn’t come forward earlier. I just…I didn’t know what to think...what to do.”

“It’s okay,” John told him. “I’m glad you came to us. Just breathe slowly for me. Don’t talk just yet. This needs stitching. Sherlock-“

“On it.”

Sherlock watched quietly as John stitched up Sam’s wound. The teenager shivered and shook the whole time; his face was deathly pale. He was in shock, and not just from physical pain. He thought of ambulances and their shock blankets, and he thought it wouldn’t hurt to grab a blanket from the sofa. Even though the kid was talking he didn't seem quite aware of exactly what was happening to him.

“There,” John said after another ten minutes. “Have you had any fever?”

“I don’t think so,” Sam replied. “Do you think it’s infected?”

“Not yet,” John sighed, “but you have to keep the wound clean. And you look dehydrated- Sherlock get him some water. You really should have gone to the hospital.”

“I was afraid they would phone the police,” Sam admitted, “and I haven’t decided what I’m going to tell them yet.”

“The truth always works,” Sherlock said as he handed the kid a glass of water.

Gratefully Sam gulped down the glass of water, but when he was finished he simply stared at it instead of answering. Sherlock stole a glance toward John, who nodded in understanding. Sam didn’t need them to be detectives right now. He didn’t need someone to interrogate him; he needed someone to listen.

“Look it’s really none of our business why you were meeting Jonathon,” John spoke up. “You’re a victim here too. We just need to know things like…did you see your attacker?”

Sam shook his head.

“He was wearing a mask,” he muttered. “It happened so quickly. I didn’t see him coming. I do boxing, I could have taken him. I should have!”

“Don’t do that,” John said, placing a hand on Sam’s shoulder. Sherlock was a bit surprised to see John take the lead, but all the same he found it rather endearing how empathetic he seemed to be toward Sam. “There are going to be a million ‘what ifs’ and ‘could haves’ and ‘should haves’ in life. You said it yourself, the attack happened fast. You would have been going up against a murderer. You could have gotten hurt worse.”

“I could have saved him,” Sam whispered. His arm was trembling as he held it to his face, wiping
away the tears that suddenly slipped from his eyes. “All I got was this…I shouldn’t be alive.”

And Sherlock realised what was happening.

He knew why Sam was meeting Jonathon at the pub.

“You were in love with him,” Sherlock stated quietly. “No one knew.”

“No,” Sam said, letting out a huff as he ran his hands through his red hair. “No, no one knew because I’m a coward. I’m such a coward I couldn’t even tell the bloody police.”

“Twenty homophobic comments on your boyfriend’s Facebook page after he came out,” Sherlock spoke up, “who can blame you for being a bit worried about coming out yourself?”

“It shouldn’t work that way,” the kid muttered. “Some of those people who were talking like that are people I thought were my friends. I should have told them off. But I didn’t. Jonathon was really upset, obviously, and wanted to meet. He was really upset…I don’t think he ever thought people would react like that.”

Sherlock and John exchanged worried glances. He felt bad for the kid: here he was still nervous about talking about his sexuality and his life was about to become the center of public conversation at least in London, if not across Great Britain.

“As much as I hate to say it, the police will need a statement,” Sherlock said, “but I’ll call a mate of mine at Scotland Yard. He’s one of us, he’ll be easy to talk to, I promise.”

"Sherlock," John warned, nodding toward the hall.

Sherlock nodded back, understanding the request.

“Drink some more water,” John instructed to Sam. He followed Sherlock out of earshot but didn’t take long before he rounded on him: “‘One of us’? You’ve got to be careful, Sherlock.”

He swallowed nervously, knowing John was right.

“I didn’t mean it like that,” he said, though he worried he inadvertently had.

“He could put two and two together,” John sighed. “Anyway I just wanted to remind you that Greg wants to come out on his own terms. This case is only going to make that harder, but we have to respect what he wants to do.”

“I know,” Sherlock promised. “I’m going to phone him and see if he can come by here to get a statement.”

“Good idea. I’m going to look after the kid.”

His fiancé offered him a small smile as he went back to Sam, and Sherlock withdrew his mobile to give phone Greg.

“I was just about to phone you,” Greg announced as soon as he answered. His voice sounded hurried, grim. “There’s been another stabbing.”

Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat. His face paled. His body turned cold.

“And Sherlock…” Greg’s voice fell; he sounded helpless. But Sherlock already knew what he was going to say. “This victim was also a gay male.”
I sort of hit a writer's block with this chapter, hence the delay! But I think I worked through it well enough. I think I just got so excited about planning where this story is headed that I realised oh yeah, I really need to plot out this case!

Thanks, as always, for reading and for all of your feedback! I'm glad you guys like these darker cases as well as the fluff and romance. There's some more darkness up ahead...but I think you'll like where it ends up in the end! ;)

Happy New Year to you all!! And Happy Sherlock Week! Enjoy the special everyone!!
“What we’re asking for now is public cooperation,” Greg announced. His brow was sweating underneath the fierce telly lights. A room full of doubtful reports stared back at him while Sherlock and John hovered in the background. “Exercise usual precautions when you’re out. Keep your eyes and ears open and tell someone if you see anything suspicious- anything.”

_Keep your eyes and ears open._

Sherlock had to bite back the urge to groan. Greg threw a panicked glance toward him, but he simply shrugged. There was no helping him now. Greg was far better at his job than Sherlock gave him credit for, but he was dreadful at press conferences. Not that Sherlock could blame him: the last thing he knew Greg cared about right now was what the press thought.

“I’ll take questions now,” Greg continued reluctantly.

A young reporter in the front row immediately shot her hand in the air.

“As there are now two dead victims and two witnesses that are all homosexual, would you call this a hate crime?”

The DCI’s eyes fell closed, like he had known he would have to face that question.

“Obviously everything is speculation right now, but at the present we’re most concerned about finding the murderer and preventing future attacks,” Greg replied.

“So there is concern for future attacks?” Another reporter asked.

Christ these people were just as clueless as most of the Yard was!

“This is just like any other instance of a crime with multiple victims,” Greg explained. “Like I said the best thing everyone can do right now is stay calm and vigilant. I’m going to leave any further questions to DI Sally Donavan.”

Greg fled from the stage, pulling on his coat as he did.

“Get me out of here,” he muttered as he passed John and Sherlock. The consulting detective smirked as he followed the DCI to his office. Greg slammed the door behind him. “Dammit!”

He kicked at his desk a few times- he really was developing a bad habit of kicking things when he was frustrated.

“It’s like they throw me in there just to mess with my head,” Greg sighed. “Now to get back to actual work, our new victim is a twenty-three year old university student. He was with his mate outside a club not two blocks from the pub our last victim was at.”

“With his mate?” Sherlock echoed.

“Again?” John asked. “So he’s killing gay men and leaving behind their boyfriends? Jesus…”

Pale-faced, Greg sank down in his chair and crossed his arms.
“The victim’s name is Jeremy Blakely. Unlike Jonathon, he had already come out to his friends and family. I’ve already had people checking his Facebook friends against Jonathon’s and they don’t share any mutual acquaintances.”

“Oh good. I’m glad the Yard is paying people to check people’s Facebook friends.”

“We’re doing it because-“ Greg began defensively.

“I know what you meant,” Sherlock muttered. “I suppose we wouldn’t be lucky enough to find someone commenting on their two different pages.”

“No such luck,” Greg agreed. “But the close proximity of the crime scenes is a good lead. We can view CCTV from the past few days and see if familiar faces pop up twice.”

“Lots of people go to the same pubs and clubs multiple times a week,” John pointed out.

“Yeah, but they probably don’t go alone looking like creepers who are out to murder people,” Greg replied. “I’m waiting on DNA results from both victims to compare data. I also have the boyfriend of the new victim waiting to be interviewed if you’d like to do the honours, Sherlock.”

He blinked, surprised to be called on. Usually Greg liked to keep him away from grieving victims, so why was he depending on him so much with this case? He really did think he was very good at this.

“If you’re not comfortable with it-“ Greg began to offer.

“No,” he replied quickly, shaking his head. “I can do it.”

Fifteen minutes later he found himself sitting across from a Brandon Young, the victim’s twenty-two year old boyfriend. The kid simply stared at the table; his eyes were red from crying while his face was a deathly white. He had a shock blanket wrapped around him. The black shirt he was wearing was still stained with the blood of his lover.

This kid didn’t want to be here. This kid didn’t have anything to say. He was going to be just like the boyfriend of the last victim: he didn’t see anything, he didn’t have time to do anything, and it would haunt him for the rest of his life.

He decided his mission with this interview shouldn’t be to quiz him about what happened. Instead he needed to gain this kid’s trust so he could find out as much about him and the victim as possible. The key to this case would be the link between the victim and the way this murderer was hunting his victims. He very much expected this to be a serial stabbing, which meant they were working against the clock to prevent other deaths.

“You should know that I’m not with the police,” Sherlock announced. Brandon didn’t budge. “I’m a consultant.”

“I know who you are, Mr Holmes,” Brandon said quietly.

“Ah,” Sherlock breath, his lips forming a firm line. He paused for a moment before daring to ask: “You read John’s blog, then?”

The smallest of smiles peered at the corners of Brandon’s lips but quickly slipped away, like he realised he was letting some emotion show.
“I’ve always liked mysteries,” the kid replied, his voice raw. “I never thought I’d be in one. I never thought I’d be in one of Dr Watson’s blog stories.”

Sherlock felt like someone punched him in the gut. He had a feeling John was listening in and feeling insecure about writing about any victims again. John had never had anyone resent him over writing about their case (save perhaps Mycroft), but this certainly put his blog into perspective.

“He won’t write about it if you’re not comfortable,” Sherlock hurriedly explained. “He only ever writes stories with permission.”

“It’s okay,” Brandon said. “I didn’t mean anything by it. I just…I can’t believe this is happening to me. I feel like I’m in a show on telly. I just can’t wrap my mind around the fact that this is real.”

He noticed Brandon’s left hand was trembling, and the kid must have noticed too because he tightened it into a fist and wrapped the blanket tighter around himself.

“Did you hear the attacker coming or see him coming?” Sherlock asked.

Letting out a shaky breath, Brandon quietly replied:

“We were…we were making out, and someone asked us if we had some money for food. We turned around. Someone punched me in the gut, and I heard Jeremy scream. The guy ran away before I could turn around again. He was fast. I didn’t have time to get a good look at him or go after him. I wish I had paid more attention.”

“You were more concerned about staying alive and helping your friend,” Sherlock offered.

A sickening feeling suddenly settled in his stomach. The air tasted a bit metallic and the world felt hazy. Without warning he flashed back to waking up and finding Luke dead in his flat, and he realised then just why Greg wanted him doing these interviews: he had been here before. He knew what it was like to feel so helpless and downright useless after the death of a lover. He knew what it was like to wonder why he was still alive when his lover was dead. His eyes wandered over to the two-way mirror, where he knew Greg was watching him.

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” Sherlock reassured Brandon. “And you’re still in shock. You don’t know what to feel. And I know it’s the worst time to have to ask you these questions, but we’re worried about other attacks.”

“You think it might be what, serial stabbings?” Brandon asked.

There was a spark of interest in his eyes, and Sherlock considered that perhaps helping them with this case was what Brandon needed right now. He enjoyed crime stories and even though he was unfortunate enough to star in one, maybe helping to catch the murderer would make him feel like he was worth something again.

“Two stabbings is usually a coincidence,” Sherlock admitted, “but stabbings of two gay men in the same district in London is a bit more of…my area of expertise. It’s a bit too coincidental. Usually in serial cases I like to find out everything I can about the victims to look for connections. But with this case there are two witnesses with a close connection to the victim who are alive.”

“I want to help,” Brandon spoke up. “Whatever I can do, I want to help. I don’t know…I don’t know what I’m going to do, what I’m going to tell people, you know, when they find out that I couldn’t stop it. But if I can help find who did this…at least that’s something.”

“Yes,” Sherlock nodded, feeling rather proud of the kid. “Can you start with telling me everything
you saw last night, everywhere you went, everyone you talked to?’”

Drawing in a deep, shaky, breath, Brandon paused for a long moment before nodding.

“You said the attacker asked for money for food,” Sherlock began. “What kind of voice did have? High pitched? Low? Was it raw or clear? Did he have a specific accent?”

“Manchester!” Brandon exclaimed, his eyes lighting up. “He sounded like he was from Manchester. And he might have been wearing a dark green coat. And he was a little taller than me. I think…I think he had blonde hair.”

A smile crossed Sherlock’s face.

“That’s a start.”

Now that they had a vague description he and Greg decided their best course of action was to pour through CCTV footage. Greg sent Donovan out to interview some of the people who left comments on Jonathan’s Facebook wall. After a few hours of looking at footage Sherlock told John he should go home to get some sleep (in reality his constantly glancing between him and Greg and pacing the floor was making him anxious).

Around ten they still hadn’t found anything. Not a single person was at both the pub and the club during those nights.

“That’s it,” Greg finally sighed at eleven. “My eyes feel like they’re going to fall out of their sockets. Whoever we’re looking for must have just caught our victims outside the venues. We’ve both got long days ahead of us, let’s just go home and try to get some sleep.”

“Your dinner with Mycroft,” Sherlock realised, feeling a bit guilty. He could have easily looked over all that footage by himself.

“Don’t worry about it,” Greg said with a wave of his hand as he grabbed his coat from his desk. “Mycroft’s missed out on more than his fair share of dinners, to be honest. We’re both sort of used to unpredictable schedules.”

“Right.”

“I’ll give you a lift home,” Greg offered.

“It’s not really on your way-”

“I need to drive around a bit,” his friend shrugged. “It helps clear my head.”

Nodding, Sherlock followed him out to the almost-empty car park without argument. Greg was quiet the whole way back to Baker Street. Sherlock knew how to read his friend, and he knew when he became silent like this, when his eyes were so focused straight ahead he wondered how he was even keeping track of traffic, that he wasn’t to be disturbed. At least not until he worked over the case in his head so much that he finally broke down and asked Sherlock for his opinion.

“I can meet you early tomorrow,” he offered as they pulled up to Baker Street.

“I’m going to be in by at least five,” Greg said. His eyes shifted over to him, as though that were a challenge. “DNA samples will be back from the victims’ clothing. I don’t really expect to find
much, but just in case I want an early start.”

Sherlock knew he wouldn’t get any sleep anyway, and he doubted Greg would either.

“I can get a taxi and be there at four if you want, I don’t mind,” he said.

Letting out a tired laugh, Greg shook his head.

“I’ll pick you up. I know you want sleep so just tell me when.”

“Yeah, well, like you’ll be able to sleep either,” he muttered.

For a few moments they just awkwardly sat there, parked in front of Baker Street. Sherlock wasn’t ready to leave this case, not even for a few hours, knowing that at any moment the killer could strike again. He felt like they were missing just one little piece of the puzzle that would give him all the answers they needed.

And yet at the same time he was afraid they were looking for a needle in a haystack.

“Mind if I use the loo real quick?” Greg asked.

“Yeah. Yeah, sure.”

His body felt heavy and worn down as he crawled out of the car. Greg looked equally as exhausted, and he couldn’t help but to find himself worrying about him driving home.

“Are you sure you just don’t want to stay the night?” Sherlock offered. Frankly Greg looked like he was so tired he couldn’t even think: he just stared helplessly at Sherlock. “Come on, you’re staying. You’re not fit to drive all the way back to Mycroft’s.”

“Thanks,” Greg muttered. “This job is never going to get easier, is it?”

“Of course not,” Sherlock sighed as he took out his key and opened the door. “It’s not supposed to be easy. That’s why they promoted you…and that’s why you have me.”

He managed to crack a small smile and was rewarded with a single laugh from Greg.

“Oi!” The sound of an approaching stranger startled them so much that he and Greg both turned around without thought.

And then it happened.

It happened so fast that Sherlock actually wasn’t sure what happened for a full moment. All he heard was Greg cry out, and the rest of the world seemed to fade away. He heard the attacker mutter something to Greg and spit in his face before running off across the street.

*Act!* A voice in his head shouted. *Do something!*

But his body seemed to be stuck.

He was frozen in time.


His body finally seemed to work again as Greg began to sink down to the ground. Sherlock caught him before he could fall.
His eyes immediately found the blood spurting from Greg’s side.

“Sherlock!” Greg pleaded weakly, grabbing his arm with a bloody hand.

Sherlock’s heart skipped a beat when he saw the bloody hand, and his breathing quickened. He was bleeding through his shirt. His face was grey.

“Sherlock!” Greg gasped again, moving Sherlock’s hand so it sat over the wound. Then he remembered: pressure. Stop the bleeding. Call 999. Call John…John!

John was right upstairs. They were at Baker Street.

None of this felt real.

“Scarf,” Greg whispered, pointing to his neck. Sherlock frowned, wondering if he was already confused. When he did nothing Greg reached up, tugging at the scar around Sherlock’s neck.

Of course: the scarf would be good for stopping the bleeding. He tore off his scarf and pressed it down hard against the wound on Greg’s side. In the dark he couldn’t tell how bad it was, but judging by the cry of pain Greg let out and the amount of blood it was rather deep.

“I need John,” he whispered to himself.

“Sherlock-” Greg murmured. Both his voice and body shook as he reached up again, grabbing his arm.

“You’ll be fine. I just need John,” Sherlock rambled on.

He began shouting. John was upstairs, the door was partly open. He would be able to hear.

“Sher-“ his friend whispered; he was getting weaker by the moment. “Hospital.”

How was it that Greg seemed to know what to do right now but he himself was just…sitting there?

“John! John!” Sherlock continued to scream until finally his fiancé stepped outside, wrapping his dressing gown tightly around himself as he did.

“Jesus, Sherlock, what’s going on? It nearly bloody- oh my god.”

He didn’t have to explain what happened. John fell by his side and pushed his hand away to take over.

“Have you phoned 999?” John asked.

John was taking over. John could handle this. He would be able to save Greg.

What Sherlock had to do was catch the suspect. He was right there, right there, and he had just let him get away.

He could still catch up with him.

Ignoring his fiancé, Sherlock jumped to his feet and began taking off across the street. Adrenaline was catching up to him, guiding him as his feet pounded down the block. John continued to call after him but his voice soon faded as Sherlock ran further and further.
But Baker Street was empty. The suspect could have caught a cab or bus at the end of the street by now. He could know the area and all its hidden corners and shortcuts.

Whatever the case may be was gone.

He was gone and Mycroft had cameras everywhere. He might not have access to them anymore but someone did, someone would be able to help and-

*Mycroft.*

Someone had to phone Mycroft.

He would have to phone him: he was family, and family did that kind of thing.

Greg was family.

His family needed him, and as much as he hated to he knew it would do none of them any good to go racing around town, looking for a man he hadn’t even gotten a good look at.

With trembling hands he took out his mobile and finally phone 999, demanding an ambulance to Baker Street. When he hung up he closed his eyes, giving himself a full five seconds to get himself together.

His family needed him. This case needed him. He couldn’t lose it right now.

He rushed back to his flat, where John was still hunched on the ground next to Greg. A frantic Mrs Hudson was hovering over them, shouting something about blankets and cold weather. Sherlock’s scarf lay on the pavement, soaked in blood.

“He’s lost a lot of blood,” John announced as soon as Sherlock sank down next to him. The two looked to each other; John’s eyes were red, like he was on the verge of his own breakdown. “Did you find them?”

Sherlock shook his head.

He felt hollow.

“I phoned for an ambulance,” Sherlock breathed.

“So did I,” John sighed, running an arm over his face. He sniffled and shivered, and Sherlock remembered then just how cold it was. “They’ll figure it out. It should be here any moment. Here, can you-?”

His fiancé nodded toward the wound he was still holding pressure too. Sherlock stiffened as he looked down at his friend, noting his face looked even more lifeless than before. His eyes were glassy, his breathing erratic, and he was muttering senselessly.

“How bad is it?” Sherlock dared to whisper.

John looked a bit ill as he ignored him, fooling around instead with the medical kit Mrs Hudson brought him.

“Oh Sherlock!” Mrs Hudson cried above them. Her eyes were full of tears and her hands trembled as she held them to her face. “You should phone your brother, dear. Would you like me to do it for you?”
Sherlock shook his head.

Sirens sounded off nearby.

“Sher-“ Greg gasped, coughing as he fought for the strength to speak.

“Stop trying to talk,” John instructed through gritted teeth.

But Greg looked up at him desperately, and Sherlock placed a hand in his hand, hoping that somehow it would remind him that they were there for him. He wasn’t going to go through this alone.


He wanted Mycroft to know he loved him, Sherlock realised. That’s what people said, right, when they thought they were dying?

But of course Greg wasn’t dying.

He couldn’t be.

“I will,” Sherlock whispered.

“Tell Myc,” Greg tried again. And finally, all in one breath, he managed to say: “Tell him I don’t want him to take the job.”

Sherlock stared at him, wondering exactly how coherent Greg was right now.

But now wasn’t the time to decipher his ramblings. The ambulance pulled up and soon medics were taking over. John was sounding off his credentials, demanding to be let into the ambulance.

“Sherlock!” He didn’t even realise John was still trying to talk to him. He was too immersed in watching Greg being hoisted up onto a stretcher and loaded into the ambulance. John was standing inside of it; there were already two medics, a patient, and a doctor. There was no room for him. “St. Barts. Meet us there!”

Right.

Phone Mycroft. Get a cab. Go to St Barts.

Without warning the ambulance doors slammed and the vehicle rushed away, sirens blaring and its red lights dancing in the darkness.

“Oh love,” Mrs Hudson said, placing her hands on his shoulders. “You’re in shock, dear. Would you like me to go to the hospital with you?”

Sherlock shook his head, barely aware of what she even said. He noticed Greg’s car keys were on the ground- they must have fallen out of his hands when he fell. He bent down to get them, deciding it would be faster to commander his car than to wait for a taxi at Baker Street at this time on a weekday night.

“You really shouldn’t drive,” she pleaded.

“I’ll be quite alright,” he whispered.

It was a lie but it was all he could manage as he leaned forward to give her a quick kiss on the
cheek. He opened the car door and stepped into the driver’s seat- he hadn’t driven since what, Baskerville? He shook his head, in awe of how surreal it felt to realise he was in this car only moments before.

That felt like days ago.

It still felt like this wasn’t really happening.

Nonetheless he really had to phone Mycroft. Eyes falling to a close, he shut them tight as he breathed in deeply, desperate to keep himself together.

And he dialed his brother’s number.

Chapter End Notes

Well............... 

(you know I love you guys...right??!!)

PS: If you're not too mad at me I posted a new story called "Before". I will update it soon, hopefully I'll be able to write a lot of the next chapter this weekend!
Sherlock’s knee bounced up and down as he sat in the hospital waiting room. The A&E was packed, as he expected the St. Bart’s A&E to be, but Greg had been wheeled into surgery right away. He had watched as John talked to the emergency surgeon in detail— in his dressing gown, nonetheless. But in all of Sherlock’s panic and grief about Greg he couldn’t help but to admit to himself he was quite proud at how professionally and calmly John handled the whole situation. It didn’t matter that he arrived at the A&E in his pyjamas: John would have been ready to assist in surgery if need be.

But now Greg was in surgery and all they could do was wait.

Wait for the surgery to be over and wait for Mycroft to arrive.

His brother hadn’t said anything when Sherlock told him what happened.

He simply said he’d be there as soon as he could and hung up.

The minutes seem to pass by as slow as hours as he sat next to John in the waiting room. John wore a pair of scrubs he borrowed from the hospital. They both sat in complete silence until finally, twenty minutes in, Mycroft walked into the room.

Sherlock’s breath caught in his throat. He slowly stood, watching as his brother approached him. He was wearing his usually suit, but sans tie and cufflinks. Mycroft wore brown loafers that clashed horribly with his black suit…and he wore one navy sock and one white one.

He bit his lip, suppressing a laugh.

“What?” Mycroft demanded tiredly.

“Your socks don’t match,” Sherlock confessed. “And your shoes…” He felt bad teasing his brother under the circumstances, but it was nice to have something to laugh about. It seemed to help him finally breathe.

“I haven’t picked up my dry cleaning yet,” Mycroft explained. “Half my socks were dirty…honestly I wasn’t paying attention. Sherlock…what happened?”

Eyes falling to the ground, he drew in a deep breath but even when he opened his mouth to explain he still couldn’t speak. He had been practising what he was going to tell his brother since he left the flat, but he still didn’t know what to say. How could he explain that Greg had been stabbed, right beside him? That he had let the attacker get away?

“Greg offered to give me a lift home after work,” he began quietly, still refusing to meet his brother’s eyes. “I tried to tell him not to, but he said he liked driving around to clear his head.”

“He does that,” Mycroft chimed in with a sad smile. “It’s a new habit of his, especially during tough case.”

Yeah well…he looked a bit exhausted, and I didn’t think he should be driving home so I told him he should stay over,” Sherlock went on. “He agreed…and someone came up to us and attacked
him as I was opening the door. Just like that. It happened fast, just like the other witnesses said.”

Mycroft’s face went grey and he shifted from one foot to another, like he was fighting to keep his balance.

Obviously he hadn’t considered that Greg was the latest in the string of victims in this case.

“You think it’s the same suspect?” His brother asked breathlessly.

Sherlock nodded.

“He fit the description,” he admitted. “I only saw him for a split second. I tried to go after him but…he got away fast. The whole thing happened in moments.”

“I would have rather you not go after the murderer wielding the knife,” Mycroft said, holding up a hand to calm him down. “You were there for Greg, and I am grateful for that.”

Silence fell between them. Mycroft’s eyes scanned around the waiting room, and Sherlock realised he needed to explain:

“Greg is in surgery. He lost a lot of blood…the knife hit an artery. His blood pressure had really dropped by the time we got here. The doctor says he’ll be fine, it’s going to take time.”

He hated not having any better news to give.

“Why is John in scrubs?” Mycroft asked suddenly.

Sherlock threw a glance over to his fiancé. A small, proud, smile crossed his face as he thought of how calmly John had handled saving Greg’s life. He had even taken over in the ambulance, assisting the medics and making decisions that even impressed Greg’s doctor. He was there by Sherlock’s side the whole time in the waiting room; even if neither of them knew what to say it made all the difference having him there.

“The dressing gown and pyjamas he was wearing when he came outside to save Greg’s life were covered in blood,” Sherlock confessed.

His brother’s eyes lit up with gratitude as he stared at John for a few moments before walking over to the army doctor.

“John,” Mycroft announced quietly.

John jumped up, startled to be called upon.

“Mycroft,” John breathed. “I’m so sorry-”

“Please,” Mycroft said, placing a hand on John’s shoulder. Sherlock wasn’t ever sure he had seen his brother do that before. “Sherlock told me what you did for Greg. Thank you.”

His fiancé’s eyes danced around uncomfortably.

“Don’t worry about it,” John shrugged. “Greg’s going to be just fine.”

“Yes,” Mycroft replied. He sounded like he still hadn’t quite wrapped his mind around what had happened.

“Erm…” John picked up some papers off the seat next to them and handed them to Mycroft. “They
gave me these papers to fill out for Greg, but I don’t really know his medical history. I thought maybe you…”

Nodding, Mycroft accepted the papers and clipboard.

“Greg’s parents are on the way,” his brother suddenly announced.

Exchanging glances with John, Sherlock tried to decide which surprised him more: hearing of Greg’s parents, whom had never been mentioned to him ever before, or hearing his brother sound rather nervous upon having to see Greg’s parents.

“Greg has…parents?” Sherlock asked, feeling stupid.

Of course Greg had parents. Just because he had never mentioned them before didn’t mean he didn’t have parents.

“Yes, of course Greg has parents,” Mycroft protested, echoing his thoughts. “They live outside of London. They’re very nice, very ordinary, people, and they want to see their son when he’s in hospital.”

His brother finished his spiel by straightening his suit and taking a seat next to Sherlock. He didn’t seem to want to elaborate about Greg’s parents so Sherlock and John simply took their seats next to him. Sherlock watched as his brother hurriedly filled out Greg’s medical background papers, noting everything he was allergic to, every procedure he had had in the past. Mycroft even knew his partner’s family history.

“Wow,” Sherlock muttered.


Sherlock turned to John, who simply shrugged.

“You know I was shot in Afghanistan,” John offered. Sherlock glared at him. “…and that I was shot last year too. Actually, what did you do when you had to fill out forms for me then?”

“He phoned me,” Mycroft replied under his breath.

“You phoned Mycroft?!” John exclaimed. He threw a glanced around the waiting room, clearly trying to be mindful of the other people who were waiting. “How do you even know my medical history, Mycroft? Wait, don’t answer that.”

His brother smirked as he finished filling out the last line of the papers and stood to walk over to the front desk. At the same time a doctor came out into the waiting room; John stirred at the sight of him, telling Sherlock this was Greg’s doctor.

“Excuse me- are you Greg Lestrade’s family?” The doctor asked.

Mycroft stopped, clearly startled at the term ‘family’. Sherlock watched his brother, wondering if he was going to carry on pretending like they weren’t together.

“I’m his fiancé,” Mycroft announced, buttoning two of his jacket buttons.

A another proud smile fell across Sherlock’s face.

But the doctor’s eyes narrowed, like he didn’t understand, and judging by the distaste in his brother’s eyes this was exactly the kind of reaction he had feared.
“We’ve applied for a Civil Partnership,” his brother explained dryly.

“Right,” the doctor said, throwing an uneasy glance to the ground before glancing back up at Mycroft. Sherlock was relieved the doctor was completely serious and professional when he turned his attention back to Mycroft- partly because his brother looked like he wanted to punch the man in his face. “Greg’s lung collapsed. Luckily, with the efforts of Dr Watson he was able to minimize damage on sight. Surgery was successful, and Greg is recovering in the ICU.”

Any resentment in Mycroft’s face from before quickly melted into gratitude and relief. He could see his brother’s shoulders physically relax, and even his own chest seemed much less tighter.

“When can I see him?” Mycroft asked.

“I would rather leave lengthy visits until he’s breathing on his own again,” the doctor explained, “but I know you’re anxious, so I can allow you five minutes.”

“Thank you,” his brother replied graciously. He turned to Sherlock and asked quietly: “Would you like to come with me?”

Sherlock was surprised- he figured this would be a private moment, one that he had no place interfering in. But if his brother was asking he must need him so he nodded and followed him silently to the ICU.

He had been in his fair share of ICUs, both as a patient and relatives. The only thing worse than waking up and finding yourself hooked up to machines, clinging for life, was seeing someone who loved hooked up to machines and clinging to life.

Greg’s room was small and dark, cramped with machines. The DCI was asleep- sedated, he realised- and breathing with the help of a machine. His brother stiffened as he stood beside the bed and gazed down to his pale, rather frail-looking fiancé.

“It’s strange seeing him so still,” Sherlock whispered. “I know that sounds cliché, but it’s true.”

“He’s beautiful when he sleeps,” his brother breathed.

His eyes drifted up to his older brother, startled that such a blunt display of affection could ever escape him.

“He should be in bed right now, at home,” Mycroft continued softly as he placed his hands on the railings of the bed. It was like he afraid to touch his partner- because if he did then this would be real. “He doesn’t deserve this.”

“No,” Sherlock forced himself to say. He shook his head, trying to not let the guilt continued to eat at him. “No. I’m sorry, Mycroft.”

Instead of answering Mycroft heavily lifted his hand from the railing and placed it over Greg’s. His brother’s eyes fell closed, and he could have sworn a small gasp escaped him.

“If you need to be alone-” he offered.

“Yes, please,” his brother gave in.

“I’ll be right outside.”

The room fell silent as Sherlock slipped out the door and slid down the wall until he hit the floor.
Bringing his knees to his chest, he shivered in the empty corridor. Eyes closed, he forced himself to relive the moment Greg was stabbed. He let out a long breath as he dove deep into his mind palace.

*He shivered again, but this time not because of the cool hospital corridor but because he was standing outside of his flat in the freezing night air. His key was in his hand, he opened the door…*

*And froze.*

*Surely in that split second, that very moment the attacker approached, he heard something. He had to have heard something. The attacker made some sort of noise as he neared them, even if he thought he hadn’t heard it.*

*He shut his eyes tighter but still…nothing.*

*He could hear the echoes of Greg crying out in pain.*

*And nothing else.*

*His mind palace was broken.*

Suddenly the door to Greg’s room opened again, and his brother appeared in the hall. To his surprise Mycroft sank down to the floor beside him, joining him in drawing his knees to his chest.

“Won’t the floor ruin your suit?” Sherlock teased.

“Damn my suit,” Mycroft muttered. He let out a sigh as he ran his hands over his face. “How did you do this when John was shot?”

Sherlock shrugged.

“John was so strong,” he confessed. “He was so good through it all. But of course there were times when he needed someone, and all the way through it I just reminded myself that no matter how upset I was that he was in worse pain. He needed me.”

“Right,” Mycroft muttered. “Gregory needs me.”

His brother leaned his head back against the wall and draped his hands over his knees. It was strange seeing his brother so helpless: usually he was the rock who always knew what to say. But it was becoming apparent that not only did Greg need Mycroft right now, but Mycroft needed Sherlock. He placed a hand on his brother’s shoulder and squeezed it, reminding him he was there.

Then he remembered Greg’s message for Mycroft.

“Mycroft…Greg had a message for you,” he said quietly. His brother looked at him, startled and surprised. “Right before they put him in the ambulance, he asked me to tell you…he wanted me to tell you he doesn’t want you to take the job. Whatever that means.”

Slapping his knees, his brother got to his feet and straightened his suit.

“It means I have a phone call to make,” he announced.

Frowning, Sherlock scurried to get to his feet as well. Did that mean…?

“You got a job offer?” Sherlock asked.

“I received many job offers,” Mycroft said as he took out his mobile. “I was ready to accept one
particular offer. It was one that would require a lot of travel and international work. Gregory and I talked it over for some time, and we both decided we would be okay with that. But apparently he’s not. And you know…neither am I.”

His brother said nothing more as he wandered off toward the opposite end of the corridor.

“It’s the middle of the night!” Sherlock called after him.

Mycroft turned back at him while walking with a mysterious grin.

“Not where I’m calling.”

He winked before disappearing through an exit to make the call. Sherlock shook his head; his brother never seized to amaze him.

He had no business hiding out in the corridor, and he knew Greg needed his rest so he headed back to the waiting room where he found his fiancé waiting with an elderly couple.

“Ah, Sherlock,” John said as he stood up. He noticed then how tired his partner was, and he remembered John had been woken up from what must have been a very short sleep when the stabbing happened. “This is Mr and Mrs Lestrade.”

Greg’s parents looked as though they were at least in their late seventies. Mrs Lestrade wore track pants and a winter coat, while Mr Lestrade dressed very traditionally in a suit, like Mycroft. He held a cane and was hunched over. He seemed to remember Greg saying something some time ago-possibly while he was in withdrawal- about his father being a war veteran. They both looked a bit out of place: perhaps not only because they were called out of their beds in the middle of the night but because they were not used to being in the city.

“How is my boy?” Mrs Lestrade asked. Her voice shook ever-so-slightly, her body trembled, and John placed a hand on her shoulder to steady her. “Dr Watson has told me but…you saw him. How is he?”

Swallowing nervously, Sherlock carefully chose his words. He couldn’t possibly tell Mrs Lestrade that her son was mainly breathing with the help of machines, looked pale as a ghost, and his lung had collapsed.

“He’s hanging in there,” he said simply. “Greg is strong. Even when he was hurt, he was trying to tell me what to do to help him.”

He forced himself to crack a bemused smile, but he knew he wasn’t fooling anyone.

“Can we see him?” Mrs Lestrade asked.

“Oh sweetheart, Greg needs to rest,” said Mr Lestrade, placing his free hand on his wife’s arm.

“I want to see my son!” Mrs Lestrade protested. “I need to see him.”

John held out a hand to try to calm her down, mindful of the other people also anxiously wanting to see their own loved ones.

“Two people can go in at once so yes, you can see him,” John said. “But Greg does need rest. And…well, it might be a bit hard to see him like this.”

The DCI’s mother shook her heard in protest.
“I want to see him,” she whispered.

Nodding, John offered:

“I can walk you there.” He held onto her arm as he began to lead her away, but he stopped and leaned close to Sherlock’s ear before he left to ask: “Where is Mycroft?”

Sherlock shrugged.

“He had to make a phone call,” he replied.

John offered him a swift kiss on the cheek and a soft smile.

“Hang in there, love,” his fiancé said quietly.

He could only nod in return.

Sherlock waited until John had turned the corner with the Lestrades before he sank back down into his seat and led his head fall into his hands. Closing his eyes tightly, he pleaded with himself to do just that: hang on.

He felt the presence of someone else beside him and looked up to find his brother holding a cup of coffee.

“Normally I wouldn’t approve of giving you caffeine this late at night but seeing as you’ll be up all night anyway…” Mycroft drifted off as he took a seat beside him, and Sherlock accepted the coffee.

Neither brother said a word as they stared helplessly before them, waiting for the night to turn to dawn.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Greg and Mycroft. I really do love them so! Thank you, as always, for all your kudos and feedback! You know I love hearing from you!!
“You okay, mate?”

Sherlock looked up at Greg Lestrade with hollow eyes. He hadn’t the energy to speak; he only stared. He sat helplessly against the wall of Greg’s restroom, where he had been camped out for the past forty-eight hours. This withdrawal was worse than any he had experienced before. It felt like his body was on fire, yet his mind was…dead. Mush. He had no energy, no appetite. He felt completely drained and devoid of life and yet he couldn’t sleep.

He was empty.

A skeleton.

When he didn’t answer Greg grabbed a flannel, dampened it in the sink, and sank down next to him. Gently, he draped the warm cloth across his forehead, but instead of feeling comforted he began shivering.

“I need to check your blood pressure,” Greg said.

Managing a nod, Sherlock stuck out his arm, used to the routine by now. He let out a shaky breath while he let Greg take his blood pressure.

“It’s still high,” Greg announced. “Your doctor phoned to check on you; he said if your blood pressure is still high by tomorrow he wants to see you again.”

Sherlock didn’t respond.

The week had been a whirlwind of police interrogation, hospital treatment, medical terms, and throwing up in Greg’s flat. He had been so sick, so helpless, that he hadn’t had time to hate himself yet.

But now as his body was beginning to slow down and adjust to being emptied of drugs, all he could think of was we’ve been here before, and we weren’t supposed to be here again. He had promised Greg he wouldn’t use again, and he had failed. Not only had he failed but he went too far, even further than he had before with drug use.

Yet Greg still welcomed him into his home. He still cared for him.

Why?

“Do you feel like you can stand?” Greg asked.

Sherlock shrugged.

“Come on,” Greg announced, standing to his feet. He held out his hand. “You should take a shower, you might feel a bit better. And I want you to try eating toast- you need something in your stomach. Oh, and I got you some clothes so you can change.”

He led Sherlock into the guest bedroom where he was staying; a large shopping bag sat on the bed.
“You went shopping for me?” Sherlock asked quietly.

For a split second a proud smile slipped across Greg’s face. He looked rather parental, and honestly in some ways Greg felt more like a father to him as a friend. He couldn’t remember the last time anyone did shopping for him or even offered to.

“Yeah, well, your flat is still a crime scene and you didn’t exactly have much of a wardrobe anyway,” Greg shrugged. “Plus there were a lot of sales. So…”

The smallest of smiles peered out of the corners of Sherlock’s lips as he picked through the collections of shirts, jumpers, pyjamas, trousers, and even a new hoodie.

“I don’t know what to say,” Sherlock said.

“You don’t have to say anything,” Greg said, placing a hand on his shoulder. “Just promise me you’ll take care of yourself.”

Sherlock nodded. He was afraid to say anything because he knew promises were a lot harder to keep than they were to make. But he did know he had to start paying attention to his health again. He was so malnourished when he arrived at the hospital that most of his stay was because of being put on IV fluids. Even though he had been using again, he had thought he’d been eating enough, sleeping enough. He had a roof over his head- albeit his flat wasn’t exactly the safest, it was still his. He had had something.

“It’s okay, you know,” Greg spoke up softly. Sherlock looked up at him, hoping his friend was about to say what he needed to hear. “It’s okay to need to depend on someone. You’ve been on your own for a long time, mate. You’ve been through a lot- you’ve been through things some people could never imagine going through. It’s okay to need somebody. And I’m here for you.”

That was exactly what he needed to hear. He needed to know it was okay to feel helpless. Because frankly, he had no clue what he was doing or what was going to happen for him. He had no parent to lean on. Greg was the closest thing to a parental figure he had ever had, but he was starting to feel, well, a bit like a friend.

Maybe that’s all he needed right now: a friend.

“Thank you,” he whispered. He shivered, and suddenly a warm bath sounded appealing. “I think I’ll actually take that bath now. And…maybe some toast would be okay.”

A broad smile crossed Greg’s face, and he surprised him by quickly embracing Sherlock with a hug.

“You’ll be fine,” Greg muttered. “I know you’ve struggled. I know it’s been hard. But you can do this.”

Sherlock nodded as they broke apart.

He could do this.

He had heard that a dozen times by now, and every time Sherlock promised he could do it he failed.

Yet here Greg was, telling him again he could do it.

And again, Sherlock said he would.
“Hey Sherlock?” The consulting detective jumped at the sudden sound of John’s voice. In the early hours of the morning the A&E had become quiet; Mycroft hadn’t said a word since their conversation in the hall. Sherlock sat by his brother for the next couple of hours, feeling like he should at least constantly be there for him, even if he didn’t want to talk. His fiancé held out his hands and Sherlock sighed as he reluctantly let him help him stand and walk over to the other side of the room. John held onto his hands, letting them hang in the air for a long moment before he finally softly explained: “Greg’s officially in stable condition. All he needs now is to rest so he can get stronger and breathe on his own better. There’s not much reason for us to be here. We can come back in the morning, but we should really go home and try to get a few hours of sleep.”

He rubbed a hand up and down Sherlock’s arm. Even though Sherlock honestly felt mentally and physically drained, he also couldn’t bring himself to leave. He knew Mycroft wouldn’t and he didn’t want to leave his brother waiting alone with Greg’s parents.

“I can’t leave,” Sherlock replied. “You can go home, but I need to stay here with Mycroft.”

“You know Mycroft would agree with me,” John protested. “You’ve been through a trauma tonight, Sherlock. Tomorrow’s going to be a long day: we’re going to have to talk to the police and—”

“The police!” Sherlock said abruptly, his eyes going wide as he remembered who he had forgotten to phone.

“Oi!” Right on cue Sally Donovan burst into the A&E, her eyes fuming and her hands already balled into fists. “The bloody dispatcher! I found out my partner was stabbed from the dispatcher!”

“Sally—” John jumped in, stepping in front of Sherlock.

“Don’t!” Sally warned, waving a finger at John. “I know you and I have our differences, but how could you not tell me about this?”

The worst part was Sherlock honestly didn’t have an answer: he had just forgotten. The past few hours had been a blur, and once the adrenaline rush past he sunk into his mind palace, trying to make sense of it all.

But that was no excuse. If Sally had not told him Greg was hurt like this he would have never forgiven her.

“I’m sorry,” he stated quietly.

For a long moment, Sally simply stared at him.

“You’re sorry?” She finally echoed, crossing her arms. “Jesus, you really must be traumatised. Just…what happened?”

“He can talk to you tomorrow,” John cut in. “It’s been a long night. We really need to get home.”

“Your home is a crime scene.”

His eyes shifted over to meet John’s, who had clearly not considered this. Not only had their flat turned into an active crime scene over that, but the media would be all over Baker Street by morning—especially if news got out that Sherlock thought the suspect was the same as their serial stabber.
“Can I see Greg?” Sally asked. Sherlock was a bit taken aback by how sincere she was. He tended to forget that Greg had other coworkers- other friends.

“He’s asleep,” John explained. “He needs to rest. His lung collapsed.”

Sally’s eyes widened, and Sherlock knew after that new piece of news she was not going to take ‘sit and wait’ as an answer.

“I’ll take her,” Sherlock said.

“Sherlock-”

“Come on, Donovan.”

Against his better judgment, Sherlock led the detective over to the admittance desk, where Sally used her credentials to gain them access to the rooms. Not only did Sally deserve the truth, but time was of the essence with this case and they couldn’t afford to lose time because Sally still didn’t know the truth about Greg’s sexuality. Greg was going to have to come out, but he deserved to be able to do it himself.

“What happened out there?” Sally demanded as soon as they were walking down the corridor alone.

“Greg and I stayed late to pour over the CCTV footage. He offered to give me a lift home, but he was pretty exhausted so I told him he should just stay over. We walked up to the doorway, and someone came up to us and attacked Greg.”

“Did you get a good look at him?” Sally asked.

He stopped for a moment, turning to her.

“He matched the description of our serial stabber,” Sherlock confessed.

Face contorting into confusion, Sally crossed her arms again let her eyes gaze down the corridor toward Greg’s room.

“But what would he want with Greg?” Sally demanded. “He’s hunting gay men, right? Unless he thought Greg was you?”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk. No, their stabber was far too clever for that. Their stabber had been following the progress of his own case: he knew Greg was working it, he had probably even watched the press conferences. He had known exactly who Greg was- and would therefore know exactly who Sherlock was as well.

Instead of replaying he led Sally to Greg’s room. He knocked just in case but wasn’t surprised when there was no answer. Gently, he pushed the door opened and stepped into the room. When Sally stepped in behind him he could see her visibly stiffen.

“Stable” was a rather misleading term. “Stable” implied Greg was doing better than before, when in reality he looked just the same. His mate was still pale, still stiff, and still appeared weak.

To his surprise, Greg stirred awake at the sound of them entering. His eyes twinkled at the sight of Sally, who he noticed swallowed nervously upon seeing her work partner in such poor condition. Greg smiled as he weakly greeted:
“Sally! You didn’t have to come here in the middle of the night.”

With a rather shy smile for her usual personality, Sally admitted:

“It’s nearly five in the morning. I wanted to see you.”

“Oh I’m fine.” Even as he said it Greg coughed and clutched at his chest. He let out a few raspy breaths before reaching out; Sally took his hand in hers.

“You know maybe John was right, you should rest,” Sally said.

She began to turn around, but Greg squeezed her hand and pulled her back to stop her.

“Sherlock brought you here-“ he stopped, taking in a deep breath. “He brought you here because you need to know: the person that stabbed me…he’s the same as our suspect.”

“If you should be resting, Boss, you need to rest,” Sally cut in. Sherlock wasn’t sure if she was more anxious over why he was acting this way or worried about his health.

A feeble smile crossed Greg’s face. His eyes closed briefly but when they reopened his looked Donovan straight in the eye and confessed.

“I’m gay, Sally.”

Sally stopped.

Her hand fell.

She stepped back.

Her hand raised to cover her mouth.

Greg looked hurt, like he feared everything he was afraid of was coming true. His partner didn’t approve of his sexuality; she wouldn’t want anything to do with him. And by god if Sally dared to say one negative thing to him about it-

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Sally demanded quietly, her voice wavering.

He wondered if he should give them their privacy, but at the same time he had a feeling Greg wanted the support.

“I…didn’t know how,” Greg replied weakly. “I was…afraid…afraid of…”

“The homophobic twats at the Yard,” Sherlock finished for him.

The DCI glared, but Sherlock knew that was the truth.

“I’m not-“ Sally began to protest. She hesitated, searching for her words, and ran her hand through her hair. “I’m not homophobic. You know that.”

“Some of the higher-ups are,” Sherlock said, on behalf of his friend. “Most of them are conservative, so conservative it skews their views of people. Not only higher-ups, but coworkers too- John and I have experienced that, you know that.”

Sally let out a shaky breath, caught.
“Anderson was…Phillip was…I didn’t agree with everything he believed.”

“It’s okay,” Greg said, reaching out for her hand again. “I know you don’t. I was just…afraid, in general. I’m different. I’m…not who you think.”

“You could have told me,” Sally insisted. She looked down at the ground for a moment and swayed on her feet; Sherlock considered for the first time that she, too, had been up all night. “But you had every right to come out when it felt right. Now this bastard…it’s like he’s trying to put you on the spot. He’s messing with you, Greg.”

“He targeted him,” Sherlock spoke up. “He probably followed us to Baker Street. It’s quite possible this entire killing spree has been about you, Greg.”

Eyes closing, Greg shifted in bed and let out a long sigh.

“The press is going to be all over this,” Sally muttered. “If they make the connection-”

“We can’t let them!” Greg attempted. He drew in a deep breath before turning to Sherlock with wide, fearful, eyes. “Myc…we’re not ready.”

Sally frowned.

“What’s he talking about?” Sally asked.

With twinkling eyes, Sherlock replied:

“Oh, it gets better.”


“Mycroft…Holmes?!”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin.

With a tired smile, Greg reached out for Sally’s hand again, and she accepted it.

“I trust you with this case,” Greg whispered. “But be careful.”

Nodding, Sally promised:

“I will. I’ll make you proud, Boss.”

“Good,” Greg murmured in response.

His eyes fluttered to a close, and without further warning the DCI fell back asleep. Silently, Sherlock and Sally slipped out of the room. As he walked down the hall he felt like he was moving through life in slow motion; the chaos of the night was truly beginning to wear down on him.

And the worst part was, as soon as the sun came up and the news got out things would only get worse.

“I’ll take it from here, yeah?” Sally said. “But I’ve gotta admit, Greg’s had you front and center on this case so far. It seems like you guys were really starting to get somewhere. You seemed to connect with the victims and well-”

“Now I’m one of them,” he muttered.
Sally didn’t reply, but he knew that’s what she meant. He had a new perspective on the case now, and though it was more personal than ever, that perspective would gain him more trust with the other victims.

“Normally we’d never let a victim lead a case like this but you’re…different,” Sally said, “and as much as I hate to admit it, Greg trusts you and you seem to be a good help to him. But you are a prime eye witness: we’ll need you in court.”

What Sherlock didn’t want to admit was he had no clue what their next step was in this case. Their killer was careful: he didn’t leave behind evidence, and he somehow made himself unseen even in public. If they didn’t find their suspect in CCTV and if they didn’t find any evidence, they would have to rely on catching him in the act. They could try to draw him out, but the suspect was already watching the case and the Yard closely.

He had never worked a serial case with such little evidence.

Evidence.

His eyes went wide as he thought back to a few hours ago, at Baker Street. The suspect had treated Greg differently: the other witnesses said the stabbing was quick, swift. But with Greg, the suspect pressed him up against the wall. He held onto his shirt. He spat at him.

“Get Greg’s clothes from the hospital,” Sherlock said. “The suspect, he pressed him against the outside of the flat and spit in his face. He said something to Greg- Greg would recognise his voice if he heard it.”

“He spat at him?” Sally shot. “Christ, if we catch this guy-“

“You’ll have to take a number,” Sherlock teased, “Mycroft, Greg, John and I are already in line to be the first to get to punch him in the face.”

“Oh I want to do more than punch him in the face.”

Sherlock was quite certain he might try to kill the guy if he ever met him face-to-face, but he held his tongue.

“You need security detail,” Sally said. “You and your brother. John as well. I’ll have a guard at Greg’s door twenty-four seven. You and John really should head home, or somewhere besides this hospital. Tomorrow’s going to be insane.”

Nodding, Sherlock explained:

“Mycroft offered us to stay with him and Greg’s parents.”

“I’ll get you a police escort.”

“We don’t need-“

“By the book, Sherlock,” Sally warned. “We have to do this by the book. An officer will escort you home, and that officer will sit outside your brother’s house until he needs to escort you in for a statement tomorrow. Someone else will be there to watch over your brother and Greg’s parents. Your sister is still in America, right?”

His eyes flashed to her; a pit of guilt settled in his stomach.
No one had phoned Laura.

She would kill them for that.

“Yeah,” Sherlock answered, trying to hide his guilt.

“You should give her a heads up about the investigation,” Sally said. “You should warn her it might get a bit…messy.”

He understood what she meant. As soon as the media caught wind that there was another stabbing of a gay man- and this time a copper- the case would take on a whole new life. And what Greg said before, about how not everyone would be so supportive of the gay victims of this case, was true.

“I’ll talk to her about it,” Sherlock promised.

“Good,” Sally nodded. Letting out a tired sigh, she ran her hands over face and shook her head, as though willing herself to stay away. “I’m going over to your flat to see what the team’s found so far. I don’t want to see you there. I can have someone pack you and John a bag, if you need it.”

“Thanks,” he muttered.

He had to admit, he was surprised at how full-on Sally was being with this case. She was confident, she was making all the right points. She was even listening to him. Sherlock knew she had been up for a promotion and obviously she had received it.

“Congratulations on the promotion, Sally,” Sherlock said, his lips peering up in a small smile. “You deserved to make DI.”

He held out her hand, and she shook it.

“Thanks,” she smiled back. “I never imagined my first case would be like this.”

“You’ll be brilliant,” Sherlock said. “Greg trusts you.”

“Yeah…” she trailed off, biting her lip for a long moment before continuing: “I just can’t believe he never told me. I know the guys mess around, and some of them really believe in messed up things, but he knows he can trust me.”

“If it makes you feel any better, they didn’t tell me they were together for over two years into their relationship.”

Sally let out a bark of laughter.

“How long have they been together?!”

Sherlock’s voice fell as he murmured: “Almost three years.”

“Three…?! Three years?!”

He decided now wasn’t the time to tell her they were applying for a civil partnership.

“I’m going to have to slap him once he’s better,” Sally said, shaking her head. “Get some sleep, Holmes. I’ll ring you in the morning. I’ll see you then.”

As he watched her disappear down the hall he took out his mobile, but he waited until she was far out of earshot to phone his sister. It took four rings, but at last she answered. Her voice was groggy;
he had clearly woken her up.

“Sherlock?” Laura asked. “What’s wrong? It’s like…it’s like after four in the morning there.”

“Yeah,” Sherlock sighed. “Sorry I woke you. I just wanted to let you know…Greg’s in the hospital. He was stabbed.”

“Oh my god!” There was a sound of items being knocked around, and he imagined Laura trying to jump out of bed and feel her way out of her bedroom in the dark. “What happened? Is he alright? I can get on the next flight to London!”

“No!” Sherlock insisted. “He’s okay now. He was stabbed in the chest outside Baker Street. His lung collapsed and he lost a lot of blood, but he’s stable now. He’s fine. You don’t need to rush over here– he’ll probably be out of hospital in a couple of days. We’ll see you in a couple of weeks anyway. But I wanted to warn you…we’ve been working on this case, involving a serial stabber who has been targeting gay men. Two of the victims died. Greg was the third.”

“Oh my god,” Laura breathed. There was a long pause until she finally spat: “Are you saying…are you saying he was targeted because of his sexuality?”

“Yes.”

“Christ…fucking hell.”

He wasn’t sure he had ever heard his sister swear before.

“There’s going to be a media storm coming for us tomorrow,” Sherlock said. “Greg’s kept his sexuality hidden, but it will come out with this case. I wanted to let you know not just because to let you know he was hurt, but to warn you…”

“I doubt there will be a hundred reporters outside my door tomorrow,” Laura said. “But thanks. I’ll keep Dan home from school and warn Jason not to talk to anyone.”

“That sounds like a good idea. But yes, I think you will be fine as well. Just…don’t follow the case too closely. A lot of stuff is going to be said about Greg, maybe about me– who knows, maybe even Mycroft if it gets that far. Almost none of that will be true.”

“Of course,” Laura said. She paused again, this time he could tell because she was nervous about what she wanted to ask. “Do you have any leads? What’s the next step?”

Letting out a sigh, Sherlock ran his hand through his curls.

“I’m not sure,” he confessed. “We might be able to get some DNA off of Greg’s clothing. Sally Donovan is taking over the case, she’s a colleague of Greg’s. She usually works under him.”

“Well, let me know if anything comes up,” Laura said. “How’s Mycroft holding up?”

“He’s being Mycroft,” Sherlock admitted. “He’s closing himself off. Greg’s parents are here.”

“Oh?” Laura said. “What are they like?”

With a smirk, Sherlock replied:

“A lot like Mycroft, actually. They’re pretty quiet. I don’t think they know what to think. They’re staying with Mycroft tonight. In fact, John and I are about to head over to stay with them. Our flat is a crime scene, so I suppose we’ll be staying there for a few days.”
“Probably a good choice,” Laura said. “Try to get some rest, okay? Call me whenever you need to. Tell Mycroft to do the same. I want to talk to him in the morning, or whenever he’s ready. Tell him I’m thinking of him- and tell Greg that too.”

“Of course,” Sherlock whispered.

“I love you.”

“Yeah,” he breathed.

As they said their goodbyes and he hung up, he couldn’t help but to selfishly wish that she was here with him. He was going to have to be the strong one in the family right now- he was going to have to let Mycroft lean on his shoulders for a change.

Sherlock wandered back into the waiting room, where John was helping Mr and Mrs Lestrade prepare to leave.

“Ready?” John asked as Sherlock approached him. The consulting detective smiled, and John squeezed his arm. “Sally seemed rather…at ease when she left. So she knows now?”

“Yeah,” Sherlock said. He stole a glance to his brother, who was mindlessly gazing at his mobile. Mycroft had been scrolling through news for the past few hours, trying to pretend as though he were keeping himself busy but in reality Sherlock could see he had only searched through two or three entire stories in that time. If they weren’t careful his brother was about to be thrown into the spotlight in ways they never could have predicted. In ways he didn’t deserve. Yes, he had to be there for him- he had to protect them. “She’s going to ring us in the morning for us to come in and do a statement.”

“Sure,” John offered. He held up Sherlock’s coat, which he reluctantly accepted. He really wasn’t ready to leave; he knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep, and neither would his brother. “Let’s get you out of here.”

His brother didn’t say anything as he led them outside, where a taxi was to be waiting to take them all home. Donovan’s police escort was supposed to be there as well.

But when they exited the hospital through the sliding doors they were instead met with dozens of flashing lights and even more reporters. Questions were shouted at them from all angles. Television cameras were rolling.

And so it began.

Chapter End Notes

Oh my god, I'm SO sorry about the long wait! I honestly hadn't realised it had been so long since I updated!! But thanks so much, as always, to everyone who is still reading this and for all of your feedback! I would love to hear your opinions on this case, and what you think of Sherlock's emotions and the re-introduction of Sally. I know this chapter was a little dialogue-heavy, but I felt that was necessary to keep this scene flowing.
When they arrived at the Yard the next morning they were met with yet another sea of press, and Sherlock drew a deep breath as he stepped out of the car. Placing a hand on the small of John’s back, he kept his head down as they followed the officer into the Yard.

Once they got up to the floor of Greg’s department, they were met with silence.

Everyone was staring at him.

He was grateful when Donovan immediately appeared in front of them, arms crossed and her straight-faced.

“Good, you’re here,” she announced. “John I’m taking your statement. Sherlock, Dimmock’s taking yours.”

Usually Sherlock groaned at any mention of Dimmock, but this time he simply nodded and looked over to where Dimmock was waiting for him by his desk.

“See you back here in a few,” John told him quietly.

Sherlock didn’t reply- or even look at him- as they parted ways.

“Hey,” Dimmock greeted awkwardly as he led him into an interrogation room. The consulting detective only nodded. “How’s Greg doing?”

He was almost surprised Dimmock asked. Besides Sally he had no texts, calls, or even emails from anyone at the Yard asking about their colleague.

“He’s stable,” Sherlock replied stiffly. “He shouldn’t have to have any more surgery, and he should be moving out of the ICU soon.”

Dimmock paled, as though he really hadn’t considered in detail what Greg was going through.

“Good,” the detective said. They both sat down, neither seeming to know where to take this. He and Dimmock still hadn’t had a lot of experience working with each other, but he wasn’t exactly in the mood to mess with his head right now. “I just need a simple statement from you. You don’t have to go into too much detail- I know this is still all very…fresh, for you. Now, you told Donovan you may have access to CCTV footage of your flat?”

Sherlock nodded and handed Dimmock a disk his brother had given him. Mycroft was easily able to hack into the CCTV cameras that still lined Baker Street. There was clear footage of the attack- including several shots of the attacker. The angles were perfect…almost as though Mycroft had positioned the cameras in anticipation of such an attack one day happening at Baker Street.

“Excellent,” Dimmock muttered. “You ready?”

He nodded once again, and Dimmock began the recorder.

“Tell me what happened after you left the Yard,” Dimmock instructed.
For what felt like the dozenth time he explained what happened. Dimmock never once interrupted except to ask additional questions; he made no judgments about Sherlock’s actions or choices. Even when Sherlock admitted he attempted to go after the suspect Dimmock’s brow merely furrowed but still he stayed silence. When Sherlock was finished Dimmock simply turned off the recorder and stood up, buttoning up his suit jacket.

“Thank you for coming,” Dimmock announced. “I’ll take a look at the security footage. With any luck we’ll be able to make out footage clear enough to put a shot of it on the news, and hopefully that will bring in some leads. I hope you understand that I have to ask you to sit this case out. I know how much you care about Lestrade, but you are a major witness in this case and you will have to testify in court. We can’t have you testifying on behalf of the victim and making a case against the suspect.”

“I know,” Sherlock said quietly. “But if you need anything…unofficially…ring me.”

Dimmock offered a grim smile, and Sherlock had a feeling the detective secretly- desperately-wished he could have his help on the case.

“If you think of anything, anything else we’d need to know about the case, phone me,” Dimmock said. Stuffing his hands in his pockets, he made for the door but then paused. “I just…I can’t believe someone would want to hurt Greg. Why does it matter that he’s gay? He’s a good guy. He doesn’t deserve this.”

“No,” Sherlock muttered, placing a hand on Dimmock’s shoulder as he left. “He doesn’t deserve this. You’re a good copper, Dimmock. Make Greg proud.”

He could feel the detective’s eyes on him as he walked out and he met John in the corridor.

“You okay?” John asked.

He simply looked John dead in the eye, and his partner nodded, understanding. In compliance with their orders to not interfere with the case they both kept quiet until they reached the main street and began to head toward the tube.

“How did it go with Donovan?” Sherlock asked.

John shrugged.

“I was given strict orders to make sure you don’t interfere with the case,” he announced.

The corners of Sherlock’s lips perked up into a wicked grin.

“So…back to Mycroft’s to discuss the case?” He asked.

“Definitely.”

Suddenly a person jogging bumped into him, knocking the wind out of him and making his heart stop. The man reached out, obviously just to make sure Sherlock was okay, but Sherlock was too busy flashing back to the attack at Baker Street. He felt like the world was closing in on him, like everyone was far too close. Everything felt cold and dark.

“Are you okay?” The jogger asked. His voice sounded a bit echo-y. John was looking at him with concern, like he could tell he was having some kind of panic attack.

“Sherlock, are you okay?” John asked, placing a hand on his shoulder.
Sherlock jumped at the touch, but it did bring him back to reality.

“Yeah,” Sherlock lied. The thought of taking the tube was suddenly too claustrophobic to him. The jogger left, and John lowered his arm. “Can we take a cab instead? I’ll pay?”

“You’ll pay?” John teased. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

He didn’t reply. Why did he have to go through this anxiety every time a case went back? How was it that he was losing control of his mind this easily?

“You know we haven’t really talked about you,” John said quietly. He took Sherlock’s hand and gently squeezed it. “If you need to, you know I’m here.”

“It was…just a bit of a panic attack,” he admitted. “I’m okay.”

“Claustrophobia is perfectly normal after experiencing a trauma,” John said. “Let’s get back to your brother’s. We can go over the case alone, just you and me, okay?”

“Okay,” he nodded.

Mycroft had returned to the hospital with Mr and Mrs Lestrade so they did indeed have the Holmes estate to themselves. They settled into the formal living room with tea and John’s laptop so he could obsess over his copy the CCTV footage.

“You’ve watched this dozens of times,” John sighed. “You’re torturing yourself. You’re not just going to stumble upon the man in London. What we need is a way to track him down.”

“Oh really, I didn’t realise that,” Sherlock muttered. He knew the comment was a bit cold, but he couldn’t help it. He just felt so useless. “If this case is about Greg the suspect has to have a history with him. If only we had a name.”

“Not necessarily,” John said abruptly. “His other victims seemed to be chosen at random. But what if he stalks them? What if he finds them somewhere? If Greg is a target the suspect had to find out he’s gay somehow, and that wouldn’t have been through any case.”

Sherlock leaned back against the sofa, and John placed an arm around his shoulders.

“Do you think Greg and your brother go out?” John asked. “Like…on dates?”

He scrunched his nose up. They had witnessed how close his brother and Greg were in America, and he knew his brother was capable of having, well, fun. Surely they went out to dinner every now and then, but somehow he just couldn’t imagine Greg and Mycroft gallivanting around town on dates.

“I suppose,” he sighed. “We should talk to Mycroft when he gets back.”

“Yeah.”

John let out a tired sigh himself and leaned over so his head rested on Sherlock’s shoulder. He held his fiancé close; Sherlock could see how tired John was and felt badly that this case was taking so much of a toll on him.

“Why don’t you go sleep?” Sherlock suggested, kissing the top of John’s head. “I’ll talk to Mycroft. He should be getting home soon.”
“Are you sure?” John was practically slurring his words even as he mumbled his reply.

“If you don’t go to bed you’re just going to fall asleep on top of me on the sofa,” Sherlock teased.

Grinning, John shot:

“Actually, that sounds like a great idea.”

The two of them shifted so they lay side by side. He ran his hand through John’s hair and kissed the top of his head.

“Your hair’s getting too long,” Sherlock teased. “Maybe I can give you a trim.”

“You’re not coming anywhere near my hair with scissors,” John laughed. “Mrs Hudson, maybe.”

“You’d let Mrs Hudson cut your hair before me?” Sherlock whined.

John only smiled and let his eyes fall to a close.

“Love you,” Sherlock muttered.

His fiancé only drew Sherlock’s arms closer to his chest, and only with John by his side was he able to allow himself to get some rest.

He woke to a sudden crash, glass against a floor. Sherlock jumped, his eyes flying open. It took him a moment to remember that he was at his brother’s house, and when he looked down and found John sound to sleep beside him it all came back to him: Greg, the attack, the hospital, the case. There was a hiss from the kitchen that undoubtedly came from Mycroft, and Sherlock carefully got up so he didn’t wake John and rushed into the kitchen. His brother was holding a blood-covered towel against his hand. Fragments of a glass were scattered across the floor.


“Are you trying to end up in hospital with Greg?” Sherlock smirked as he headed over to the pantry and grabbed a broom to sweep up the broken glass. “How is he?”

“He’s exhausted,” Mycroft admitted, wincing as he pressed the towel more tightly around his hand. “I think it’s finally dawning on him just what happened. He was jumpy- anytime someone opened the door or there was a sudden noise he was obviously shaken.”

He remembered how jumpy John was when he first moved into the Baker Street. Clearly still traumatised from war, for the first couple of months John would jump when doors slammed and flinched when ambulances with blaring sirens rushed by on the street.

“He should talk to John,” he suggested, “he went through something similar when he got home from war.”

“You’ve been through something similar too,” Mycroft pointed out, stealing a glance toward him. “I do think it’s important to remind Greg he’s not alone. You know him: he doesn’t like to open up about himself too much.”

“Yeah, you two have that in common,” he grinned. “How did you hurt your hand?”

Sighing, Mycroft took a peak at his wound and winced when he saw how much it was still
bleeding.

“I sat the glass down to hard,” Mycroft confessed. “Sorry, I haven’t actually slept in the past couple of days. I thought I’d come home and try but I haven’t actually eaten either.”

“Sit,” Sherlock ordered, pointing at a barstool at the kitchen island. “I’ll make breakfast, and then you are to sleep.”

His brother smirked.

“Look at you, ordering me around for a change.”

Sherlock had to admit, he rather enjoyed telling Mycroft what he needed to do- though he knew truthfully he should be listening to his own advice as well. He began to crack open a few eggs, making enough for himself and John too. He threw some bread in the toaster but turned his nose up at the packaging when he saw what type it was.

“What is this stuff?” He shot. “Is this even bread?”

“It’s vegan,” Mycroft muttered. Sherlock couldn’t help but to let out a laugh and Mycroft gritted his teeth. “We ate so poorly on our holiday that Greg and I both decided we should start eating better. Also…Greg’s cholesterol was a bit high when they did his blood test. Then he made me get one and mine was high too, so we’re finally going on a diet together- and please, no comments about my weight.”

He decided to have mercy and hold his tongue.

“Any progress on the case?” Mycroft asked.

For a long moment Sherlock stared down at the stove and concentrated on the scrambled eggs. Just as the Yard thought the case was too close to home for him to be involved, he wanted to tread carefully when it came to involving Mycroft. But John was right- they had to talk to him.

“John and I were talking,” Sherlock began reluctantly, “and we were thinking: only our family and Greg’s family know about his sexuality. There had to be a way our suspect found out. Have you two been out anywhere recently, where other people might have seen you?”

He could have sworn Mycroft’s cheeks reddened a bit.

“We try to stay as private as possible,” Mycroft replied, “but from time to time I do give into Greg’s yearning for…well…a ‘guy’s night out’.”

Back turned to Mycroft, Sherlock smirked.

“And when was your last ‘guy’s night out?” He asked.

His brother thought for a moment. Sherlock shoveled the eggs out of the skillet and began dishing them out onto plates.

“A week ago we went to this new pub Greg kept saying he wanted to try out,” his brother finally admitted. “It was called The Red Tavern.”

That was in the same district as the victims were in. Frowning, Sherlock wondered if maybe they were looking too hard at this case. All of the victims were in the same district- save for Greg, who had previously been in the area only days before. Their first thought had been it must be someone
who was familiar with the area, who went out a lot, who people watched.

But what if…

“An employee!” Sherlock announced, his eyes widening. Mycroft’s own eyes narrowed as he bit into his eggs, but he didn’t interrupt. “We’re looking for someone who works in that district-probably in that very pub. They would know the area well enough to be able to escape so quickly. They would have a prime spot for picking out and stalking their victim. We need to go over the footage again, and you need to think. Think back to your date night.”

“It seems like so long ago,” Mycroft confessed. “So much has happened since then.”

“Don’t give me that,” Sherlock protested. “You’re better than that. Come on, close your eyes and take yourself back to that pub. What do you remember?”

Letting out a sigh, Mycroft closed his eyes and began:

“The horrid smell. I think the pub was a bit sleazier than Greg thought. Everyone was already drunk when we got there at half eight. The crowd was younger: I think Greg and I both felt a bit out of place there. There was a table of university students sitting behind us playing cards. There was an older gentleman at the bar watching television. There was a younger couple clearly on their first date at the table beside us.”

“What about the staff?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft’s eyebrows furrowed. He paused for a long moment before finally replying:

“Our waiter was far too old to be our suspect,” Mycroft said. “The bartender was even older.”

“And the rest of the staff?”

His brother sighed.

“I really don’t remember him.”

“Mycroft!” He scolded.

“Fine!” His brother messaged his temples as he continued: “There was a busboy cleaning tables, but he had red hair and a beard so he doesn’t fit the description. A second waiter was waiting the back tables. I crossed him on the way to the loo- which was horrendously filthy, by the way- and I noticed he smelled a bit…smoky.”

His brother’s eyes flew open, wide with adrenaline.

“Smoke!” Mycroft announced. “Greg told me he specifically remembered that the suspect smelled smoky. And the waiter fits the description. We need to pull the CCTV footage again. Get the Yard to bring in the waiter for questioning.”

“Already on it.”

He phoned Dimmock, who agreed to bring in the waiter and was already in the process of releasing screenshots of the footage to the news.

“Don’t!” Sherlock warned when he heard. “We don’t want to scare him off. When you bring him in for questioning don’t suggest he’s the suspect, just tell him you’re talking to people who were in the area that night.”
Even though Dimmock agreed he thought it would be best if he got down to the Yard to supervise. Although he couldn’t be on the case, he could at least help Dimmock figure out what to ask and perhaps even stay out in the hall and listen in.

“I’m going to go down the Yard,” Sherlock announced. “Have John look at your hand when he wakes up.”

He made to leave but stopped when he noticed how pale-faced and lost Mycroft looked. His brother was blaming himself, he realised. There were probably a hundred thoughts going through his head about how he should have known: there was surely something he missed, something he should have noticed about the waiter.

“There’s nothing you could have done,” Sherlock said, taking a seat at the table. “You couldn’t have known. This isn’t your fault, Myc. Greg doesn’t blame you, you know that.”

“He blames himself,” Mycroft admitted quietly. “He thinks if he had only solved the case sooner, after the first victim, we wouldn’t be here. He keeps going over things he missed. If I tell him this-if he finds out he was this close to the suspect before the case- he’ll never forgive himself.”

Reaching out, he carefully undid the towel that was wrapped around his brother’s hand and winced when he saw how bloodied it still was.

“Disinfect that,” he instructed. “If John wants to do stitches, let him. Trust me, don’t fight it. Eat the rest of those eggs, and sleep- I mean it.”

His brother rolled his eyes.

“‘Yes mum.”

Chapter End Notes

I've been royally failing at keeping up with this story this year! Things have gotten super crazy at work- and it's about to be even worse. And life has just been bleh. It's a long story, but this year has really sucked so far :( I WANT to be able to write a lot more, but to be honest I haven't had the energy to lately. I feel so bad to neglect this story! But there are still places I want to take this fic. I definitely want to at least get it to a point where there's an actual ending in closure. I'm not going to leave you guys hanging!

Thanks so much for continuing to leave kudos and feedback! I love hearing from you guys, and I think it's really awesome you've stuck with this story for so long. You guys are the reason I keep writing! And you're the reason I want to make sure the climax of the story is done right :)

PS: I had a dream that I was finishing the story and decided the perfect idea for an ending would be to have John and Sherlock be in a plane crash and end up on an island- the Lost island! LOL. In my dream that was just the PERFECT ending and there was going to be a sequel and everything! I promise I won't jump the shark like that, but I just want to share!
John felt oddly at ease when he woke from his nap, but when he noticed he was in Mycroft’s living room and not at Baker Street everyone came rushing back to him. A pit fell in his stomach at the thought of Greg lying in hospital; his mouth was dry. He grunted as he got to his feet to search the house for Sherlock’s whereabouts. His first room to search was the kitchen, where instead of his brother he found Mycroft, who was trying to wrap gauze around his hand.

“Here, let me,” John announced. The eldest Holmes sibling sighed upon hearing his voice. Clearly he had hoped that somehow the doctor wouldn’t discover his injury. “What happened?”

“For god’s sake, I sat a glass down too hard,” he shot. “I’ve already had Sherlock fretting over me.”

“Well, he cares about you,” John pointed out, “and I’m a doctor, so if it makes you feel any better it wouldn’t matter who you were I’m always concerned when someone is trying to wrap their own bloody hand.”

Mycroft smirked, but he didn’t protest when John took the gauze from him.

“Did you disinfect it?” He asked.

“Of course.”

He frowned when he saw just how deep the wound was, and he reluctantly admitted the words he knew Mycroft dreaded hearing:

“You’ll need stitches. I have a kit in our guest bathroom, I’ll grab it.”

“You keep a doctor’s kit here?” Mycroft snorted.

“You never know when it’ll come in handy,” John said with a small smile as he stood.

He quickly stole away to the guest bedroom, which was truthfully beginning to feel like a second home with as much time as he and Sherlock had spent there. His heart sank when he saw the room was empty, meaning Sherlock had most likely left the house. Grabbing the kit, he quickly headed back to the kitchen, selfishly feeling a bit grateful to have something to do, something that made him feel useful.

“Have you ever had stitches before?” John asked as he sat back down at the kitchen table.

He also selfishly found himself curious about Mycroft’s medical history. Curiosity was a trait he had inherited ever since medical: not only did he wonder about strangers’ medical histories but his friends as well. He still knew astonishingly little about Mycroft, but now that they were practically family he thought he deserved some information about him.

“A few times,” Mycroft confessed. “There were a few…work-related instances. And when I was nine I scratched my arm up pretty badly falling off a horse.”

“You rode horses?” John asked. He carefully began his work.
Mycroft tensed at first, but as they continued talking he seemed to be more at ease.

“Mummy took me horseback riding quite often when I was a child,” Mycroft explained. “Sherlock was always afraid of the horses, but I loved them. Riding horses made me feel in control. I liked being able to do something other people were afraid of.”

“And Sherlock was afraid of them?” John asked with a smirk, reminding himself to file that under ‘things to tease Sherlock about’.

“Oh yes, he’s never been a fan of animals,” Mycroft said, “except Redbeard, his dog. Mummy got him the puppy for Christmas. He and that dog were inseparable.”

John frowned.

“He’s never told me about any dog.”

There was a distant, sorrowful, look in Mycroft’s eye, one that made John think he didn’t mean to let the tip about the dog slip.

“He was Sherlock’s best friend,” Mycroft admitted quietly. “Sherlock got him when he was five, but the dog he…he ran away when Sherlock was eight. He loved that dog so much, and it took him years to accept what happened. For the longest time Sherlock searched for Redbeard, determined he had just slipped away somewhere on the estate or to a nearby town. It was rather sweet, to be honest, how much he cared and how much he searched for that dog. It was his first case…and his first unsolved case.”

A smile slipped across his face: John couldn’t help it. He would give anything to know little Sherlock, so care-free, so curious, so in desperate need of a friend. He thought he and little Sherlock would have made pretty good friends when they were young. John had been pretty curious as well as a child, always interested in science. He played “doctor” with his sister a lot and learned as much as he could about biology and space.

“Poor eight-year old Sherlock,” he sighed. He paused for a long moment; it really didn’t seem to be appropriate to pry into Mycroft’s history when he knew the elder Holmes’ mind was only on one thing, and that was Greg. “How is Greg?”

Mycroft hissed as John pulled the stitches through perhaps a bit too roughly, but he didn’t tell him to stop.

“He’s stable,” Mycroft replied. “He’s been moved to a regular room, and they’re going to monitor him for at least a couple of days before discharging him. He looked…well, I suppose he looked as good as he could when I saw him this morning.”

“That’s good,” John said, hoping to encourage him. He knew people looked to doctors for encouragement, even if said doctor wasn’t even working on that case. “He’s really strong, and it seems like he’d doing really well for what he’s been through.”

“His blood pressure is normalizing,” Mycroft added, “and he hasn’t had a fever again. To be honest though, I’m worried how he will cope with what happened once he’s discharged. He’s been… jumpy. I’ve been through this, with Sherlock and so did Greg, but he’s never experienced anything like this personally.”

PTSD.

Of course.
Greg had been there for all of them at some point when it came to a personal trauma, but he had never been through anything like this himself. And of course, Greg being Greg and almost as bad as Sherlock and Mycroft when it came to not accepting help for anything, he would most definitely pretend like everything was okay.

“It will be a shock to him, for a while,” John told him. “It might take him a bit to realise the scope of what happened to him. He might be in denial that anything is wrong or try to hide that he’s in pain. I’ve been through that with Sherlock, too…it’s hard because you can’t force them to talk. You just have to be there, for whenever they’re ready.”

Mycroft’s wound was rather small, and it didn’t take long for John to finish stitching him up.

“Thanks,” Mycroft offered, admiring his hand.

He noticed a half-eaten plate of eggs on the table and a skillet of eggs on the stove. Judging by Mycroft’s lack of interest in the food and how much had been cooked, he imagined Sherlock had woken up, saw the state his brother was in and cooked breakfast for the three of them. He must have gotten some kind of call from the Yard and left, forgetting the uneaten food.

“Sherlock thinks he has a lead,” Mycroft explained. “He thinks the suspect might be someone who saw me and Gregory out at dinner one night. I realised there was one man, working in a restaurant Gregory and I were at about a week ago. He fits the description.”

Raising his eyebrows, John silently rewarded himself for thinking of an idea that led to a lead.

“Well,” he announced. “Hopefully something will come out of that.”

Mycroft nodded.

“I hope so.”

But nothing came out of the lead. When Dimmock and his crew tried to seek out the potential suspect, they discovered the man’s name was Robert Arnold- and he had quit his job a few days ago. Robert’s flat was emptied out, his family and friends hadn’t heard from him in a week, and the trail went cold. Despite the manhunt that was now out for him, the police continued having no luck as the weeks went by. Greg left the hospital and settled back in at home; his parents went back home and before they knew it Laura was arriving with her family for their big move.

The morning Laura’s family was due to fly into London John could tell Sherlock was on edge. When John woke up he found the bed empty. Grabbing his dressing gown, he picked up a towel from the floor and headed off to take a shower. He emerged afterward in the kitchen, rubbing his hair dry, but stopped at the sight of Sherlock sitting at their table and gazing into his microscope. A smile slipped across John’s face.

“Now there’s a sight I haven’t seen in some time,” John commented. Sherlock merely glanced up at him but didn’t offer any kind of response. While his fiancé was dressed, he didn’t look like he had any perception of what was going on today. “You do remember that today is the day your sister is moving to the country, right?”

“Of course I do.”

The consulting detective merely adjusted the microscope and continued taking notes. As he came
around behind Sherlock and peered over his stomach to see what his partner was examining, his stomach churned when he saw it was a drop of blood.

“What are you studying?” He asked, uncertain if he truly wanted to know the answer.

“It’s a blood sample taken from the coat Greg was wearing the night of the attack.”

His lover had a cold, crisp, tone to his voice, as though he knew John would disapprove and he was just daring him to do so. Swallowing nervously, John tried to choose his words carefully before freaking out.

“How did you get that?” He asked calmly.

*I thought you agreed to stay away from the case!* Is what he wanted to say, but he knew it would be useless to start an argument.

“I have my ways,” Sherlock replied. Maybe he thought he was being cute, but the comment just infuriated John even more. The doctor drew in a deep breath, finding it harder by the moment to keep calm. “Don’t worry: I didn’t nick it from evidence, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“Just please, remember there will eventually be a trial, and we can’t risk tampering with evidence and causing a mistrial,” John muttered.

He quietly proceeded to make what had become his usual breakfast: simple beans on (vegan) toast.

“I don’t see how you eat that crap every morning,” Sherlock shot. “It’s not even real bread.”

John snorted. While staying with Mycroft he had surprisingly come to like the bread the eldest Holmes sibling and Greg had been eating, and he also secretly knew he really needed to get serious about his own eating habits. He hadn’t told Sherlock, but he had a blood test done. His cholesterol was higher than he would have liked it to be, along with his blood sugar. Even though neither was at dangerous levels, he knew it wouldn’t take long for those numbers to increase to levels that could take a serious effect on his health.

“This bread is extremely real! It’s much more *real* than the processed stuff we’ve been eating,” John challenged.

He knew he had to be careful about insulting Sherlock’s eating habits, as most days he was happy if his fiancé ate three complete meals. He hated he had to compromise like that- Sherlock’s diet was full of far too much salt, carbs, and fat.

And yet somehow, the younger man continued to never gain a single stone. Not a *single* one.

“I can’t believe they suckered you into this diet,” Sherlock muttered. “Laura will be in on it too, just watch.”

John let out a chuckle.

*Diet* isn’t an evil word. Really what we’re doing is just a lifestyle change.”

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock stood up and began to clean up his experiment. He leaned over and planted a kiss to John’s forehead.

“Yeah, well I’ll always love you despite any amount of stones you gain or how high your cholesterol is.”
He winked as he carried his microscope back to the bedroom, and John felt his cheeks reddening with embarrassment at being called out.

But he couldn’t let Sherlock get away that easily. Clearly something was bothering him; he had been rather quiet the past couple of days. There seemed to be this sense of dread that filled the flat that John didn’t quite understand, given how excited Sherlock had previously been about his family moving.

Something had changed.

“Hey Sherlock?” He called. His fiancé stopped for a long moment before finally turning toward him, reluctant and yet with a longing expression, like he secretly wished someone could understand what he was going through. John walked toward him, placing a hand on his arm. “Are you okay? You’ve been a bit off these past few days. I thought you were excited about your family moving?”

Sherlock swallowed hard and nodded.

“I am excited,” he said quietly. “It’s just this case. There’s a murderer out there, a murderer who attacked Greg that we’ve gotten no closer to finding. I wanted to have solved this by now. I didn’t want my family- I didn’t want Dan- moving here when all of this was still up in the air. It’s dangerous. And it just makes me think…our lives are pretty dangerous. We’ll have this five year old running around and a new baby soon and…I just don’t want anything to happen to them.”

A sympathetic, sad, smile crossed John’s face and he squeezed Sherlock’s arm.

“You know we’re all going to do everything in our power to keep them safe,” John said. “They’ll still be able to keep a low profile here. We’ll just have to be a bit more careful about how we go after cases. You know you’d worry about them no matter where they’d live. But we’ll all be there for them.”

“I know,” Sherlock nodded. “I would just feel better if we had found the murderer by now.”

John knew there wouldn’t be anything he could say that would put his fiancé to ease, so he simply leaned up to kiss him gently on the lips.

“We’ll leave in an hour, yeah?” John said.

Sherlock simply nodded once again.

Thankfully Sherlock was back to his usual self by the time they met Mycroft and Greg at the airport. It was the first time either of them had seen Greg out in public, walking around again, and John had to admit the DCI looked pretty good considering what he had been through. He walked with a bit of a limp but nonetheless there was a smile on his face. Even Mycroft looked rather content, considering his usual persona when he was out in public. John couldn’t help but to smirk: he knew both Holmes brothers were more excited than they admitted about having their sister moving into town.

“Hey,” Sherlock announced, sticking out a hand to shake hands with Greg. “How are you doing?”

Greg shrugged.

“I’m going stir crazy more than anything,” he admitted. “Thank god I’m allowed back on cases next week. I couldn’t take another day of doing paperwork. I’m still a bit sore, of course, but I have
a feeling that will linger awhile.”

“It does,” John replied.

If he were being completely honest, he could admit that he still randomly felt twinges in the shoulder he was shot in. And his leg...his leg still bothered him more than he would ever admit to Sherlock. If he had to walk for long periods of time or run around town— or even just take long trips at the supermarket— his leg would ache fiercely.

“What’s the status of their flight?” Mycroft asked Sherlock.

Sherlock checked his mobile, where he had been obsessively tracking his sister’s flight since it took off from New York last night.

“They landed a little while ago,” Sherlock announced. “They must be getting their bags.”

“I can’t imagine how nervous they must be,” Greg said, shaking his head.

“What’s their first step?” John asked.

“They’ll be staying with us for a few weeks while they get their house ready,” Mycroft announced. “All of their things are being forwarded by freight so they’ll only have a few bags with them.”

“I thought it would be good to show them around town again,” Greg chimed in. “Last time they only saw the city as tourists.”

“Learning the tube system alone will be a nightmare for them,” Sherlock commented with a smirk.

Rolling his eyes, Mycroft went on:

“Dan starts school on Monday, so they only have a few days to get acclimated. We need to be supportive of them. They’re bound to have many questions that will seem a silly, but—“

“We know, Mycroft,” Sherlock muttered.

Both Sherlock and Mycroft’s mobiles buzzed at the same time, and from their way their eyes lit up John knew what the text read.

“They’re here,” Sherlock announced, clearly far more excited than he showed. “She says they just got their bags and they should be right around the—“

“Uncle Sherlock!” Despite the crowd, Dan’s voice echoed brightly. A smile crossed Sherlock’s face as his nephew ran toward him.

“He called my name,” Sherlock teased to his brother. “I told you I’m the favorite uncle.”

Mycroft rolled his eyes, but he said nothing as Dan jumped into Sherlock’s arms, dropping his rucksack and duffle onto the ground.

“Hey, you said my name right!” Sherlock pointed out.

“I’ve been practising speech!” Dan announced proudly, “and I can read!”

“Really?” Mycroft commented, his eyes narrowing. John could imagine Mycroft had high expectations for his nephew, considering how smart both he and Sherlock were.
“I can read *Cat in the Hat!*” Dan explained.

John snorted; he could also imagine that wasn’t what Mycroft was thinking.

“Well that’s very impressive,” Sherlock said, hugging his nephew one last time before letting him go so he could hug Mycroft too.

Dan’s parents approached them next, both lugging rucksacks and suitcases large enough that their son could probably hide inside them. They both looked utterly exhausted, but a bright smile crossed Laura’s face as soon as she saw her brothers.

“Here, let me give you a hand,” John said, taking a rucksack from Laura.

“Oh thank god,” Laura said, throwing her arms around Sherlock. “That flight was horrible. I thought we’d never make it.”

“She’s been nauseas,” Jason explained to John.

Now that he took another look at Laura, John could tell she had gained more weight as she was further into her pregnancy.

“I think it was more motion sickness than pregnancy sickness,” Laura sighed. “I haven’t slept in two days.”

“Woah, that’s…not good,” John said.

“Yes, you’re coming straight home with us and going to bed,” Mycroft announced.

“That sounds like a good idea,” Jason agreed.

“I wanna go back to the big eye!” Dan exclaimed, jumping up and down.

“Maybe another time, sweetie,” his mum replied, “but for now you need a nap. And we need a ride. What’s the best way to get back to your place, Mycroft?”

A smile- an actual smile- crossed Mycroft’s face as he placed a hand on Dan’s shoulder.

“Actually I thought a family lunch would be good, if you all are hungry,” Mycroft said. “It’s on me.”

John couldn’t help but to notice that Greg visibly tensed at the idea. His face fell; he looked crestfallen, like he wished Mycroft would have discussed this with him before.

“Actually, Myc, I’m pretty tired,” Greg said. “You can take my car. I’ll catch a cab home.”

Confused, Mycroft frowned as Greg placed a hand on his shoulder and squeezed it.

“Are you sure?” Mycroft asked quietly, clearly concerned his partner was hiding something.

But John thought he understood Greg’s hesitation. After going through a trauma like he did being in a public place could be extremely nerve-wrecking. Even just being in this airport probably had him on edge. Greg looked uncomfortable with his lie, and John thought maybe it would help to have someone go with him, someone he could talk to- someone who would understand.

“Actually, I’m pretty tired too,” John lied. Noticing Sherlock was eyeing him suspiciously, he feigned a yawn, though he knew his lover wouldn’t buy it. “I didn’t sleep too well last night. I can
take a cab back with Greg. Besides, Greg’s car only has room for five so someone would have to taxi back anyway."

“If that’s what you want to do,” Sherlock said dryly.

John stole a quick kiss to his fiancé’s cheek.

“Yeah, I’ll fine,” he said. “You guys have a good lunch.”

Although Greg looked a bit embarrassed, like he knew what John was up to, he led John out of the airport. When they hit the car park he let out a long sigh.

“You okay?” John asked.

Running a hand over his head, Greg nodded. John noticed for the first time how rather disheveled Greg looked: he had developed an obvious five o’clock shadow, his hair was growing longer, and circles were settled beneath his eyes.

“Yes…I just needed to get out of there,” Greg admitted. Closing his eyes, he rested his hands on the back of his head and breathed in and out deeply, as though trying to stop himself from having a panic attack. He muttered: “I didn’t think it would take this long…I didn’t think it would take this long to feel safe again. I’m a bloody copper.”

“You were attacked,” John said calmly. “What happened to you, it’s terrifying- for anyone. It doesn’t matter if you’re a copper. Your safety was compromised. You had to fight for your life in the hospital…it’s going to take a while before you can really feel like you can breathe again.”

“That’s the feeling!” Greg confessed, his eyes flashing open. “I can’t fucking breathe. Sometimes I still feel like I can feel the knife instead of me. I keep feeling like there’s someone standing behind me.”

He wondered if Greg had told any of this to Mycroft- to anybody. Greg’s eyes were full of this anxiety John had never seen in them before. The DCI had always been the strong one of their group: no matter what was going on with Sherlock or Mycroft, or any of the family, Greg was always an anchor. He was always there to offer words of hope or comfort. It was strange, seeing him break down, but John was relieved his friend was opening up. He couldn’t imagine all of the things Greg had been holding inside.

“Let’s get that cab,” John said, placing a hand on Greg’s back. Greg jumped and he quickly removed his hand; obviously touch was something else he was uneasy about.

Greg nodded again, grateful, and they headed to the curb where a line of cabs were waiting for passengers. John’s mobile buzzed and he took it out to find a text from Mycroft:

*Is he alright?*

A small, sad, smile fell across John’s face. Of course Greg couldn’t fool his own lover.

*Yes.*

A mere second later a reply came:

*Thanks for being there for him.*

As they settled into the cab Greg let out a long sigh of relief: he was finally away from the crowd.
Of course, he texted back.

It was odd being in the Holmes family estate with just Greg. He felt like he was intruding. He actually tended to forget that this was Greg’s home too—where he slept, ate, and spent all his free time. It had been some time since he and Greg had hung out or chatted together, and frankly John felt a bit out of place.

“Feel free to go watch telly or something,” Greg offered. “I’m just going to go to sleep.”

While Greg looked physically drained, Mycroft had admitted to Sherlock that his partner wasn’t sleeping very well.

“Has your doctor given you anything to help you sleep?” John blurted out.

Stopping, Greg hesitated for a moment before turning around and confessing:

“Yeah, but it hasn’t helped.”

Throwing a glance toward the floor, John could imagine Greg trying to sleep but every time he closed his eyes he probably envisioned the attack. It was months, almost a year, before John himself was able to fall asleep within just an hour or so after he was shot during the war. Even then it was still a couple of years before he was able to sleep through the night without waking up from nightmares, and even to this day he still woke up in a cold sweat in the mornings more often than he admitted to Sherlock.

And those were besides the nightmares he still had about being shot on during while on their case last year.

“I went through the same thing when I got shot during the war,” John said quietly. “I was already constantly having dreams about the battlefield, about the soldiers I couldn’t save. After I was shot I was just in shock for the longest time. When I got back home and it finally began to hit me what happened…it was hard. I heard gunshots, all the time—when people closed doors too hard, when car horns honked. Sleeping was just impossible for the longest time. Every time I closed my eyes I’d see the battlefield.”

He swallowed nervously; even as he confessed his experience he could hear the sounds of battle in his head—the frantic shouting and gunfire.

“How long did that last?” Greg asked, his voice shaking slightly as though he was fearful of the answer.

“It was a long process,” John replied, “and to be honest I still have nightmares. But it helped, when I met Sherlock and started to have people to be around. It helps to talk to him now. If you hold it all inside, if you can’t admit to even yourself that you’re going through something awful, it’s going to be a lot harder. What I’m saying is…I’m here, if you need to talk; not only about the medical stuff and prescriptions, but just to talk.”

Greg stared after him longingly, like he would love to be able to take John up on that offer but just had no idea where to begin.

“Thanks,” Greg muttered. “I’ve had a lot of people tell me I could talk to them. Hell even Dimmock offered to meet up for lunch. But I just don’t know what to say to people. And honestly…I’m not sure what anyone could say to help. I am talking to someone professionally,
though. I really just need to be able to breathe, to not think about it all the time.”

“You need to not re-live it.”

The DCI nodded.

John could at least rest easy knowing Greg was seeking help, probably that of Dr Agar, who was the most compassionate and efficient therapists he had ever talked to. A long moment of silence passed between them as John was reluctant to leave Greg alone to suffer. But then Greg’s mobile rang, and the DCI frowned as he answered it.

“Hey Donovan,” Greg greeted. He immediately froze. He ran his hand over his head. He paced. John’s heart began to pound as he anxiously waited for Greg to hang up and reveal whatever breaking news the DI had to offer. “Do I need to come in and make a statement?” There was a pause. “What about the press?” Another pause. “No, I’ll be okay. Yeah, John is here. Okay… thanks for letting me know.”

Letting out a long sigh, Greg pocketed his mobile and rubbed his hands over his face. When he finally turned to John, he looked utterly drained.

“They found the suspect,” Greg explained. John’s eyes went wide, but before he could get too excited the DCI informed him: “He was found dead off the coast up in Scotland. He committed suicide…he stabbed himself in the heart.”

A pit fell in John’s stomach, and he closed his eyes tightly and tried to not think of what that crime scene must look like.

“Good god,” he muttered.

Silently Greg led the way into the main family room and sank down onto the sofa. It was a bit cool in the house so John crossed the room and turned on the gas fireplace. For a few long, quiet, moments the two let the warmth of the fire calm them as they tried to process this new information. He found himself more worried about how Greg and Sherlock would handle this news than how he himself felt about it: he knew Sherlock would simply be glad the man was dead. No matter how the crime had to be solved, as long as it was solved Sherlock would be satisfied- even if it meant death.

But Greg, Greg liked playing by the book. He liked procedure. He had wanted the Yard to be able to solve the case, to be able to take credit for it and to know that because of them the city was safe from this monster. Now that was stolen from him. Now he would have no answers about why he was targeted and attacked.

“It’s not bloody fair,” Greg announced under his breath, as though reading John’s mind.

“I know,” the doctor agreed calmly.

More silence.

He thought about something Sherlock said but hadn’t elaborated on and wondered if that was part of what was driving Greg mad.

“Sherlock said the suspect said something to you when he attacked you,” John said. “He said he spat in your face. Do you mind me asking what he said?”

Greg swallowed hard and tightened his hands into fists.
“He told me I was a coward and now everybody would know.”

His voice was dry and filled with disgust and self-pity.

But John felt like he wanted to punch someone.

“Bloody hell,” John muttered. He had been thinking what the suspect must have said must have been hate speech, rhetoric that he had probably repeated many times to people and was taking advantage of having the chance to say it to someone’s face as he hurt him. He didn’t expect what was said to be so personal. As he watched Greg, watched his face contort into self-loathing and regret, John realised to his own horror that his friend had actually believed those words. “You’re not a coward, Greg.”

“Really?” Greg spat. “I couldn’t even tell my own mates and colleagues about my sexuality. I hid who I was for over two years.”

“Yeah, but you had to do that because of both you and Mycroft’s careers. I hate to say it, but to be honest…do you think everyone at the Yard would be this understanding if you hadn’t been attacked?”

Greg drew in a sharp breath, and John panicked, worrying he had crossed a line.

“No,” Greg replied before he could apologise. “No, I really don’t think so. And yeah, we had our reasons, but to be honest…to be honest I think I used our careers as an excuse. Part of me- a lot of me, actually- was afraid of what people would think. I was afraid people would hate me…I was afraid of losing the few friends I actually have. And that’s pathetic, isn’t it, because people always preach ‘if your friends don’t like you for who you are they aren’t really your friends’. But when you’re my age there’s no time for starting over in life. I was afraid. I was a coward.”

Biting his lip, John remembered a time when he wasn’t so ready to admit to anyone he was gay either. Hell, he was even nervous about admitting that to Sherlock for a while. Coming to terms with his sexuality was one of the most daunting, courageous, and terrifying things he had ever done in his life- surpassed, perhaps, only by going to war.

“I know the feeling,” he confessed. “Remember how long it was before Sherlock and I admitted we were together? It was actually quite a bit before I could even admit to myself that I had feelings for him. At first I thought I was going mad, that I had finally lost it. I thought maybe I only thought I was falling for him because he was one of the only people after returning home that cared I existed. It’s okay, you know, to be afraid of that- to be afraid that you’re changing.”

With a hollow laugh, Greg shook his head and gazed into the fireplace. It hit John just then how much he and Greg had and common: they were both middle-aged men who had been with many women before and had suddenly, without warning, fallen in love with a man. They’d both fallen in love with a Holmes. They each had friends and family who would have never imagined they would end up with another man- and who would be in complete denial of it.

“I just never expected life to end up like this,” Greg said with a ghost of a smile on his face. “I thought it was just going to be my ex-wife and I and kids at some point. But now I can’t imagine my life any other way. To be honest it was sort of nice, keeping my relationship a secret. It was nice to not have that judgment from everyone, to not feel like we have to fit into everyone else’s life. I love being a part of Mycroft’s family. I love hanging out with you and Sherlock. Part of me feels like that’s all I need. But I know I can’t ignore all the other aspects of my life. I shouldn’t ignore them.”
“You know,” John said, his lips peering up in a grin, “you should have a ‘coming out’ party. People do it all the time. You should be celebrating your civil partnership anyway. This way you can just celebrate everything- you can bring everyone together and show them this is your life now and you’re proud of it.”

A grin spread across Greg’s face- the first grin John had seen on him in weeks.

“Yeah!” Greg agreed. “You know, that’s a good idea. Plus we could have Laura and her family there and introduce them to everyone. It can be sort of like a reception.”

“You know Mrs Hudson has been coming up with reception ideas for you two for ages,” John teased. “I think this will be really good for you.”

Part of him was even a little bit jealous: he and Sherlock were still hiding their ‘engagement’. He wanted to be able to celebrate them too. But this was about Greg and making him feel happy and comfortable again.

“I’ll talk to Myc about it,” Greg said. “Thanks, John. I still don’t really know what to think about all of this, but it would be nice to have something to look forward to.”

“Of course,” John said. “You need to be around people right now. Just…be thankful you’re alright. You’re safe. You’re…happy.”

“Yeah,” his friend replied with a grin. “Yeah, I am happy.”

Greg actually did take a short nap. Frankly John was just grateful to see that he was getting some sleep, and he didn’t mind having some time to himself. He gave his publisher a call- during all of the madness he had nearly forgotten about his upcoming book release. But the final copy was ready to go to print; all she was waiting on was his last approval.

“Can I add a ‘thanks to’ part, just in the front or back?” John asked.

“Of course!” His publisher replied. “Just send me a list. It’s your book, John, you can put whatever you want in it.”

A grin spread across John’s face: this was going to be his chance to really show the world who he and Sherlock were, and he was going to take advantage of it.

At that moment he heard the front door open, and the grin remained planted on his face as he made his way to the foyer to greet his lover and his family.

“Hey,” John said, giving Sherlock a quick kiss before reaching out to help Laura with the bags.

“Thanks,” Laura sighed. “I’m so sick of lugging these around.”

Her hands fell to her stomach, which poked out of her body a bit more than when he last saw her at Christmastime.

“Is the nausea any better?” John asked.

Laura smiled.

“Yeah, thanks. I really just needed some fresh air…and to be on solid ground. To be honest what I could use right now, though, is a nap.”
“Of course,” Mycroft announced, placing a hand on his sister’s shoulder. “Your room is ready- it’s the same as the last one you stayed in. Sherlock, John and I can watch Dan while you get some rest. Jason, I’m sure you could use a break too.”

A grateful smile fell across Jason’s face; as a proud father he would probably never admit how exhausting parenthood was, but John could only imagine how draining moving his whole family out of their house, getting them on a plane and flying them to another country had been.

“Thanks, we appreciate it,” Jason said. “We told ourselves we wouldn’t give into the jet lag…but this is just ridiculous. I’m going to bed.”

“I’m right behind you,” Laura said, hugging both of her brothers and John before following her husband toward the grand staircase.

“Are you tired too, Dan?” John asked to the five year old who was left wide-eyed in the foyer with his uncles.

“No!” Dan exclaimed, jumping up and down. “Uncle Mycroft said I could read to you guys!” John grinned.

“Yes!” He said.

“I’ve been anxious to hear you read,” Sherlock said.

Dan withdrew his book from one of his bags, dropped his bags right at the foyer and ran into the family room. Smirking, Mycroft picked up the bags and the three of them followed the child, who jumped up to sit in the middle of the sofa. Both Holmes brother sat on either side of them while John took his place in the arm chair. The fire was still burning strong, and John couldn’t help but to let his grin linger.

At that very moment, everything was perfect.

“The sun did not shine,” Dan began, reading each word slowly. “It was too wet to play.”

With a proud smile bursting on his face, Sherlock placed his arm around his nephew, who scooted closer to his youngest uncle. They sat in complete silence as Dan read the entire book, only asking for help a couple of times. When he finished Sherlock tackled him, engulfing him in a massive hug.

“That was brilliant!” They all turned in surprise to find Greg leaning in the doorway, his arm around the side of his chest where his wound was.

“I didn’t even see you there,” Mycroft confessed.

“I can be sneaky sometimes,” Greg teased, winking at Dan.

“Uncle Greg!” Dan exclaimed, jumping up and running to hug him.

“Careful,” Greg muttered when the boy hugged him a little too tightly.

“Sorry,” Dan replied sheepishly. “I’m sorry you got hurt.”

“It’s okay,” Greg said, keeping his arms around Dan’s shoulders as he led him back to the sofa. “I’m doing a lot better.”
He glanced over at John who offered him a single, stiff, nod to signal he hadn’t told anyone about the breaking news about the case. Dan settled between Mycroft and Greg this time on the sofa.

“Is the bad guy still out there?” Dan asked.

Sherlock’s eyes fell to the floor, and even Mycroft looked like someone punched him in the gut. But Greg only grinned.

“No,” he said. His consulting detective looked up in shock while Mycroft’s eyebrows shot up in surprise. “No, he’s not. We’re perfectly safe.”

“Good!” Dan announced.

The DCI chuckled.

“Yeah,” he sighed. “Everything’s good.”

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter will be lighter and funner :) I hope you enjoyed this one! I love Greg, and I'm trying to peel apart the layers of his character a bit more! Thanks again for all your support! I really appreciate all the comments you guys left on the last chapter. It means a lot that you guys like this story so much you don't mind waiting for updates. Thanks SO much!
John winced as he switched his paint brush to the other hand. He didn’t want to admit it but his arm was getting a bit sore, as well as his healing leg. But he had promised Laura he would help the family paint her house, and he didn’t want to be the first to give only a couple of hours into the day.

Well, when he said first…

“Are you two going to help at all?” Laura shot, glaring at her two brothers.

The Holmes brothers were seating on the sofa, which was covered with cloth to protect it from paint. A majority of the work on the house was done: windows were replaced, the roof was repaired, the kitchen cabinets and countertops were refurbished. Most of the furniture was still in storage, but enough of the house was done to allow a few pieces to be brought in to make it more comfortable for the Carters as they moved in.

Or rather, as it was at the moment, to make it more comfortable for Sherlock and Mycroft. Neither of the two had so much as picked up a paintbrush since they arrived that morning- not that anyone had much hope the brothers would be willing to do real work. At the moment Mycroft was flipping through the newspaper with a rather smug smile on his face while Sherlock scrolled through his mobile.

“I’m waiting for an important call,” Mycroft announced. “I can’t be covered in paint while taking this call.”

Laura rolled her eyes. They were all wearing white painting clothes, but aside from a few specs of the beige paint going up in the family room they were clean.

“Love, no one is going to suddenly not offer you this job if you have some paint on you while you’re on the phone,” Greg teased.

“I wish you’d tell us more about this mysterious job,” Laura said.

“Oh, you’ll have to have proper clearance for that,” Sherlock said, rolling his eyes this time. “It was ages before I knew the slightest thing about Mycroft’s old job. And I mainly deduced most of that.”

“Who could blame me?” Mycroft challenged. “You were always high-“

Jason cleared his throat, nodding to the five year old who was colouring in some pictures for his homework on the floor.

“It was a bit hard to trust you,” Mycroft finished coolly instead, saving himself. “And yes, eventually I will be able to tell you all some things about the job, but you will have to go through security briefings as well.”

Biting his lip, John flashed back to his first meeting with Mycroft in the warehouse. He remembered signing his life away, after Kirchhoff, swearing to never tell a soul. How much of his life was he going to sign away for the Holmes family? He threw a glance back toward Sherlock,
who wore a mischievous grin on his face. John had no doubt that Sherlock already knew some of the finer details about this new position Mycroft was expecting a formal offer for. Even Greg’s eyes were twinkling, and it sank in that he, as Mycroft’s fiancé, would know more than any of them.

Hell, Greg probably knew more than Sherlock did about Mycroft’s last job.

“I have to admit, Mycroft, I was kind of hoping you would go the retirement route,” Laura confessed. “I know we still haven’t known each other too long, and I really hardly knew you while you were working, but your job was clearly your life. You’re getting married now.”

“Civil partnership,” Mycroft muttered under his breath.

“Same difference!” Laura said. “My point is…life is short, and your work seems to be…dangerous. You were dedicated to your career for a long time, and you deserve a nice retirement.”

With a sigh, Mycroft sat his newspaper aside and crossed his arms.

“Retirement was nice for a month or so,” he admitted, “but I’m afraid I’d be bored out of my mind if that were permanent. I’m sure Greg would appreciate having you home safe as well.”

“Actually I’d rather him not be home constantly, driving me insane with his boredom,” teased Greg.

“See?” Mycroft smirked.

“He gets just as bad as Sherlock, honestly,” Greg went on. “Thank god I’m back on cases- with the two of us at home all day we’ve been driving each other mad.”

“I’m not sure the house could stand to hear one more shouting match over our Scrabble games,” Mycroft chimed in.

Jumping up from his spot on the floor, Dan ran over to join his uncles on the sofa.

“Scrabble?!?” Dan exclaimed, climbing up to sit on Mycroft’s lap. “Can you teach me how to play?”

The elder Holmes brother blushed, clearly reluctant to tell the young boy he had nowhere near the vocabulary required to play Scrabble.

“Maybe we’ll teach you Monopoly instead,” Mycroft offered.

“Oh god, not Monopoly,” Sherlock groaned.

“Is this still about the Christmas incident of 1983?”

“Of course it is! You and Mummy ganged up on me!”

“We did no such thing! You simply asked us to play if we were playing adults and to not treat you like a child.”

“You humiliated me!”

“Oh please,” Mycroft said, rolling his eyes. “If you’re that upset we’ll have a rematch. I’m sure I can still find the game somewhere in storage.”
“Fine by me.”

“Fine.”

“If you two are done bickering I could use a break,” Greg announced. “If I can paint with sore ribs, John with his leg and Laura with her pregnancy, you two can chip in. I say the rest of us grab lunch.”

John was secretly relieved, and it gave him a great deal of pleasure to hand over his paint brush to his fiancé, who turned his nose up at it. With a massive grin on his face, he announced:

“Here you go, love.” He leaned forward, planting a kiss on Sherlock’s cheek, and relished in the look of utter disgust on his partner’s face. He laughed as he followed the rest of the family into the kitchen, which was cluttered with boxes and only held a few items in the cabinets and fridge. Nonetheless, it was beginning to look like home to Laura’s family, and it was really starting to hit him that Sherlock’s sister was here to stay.

And it was a great feeling.

“So basically we have PB&J and…well, that’s it,” Laura said. “Sorry, I suppose I could go get fast food. But that would require driving…”

Clearly the last thing she felt like doing was driving out to get them food, so John answered for them:

"PB&J it is!"

They were half-way through their sandwiches when Mycroft waltz into the room, Sherlock in tow, with a knowing smile on his face.

“Did you get the job?” Greg asked, sounding a bit desperate as he grinned madly.

Mycroft wiped the smile off his face and stared at his fiancé long and hard before finally smiling again:

“Of course I got the bloody job!” Mycroft smirked. “They created this job for me.”

“Naturally,” Sherlock said, rolling his eyes. “He was offered three dozen different fantastic opportunities, but he has to wait for yet another career to be created for him.”

“Oh please,” Mycroft said, grabbing the bread to make his own sandwich. “I started talking about this project years ago; I’ve just never had the time.”

“Dan, why don’t you go wash up?” Laura said as she picked up hers and Dan’s plates. Once her son was out of the room she asked: “Any use asking what the job is?”

Taking a bite of his sandwich, Mycroft casually leaned against the counter and replied:

“It’s in security.”

John smirked: knowing Mycroft that could mean just about anything.

“Are you working on installing more CCTV on every street corner in London so you can spy on us more?” John teased.

With a roll of his eyes, Laura said:
“It’s probably code for he’s leading some top-secret counter-terrorism project even most of our own government doesn’t know about.”

Mycroft’s eyebrows shot up and he turned away, busying himself with eating his sandwich. John stole a glance toward Sherlock, who also turned away- as did Greg.

“No way!” Laura exclaimed. “I thought you said you wanted to stay in London.”

“I won’t be working abroad, I can tell you that,” Mycroft said. “This is more of a…management position.”

“Aka he’s closer to ruling the world than ever,” Sherlock muttered.

“That’s my man,” Greg grinned, slapping Mycroft of the back. “I keep telling him to run for Prime Minister.”

“Please,” Mycroft snorted, “don’t insult me.”

He could imagine there was no job that could be more hellish for Mycroft than being an elected government official in the public’s eye. No, he was much more into the behind-the-scenes, the decision-making and (dare he think it) bribing. Yet he was also, as Sherlock liked to say, too “lazy” for legwork so of course Mycroft would seek out a custom-made job for himself once again.

“Well congratulations,” John said. “I suppose we’ll have to get used to black cars driving us around again?”

A permanent smirk seemed to have settled on Mycroft’s face.

“I’ve already re-hired my usual driver.”

“We should pop open a bottle of champagne tonight and celebrate,” Laura said. “

“Yeah, and we can celebrate at the party!” Greg pointed out, wrapping his arm around his lover. Mycroft threw a warning glare his way, reminding him that of course they wouldn’t actually be able to tell people about his job. “Well at least we can know all we’re celebrating.”

“This is going to be some party,” John commented. “Next Saturday, right?”

“Five o’clock,” Greg said. “That’s if Mycroft doesn’t get paranoid by letting people know of his address first.”

“With my new position we can never be too careful,” Mycroft warned.

The DCI groaned.

“Wonderful. I can’t wait to go through that again.”

“You know I just want to keep you safe,” Mycroft said. His lover stole a kiss to his lips; Mycroft blushed.

“You don’t have to worry about me,” Greg whispered, placing a hand on his fiancé’s chest. “I can look after myself. I know…I don’t have a very good track record of that lately, but I’ll be okay.”

Nodding, Mycroft swallowed hard as he forced himself to say:

“I know you can look after yourself, and you know I don’t blame you for the take. But I’m going to
have some new enemies with this job- it’s just inevitable. That’s why I’m going to have to meet with all of you and have you sign some forms."

This time they all groaned in unison.

“Even Dan?” Laura asked, crossing her arms.

Mycroft stared at her for a long moment, and John had a feeling he had been struggling with how to keep his nephew out of the loop and yet safe at the same time.

“I think it’s best for him to think I’m still a simple civil servant,” Mycroft admitted.

“But how will we keep him safe?” Laura asked. “Of course we can watch him at home, but what about school?”

There was a twinkle in his eye as Mycroft took his sister’s hands and promised:

“I’ve got that covered.”

That weekend the party was a hit.

Mycroft gave in, and they had the gathering at the Holmes estate. All of Greg’s team from the Yard showed up, as well as some of his football-watching mates and mates from uni John had never met before. Everyone was dressed quite sharply, as though Greg had secretly given them the memo that a Holmes’ party was one that called for black tie attire. Even Dan ran around in his own suit.

It was nice, John thought as he leaned back against the wall of the grand room and watched everyone mingle, to see everyone so relaxed. Even Jason had a drink in his hand and a smile on his face as he laughed along with some of Greg’s friends. They needed this. And Greg- John hadn’t seen Greg this genuinely happy and at ease in a long time. He was whisking Mycroft around, introducing him to everyone with a bright smile on his face. He seemed so proud to show off his lover, his home, his life.

“He looks happy, doesn’t he?” Sherlock asked as he appeared beside him, glass of wine in hand.

“Yeah he does,” John nodded. He stole a glance toward the floor; selfishly he was a bit jealous of Greg and Mycroft. He could admit to himself that he was beginning to think he was ready to announce their engagement.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

He took another sip of his wine and John mocked him. Taking a deep breath he finally confessed:

“I think I’m ready to tell people. We deserve this-“ he waved around to the crowd of people so happy and proud of Greg and Mycroft. “I want everyone to know what we have and how happy we are.”

A broad smile crossed Sherlock’s face over the rim of his glass; his eyes twinkled.

“We do deserve to be happy, don’t we?” Sherlock teased.

John nodded.

“And we deserve to celebrate that,” he took another sip of his wine and swallowed hard as he
considered timing. “But we shouldn’t do it here.”

“You sure?” Sherlock smirked. “I always love a good reason to rain on Mycroft’s parade.”

John playfully punched him in the side.

“You know he deserves this,” John said. “Let’s keep it a secret for just a bit longer, but we’ll tell everyone soon.”

Swooping down, Sherlock planted a kiss to his cheek and replied:

“Deal.”

Suddenly there was the clinking of a utensil against glass, and they looked up to find Mycroft standing in front of the fireplace, ready to address everyone. John had to say for all of Mycroft’s usual confidence he looked a bit uncomfortable standing there. This was the first time he had ever addressed Greg’s friends, and to be honest it didn’t seem like there was a single mate of Mycroft’s here. In fact, John couldn’t think of ever hearing of a “friend” of Mycroft’s. He couldn’t imagine how nervous the man must have been to be thrown amongst all these people he had never met and talk about his sexuality; he had to admit, he really admired Mycroft for doing it.

“We have some appetizers ready in the dining room, but first I would like to say a few words.” He reached out a hand toward Greg, who proudly stepped forward and took it. “This has been a hard and, at times, rather terrifying journey for us. I don’t think Gregory could have ever predicting falling in love with someone as mad as I am- and I never would have dreamt as finding someone as kind, as sincere, as brave, and as much of a joy to be around than Gregory. This is a huge step for both of us, and to be honest I’m not sure if most of you could ever truly know just how big of a day this is for us. But I would like to thank you all for being here; I would like to thank you all for standing by us. We’ve been living in secret for quite some time, and we’re both sorry for the way everyone found out about us. Now that everything is out and in the open…as long as you all continuing to be this accepting of Gregory and I we would love to keep all of you in our lives.”

The speech earned him a nice round of applause and a roomful of smiles- and even a tear from Mrs Hudson. John clapped and grinned as he noticed Mycroft sway on his feet- just a bit- and grimaced as he down the rest of his glass of wine after the toast.

“Is your brother drunk?” John murmured to Sherlock.

His fiancé grinned.

“Just a bit,” he laughed.

As the toast ended the crowd went back to their chatter, John and Sherlock walked over to congratulate the happy couple.

“I’m proud of you, big brother,” Sherlock greeted. He turned to Greg and grinned: “and new big brother.”

Mycroft blushed, but Greg wasted no time in embracing his new brother-in-law.

“Welcome to the family,” Sherlock muttered into his ear.

“Thanks mate!” Greg was grinning ear to ear when he pulled away.

“Are you changing your name to Holmes or what?” John asked.
Beside him, Sherlock smirked.

“Gregory Holmes is too boring,” he shot, “and ‘Mycroft Lestrade’ is just hideous. No offence, Mycroft.”

“If Mummy had named me ‘Michael’ like a normal person would have it would have worked out perfectly,” Mycroft mumbled.

“I’ve always rather liked your name, Mycroft.”

The group turned in surprise to find a skinny elderly woman with greying hair beaming at the elder Holmes brother.

“Marianne,” Mycroft replied with a smile. “It was so nice of you to make it.”

John raised his eyes; he hadn’t actually expected Mycroft to invite anyone to this party.

“Why of course!” Marianne replied. “Though I do wish you would have told me all those years ago you were gay. I wouldn’t have ever made such an effort to set you up with a woman.”

Sherlock snorted into his glass of wine and Mycroft’s cheeks turned a slight shade of pink.

“To be honest, it’s something I didn’t fully realise until later in my life,” he confessed, “but I could have done without you trying to set me up with every new secretary that started with us.”

The woman grinned brightly before throwing her arms around the younger man.

“It is so good to see you again,” Mycroft said. He turned to the others and explained: “Marianne was on the staff at my first government job. She has been a great mentor for me throughout my career. She’s one of the few people in the government I can truly trust.”

He amused himself with imagining a younger Mycroft getting started at an entry-level government job, probably filing and working as an assistant for someone. He could only imagine how infuriated it would have made Mycroft to have a superior try to set him up with someone—especially if that superior was someone he had to look up to and depend on for his job.

“Oh I teased him so much,” Marianne left, “and now look at him. He’s made more out of his career than I ever made of mine.”

“All thanks to you,” Mycroft admitted. “I never would have had the confidence to get this far without your guidance.”

“So you’re the one we have to thank for his over-confidence,” Sherlock teased.

Laughing, Marianne placed a hand on the younger Holmes’ brother’s shoulder.

“You must be Sherlock,” she announced. “Mycroft had to have at least some confidence to put up with all the trouble you gave him when you were younger.”

The consulting detective stole a glance to the floor, obviously concerned about how much Mycroft had told this woman about his past.

“It was lovely to catch up,” Marianne went on, sensing how uncomfortable the comment had made Sherlock. “We should chat soon, Mycroft. Perhaps lunch? I’d love to hear more about this husband of yours.”
She winked at Mycroft, who looked as though he could melt to the ground in embarrassment.

“Take care of him, love,” she instructed to Greg.

“Will do ma’am,” Greg replied. “It was nice to meet you.”

They watched as the woman made her way through the crowd and out the door; a cab was already waiting for her in the drive.

It took no time for Sherlock to round on his brother.

“You told her about me?!” He snapped quietly enough for only their group to hear.

“She only knows I raised you since you were a teenager,” Mycroft said. His eyes narrowed, as though warning Sherlock to not make a scene. “As far as she knows my biggest problem was getting you to listen to me…which is not exactly a lie.”

“Well I thought she was lovely, Mye,” Greg announced to break the tension. “I’m glad to have finally met her.”

“And I’m glad to have heard about her for the very first time ever,” Sherlock grumbled.

Rolling his eyes, Mycroft snapped:

“Oh dear brother, don’t be like that. Won’t you go get yourself another glass of wine?”

“I think he’s just cranky,” John said, patting his lover on the back, earning a glare from Sherlock. “He missed his afternoon nap.”

“I’m going to check on Dan and Laura,” Sherlock sighed, leaving John standing with the newlyweds.

A long moment of silence passed before Greg finally announced:

“John, why don’t I introduce you to some of my rugby mates?” Greg said. “You played in school, right?”

“A bit,” he nodded.

It turned Greg’s rugby buddies were actually pretty cool. It had been some time since he had been able to talk about sports with a group of guys, and it was nice to chat about the game with people who took it seriously.

“You should come out and play with us sometime, John,” one of the guys offered.

“Yeah, I don’t know why I never asked before, too be honest,” Greg said. “Come out next Saturday.”

John’s eyebrows shot up; excitement pounded in his chest at the thought of playing again. It had been years since he played a full rugby game, but he was certain he could do it again.

“Yeah, sure!” He agreed. “Why not? Sounds fun.”

Looking around he tried to locate his fiancé, both to make sure he didn’t need saving from some horrid conversation about sports or politics or to stop him from driving someone nuts with deduction. When he couldn’t find either Sherlock or Mycroft in the crowd, he slipped from the hall
and made his way down the corridor. He notice right away the light was on in the study; carefully he pushed the door open to find Mycroft in a battle of Operation with Dan. Sherlock sat in the opposite arm chair with Laura sitting on the arm while Jason helped his step-son try to beat his uncle.

“So this is where the real party is, then?” John teased.

“Shh!” Dan scolded. “I’m concentrating.”

He giggled as he took a seat on the floor beside Sherlock’s chair and watched as Dan carefully tried to pick up the next piece in the game. Unfortunately he moved a little too fast and hit the sides. He cried out in frustration, and Mycroft had no shame in letting out an evil laugh.

“But I was this close!” Dan whined.

“You did a good job, sweetie,” Jason promised, running his hand through the kid’s hair.

“Mind if I have a go?” John asked. “I should be pretty good at this.”

The comment earned him a groan from the adults in the room, but Dan seemed real eager to see a real surgeon at work.

“Fine, but you get to play me,” Sherlock announced, eyes twinkling.

After one to many Cluedo catastrophes they had both agreed that playing board games was just not their thing…but he did love to see Sherlock squirm when he realised he was losing.

“You’re on!” John challenged. “But I get to go first, and I’m going to start with…the stomach.”

Ever so slowly, he gently lifted the piece from the stomach.

“Fine,” Sherlock replied, “and I’ll take the Adam’s apple.”

“And I’ll take the knee.”

His partner rolled his eyes, knowing John was starting to show off- which he did with ease.

“I’ll take the funny bone,” Sherlock grinned.

And almost immediately, the buzzer buzzed.

“Damn!” Sherlock hissed.

“Sherlock!” Laura warned, jerking her head toward Dan, who giggled.

“Sorry,” the consulting detective muttered.

His fiancé’s attitude toward the game quickly plummeted after his first error.

“It’s all about being as steady as possible,” John said as he went for the writer’s cramp. “There’s no room for mistakes in surgery; there’s no room for even the slightest, shakiest hand.”

A grin spread across his face as he successfully picked up the piece and lifted his eyes to meet his lover’s.

“Your turn,” John announced in a sing-song voice, earning him a glare from his fiancé.
They went a few more turns before Sherlock finally slammed his hand on the board in frustration and wobbly stood to his feet.

"Forfeiting?" John tease.

"I need some water," Sherlock muttered.

He couldn’t help but to giggle as Sherlock sat his empty glass down and stumbled toward the door. He ended up running right into Greg, who sported his own glass of water and was clearly trying to wind down for the night.

“So this is where you lot disappeared to!” Greg said. “There are guests out there, you know.”

Mycroft’s face scrunched up.

“As honoured I am to finally meet your mates if I have to pretend to like rugby or football to one more person I’m going to go mad,” he replied.

Leaning down, Greg planted a swift kiss on his partner’s cheek.

“Marriage is all about sacrifice, dear,” he grinned. “Dave has already said he’d like us over for dinner sometime.”

“Oh lord,” Mycroft sighed dramatically, “is this what my life has become?”

With a wild, drunken, grin Greg plopped down on Mycroft’s lap- an act of intimacy none of them had ever seen between the two. Laura giggled, while Sherlock rolled his eyes and fled the room.

“Yes,” Greg answered, his eyes twinkling.

Mycroft gracefully brushed his lips across his lover’s.

“Then aren’t I lucky?” He murmured.

That night, with a slight buzz still on, he and Sherlock were all smiles as they fell into bed. Kicking off his shoes, John wasted no time in showering his lover with kisses. They climbed to the head of the bed, Sherlock let out a long, satisfied sigh as he began undoing the buttons of his shirts.

“It’s been awhile,” John murmured before capturing Sherlock’s lips in a deep kiss.

“Yeah,” Sherlock breathed as they broke apart. “I want you.”

Running his hands over Sherlock’s bare chest, John planted a trail of kisses along his partner’s jaw.

“Good,” John growled. “Because I want you too.”

Silence fell in the room as he focused on kissing every inch of Sherlock’s exposed skin. His fiancé lay back, simply watching John’s every move as he crawled up and down his body. Sherlock’s skin felt warm underneath his hands that roamed over his bare chest. Scooting backward, he kissed his way down Sherlock’s chest and licking his way back up. Suddenly he felt Sherlock’s fingers in his hair, brushing through his blonde strands, encouraging him. With a sly grin on his face John finally reach down, palming the already hardening bulge in his lover’s trousers.

“Don’t think I didn’t notice, at the party,” he said. “You got all hot and bothered while we were
“Well if you’d like, I can give you a checkup.”

Running his hand down Sherlock’s chest, he slipped off the bed and into the bedroom closet- which by now housed many of his things as well. His Baker Street med kit was on the floor in plain sight, ready to be grabbed at any moment’s notice in an emergency…or during foreplay.

First he took out his stethoscope and carefully placed it over Sherlock’s heart. A smile crossed his face as listened to the familiar thump-thump thump-thump; the pace was naturally a little quicker than normal. Sherlock shuddered as his fingers wrapped around his wrist, checking his pulse there too.

“No!” Sherlock demanded with a laughing. “No, John. No. Maybe you should check my lungs instead.”

John smirked and replied:

“Turn around, then.”

Sherlock let out a relaxed sigh as he rolled and settled on his stomach. Gracefully he brushed his hands up and down Sherlock’s back, warming his skin. His fiancé continued to shudder. They hadn’t been intimate since the stabbing; like Greg, John had witnessed Sherlock being jumpier than usual since the attack. He could tell even now that Sherlock was still on edge, adjusting to having someone being this close to him.

“You okay?” John asked softly.

“Yeah,” his lover breathed.

“Really? Cause you’re all tense.” He said as he began to message Sherlock’s neck. A small groan escaped beneath him, and he had a new idea of where to take this foreplay. He didn’t want to be too rough with Sherlock, considering their drunken state and how sensitive they could both tend to be to the nauseating effects of alcohol. But ultimately, he wanted Sherlock to relax. He wanted him to feel comfortable and safe.

Wordlessly he worked out the muscles in Sherlock’s neck with his fingers and proceeded to pound out the kinks in his back with his hands. Other than a few sensual groans, Sherlock stayed silent as well with his head rested in his arms. As his hands moved down to his fiancé’s hips and his thumbs pressed down into his tense muscles, he found himself worrying if Sherlock was actually falling asleep. It was well after two in the morning.

“Sherlock?” He called softly. No answer. Unfortunately for John himself, his own cock had only gotten harder as it rest against his partner’s thighs. No way was he going to go through all of this only to have to wank himself off. He shook his partner gently. “You didn’t fall asleep did you?”
“No,” Sherlock muttered into his pillow, a sly smile on his face, “but as much as I’m enjoying this we should probably speed this along.”

John lifted himself up to let Sherlock turn around.

“Mmm…I want you, but I also want to sleep,” Sherlock whined.

“Romantic,” John laughed.

He had to admit though that sleep was beginning to take over him as well, but he wasn’t about to waste this opportunity. Instead he let out a laugh and unzipped Sherlock’s trousers.

“Well you have to get undressed before you sleep,” John announced as he pulled Sherlock’s trousers down past his waist, down his legs, and finally they were kicked off. He quickly took off his own trousers and unbuttoned his shirt. His body was warm; only the buzz from alcohol and adrenaline from sex was keeping him awake.

Both of their cocks were hard and aching for attention. Sherlock seemed to perk up a bit as John ran his hand up and down the length of his cock. He originally had the intention of fucking him into the mattress, but apparently that would have to wait until morning. For now he leaned forward, taking his fiancé’s cock into his mouth.

Back arching, Sherlock’s hands settled behind his head, his mouth slightly opened as he moaned along with the sensations of John’s tongue lapping up and down his shaft. All the while his hands continued to bore into his partner’s hips, creating marks that would surely still be there in the morning. John tried to be more careful, as to not hurt him, though judging by the tiny gasps of ecstasy escaping his lover’s mouth, he didn’t mind.

His tongue danced around the head before engulfing the full shaft once more. He felt it hit the back of his throat and moaned, his eyes fluttered to a close as his mouth pushed up and down, creating vibrations that were driving Sherlock wild.

“God, John,” Sherlock groaned. “And to think you used to proclaim you ‘weren’t gay’. Not gay my arse.”

John chuckled as he sucked his lover down, his hands skipping from Sherlock’s hips to his balls, squeezing them gently and making him cry out. Reaching down, he touched his own cock, pumping it in his hand purely to give himself at least some relief.

“Turn around,” Sherlock suddenly breathed out, his voice slightly raspy from his high from sex.

He looked up to find his partner’s eyes on his cock and understood. His breath hitching in his throat, John turned around in the bed so that his own cock dangled over Sherlock’s mouth. Sherlock wasted no time in taking his dick in between his lips, and John shuddered, relishing in the relief finally getting to release some of that tension. He rolled over to make the position more comfortable, and the feeling of his own cock being attacked by his partner’s mouth only encouraged him more.

Taking Sherlock in deep, John was relentless, rubbing at his balls, his thighs, and his arse all the while. At the same time Sherlock’s long fingers grasped his own arse, squeezing and making him moan around the cock in his mouth. He popped off Sherlock’s cock for air, taking a moment to gasp for breath and let out a moan at the sensations vibrating against his own shaft.

“Fuck!” He hissed when Sherlock’s squeezed his arse and took him in deep at the same time.
“Don’t stop,” Sherlock managed to breathe out.

John drew in a deep breath and cupped his lips around the head of Sherlock’s dick and ran his fingers up and down the shaft, all the while thrusting his own cock deeper into his lover’s mouth. When he took the cock into his mouth one last time it didn’t take long for Sherlock to let out a sudden cry and cum, lacing his mouth with his salty release. He swallowed the cum down before collapsing onto the bed, barely possessing the energy to continue thrusting his cock into Sherlock’s mouth.

Suddenly the tension became too much, his stomach tightened, and he came sooner than he thought he would down his lover’s throat.

“Jesus Christ,” he muttered, moaning into the night as he came down from his own sexual high.

Rolling over onto his back, he tried to catch his breath. As he threw an arm over his face, he thought he could fall asleep right here, but Sherlock was already tugging at his foot.

“Come here,” his fiancé pouted.

Although part of him was reluctant to move, he’d take cuddly Sherlock any day so he didn’t want to waste this opportunity. He repositioned himself so that Sherlock could curl against his body and wrap his arms around him.

“That was bloody fantastic,” Sherlock murmured into his ear. “I should have you give me messages more often.”

With a satisfied sigh John planted his head into his pillow, ready for a good, long, night of sleep.

“You know, I could use a message myself,” he confessed. But there was no answer from his lover. He frowned; surely Sherlock wasn’t asleep already. Even the consulting detective wasn’t *that* bad at cuddling. “Sherlock…Sherlock?”

He glanced behind him to find that Sherlock was already drifting off into a peaceful rest, and considering the number of nights John had tried to get his best friend to get *any* sleep, he gave in. Within moments he too was taken over by a blissful rest, complete with a smile on his face.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry to make you guys wait again! I was out of town, and then sick...and then my computer kept crashing, ugh! I know, excuses excuses :) But I decided to not break up this chapter and give you one long chapter. I hope you enjoyed it! This was a fun one to write!! Next up the book is finally about to be published...and our boys are due to reveal their secret! Thanks, as always, for all of your feedback and kudos! Love you guys!
“Wow.”

“…yup.”

The shipment of John’s first book had finally arrived…

And all they could do was stare at it.

“That’s a lot of books,” Sherlock announced, running his finger over the spine of a book in the box they had opened.

“Five thousand,” John’s publisher said, stepping into the room with a wicked grin on her face.

They stood in a warehouse space inside the printing house. To say John was overwhelmed as he stood surrounded by thousands of books stacked along shelves and rows of packaging equipment ready to ship out hundreds of successful novels a day was an understatement.

He felt like he had just randomly stepped into someone else’s life.

“This is…real now,” John finally said. It was the first full sentence he had managed since introducing himself at the front desk.

“Yes, it is,” the publisher replied. “Now this box is for copies to give out to friends and family. The rest we plan to sell online and at bookstores by the end of the quarter.”

“Wait, there will be more printed?” Sherlock stammered.

John could practically see images of cash flashing in his partner’s eyes. If he were honest, he’d admit the financial aspect of it all scare him the most. What if the book flopped? How would he ever explain himself?

But truth be told the thought of the book flopping was nowhere near as terrifying as the thought of the book being successful. The numbers being thrown at him were incredulous. At this rate just by selling half these books their rent would be taken care of for the year. He would finally be able to pay off most of his credit card. If they sold anywhere near the amount his publisher hoped to sell for the year they wouldn’t even have to worry about cases the next year. They could go on holiday again.

They could have a proper honeymoon.

The thought made him smile and relax a little.

“Now your first book signing is tomorrow at three,” the publicists said. “Now Mr Holmes, you’re not on contract to be there, but if you would like to make an appearance-”

“He’s in the middle of a case,” John cut in, earning him a gracious look from his boyfriend.

John grinned at him, letting him know no problem. Also: you owe me. This book signing was going to be overwhelming enough without Sherlock there whining about how bore he was and
mocking all of his fans.

_Fans._

He shook his head at the thought. All of this was just too surreal.

“I imagine you two are used to the attention by now, but we can arrange a security detail if you’d like,” she offered.

Shaking his head, he could only imagine how annoyed Sherlock would be with security following them around. It was bad enough they would have Mycroft people’s tailing them once again; John didn’t need to add to that.

“We’ll be fine,” he promised. “Thank you for everything, really. This whole process has been so much smoother and painless than I thought it would be. You guys have been terrific.”

While the publicists threw him a kind, appreciative, smile her eyes clearly said that she had other places to go and clients to meet.

“I’ll be in touch about a few other events we have in mind,” she said. “Otherwise, all we have to do now is ship out the pre-sales and send copies out to stores. Well done, Dr Watson, truly well done. Not that many first time authors handle the task with as much confidence and poise as you did.”

Offering them a final smile, she nodded before leaving the two alone in the warehouse. It didn’t take long for Sherlock to round on him:

“You’re just so poised, John,” he teased. John rolled his eyes, but his partner didn’t let up: “I think she was flirting with you.”

“Oh please, she was just being nice,” he said, even as he felt his cheeks grow hot. Every now and then he could tell a woman was trying to flirt with him, and to be honest it perturbed him more than just a little bit. Not only because he was with somebody, but since he began his relationship with Sherlock he considered himself wholeheartedly and completely gay. Realising a woman found him attracted felt a bit like running into a friend from uni: that just didn’t belong in his life anymore.

“Well, forget her because I’m immensely proud of you,” Sherlock announced, casually taking his hands and leaning in to kiss his lips.

_Immensely_ proud?” John mocked between kisses.

“Yes.”

They held onto each other for a long moment before finally letting go, each of them all smiles.

“So dinner tonight?” Sherlock asked. “Anywhere you’d like...though Angelo is demanding a copy of your book.”

John laughed but hesitated; there was something he had wanted to ask Sherlock but had been too nervous.

“Sherlock…you know how I’m going to see my dad this afternoon?” He asked. Sherlock simply shrugged. “Well…I’d like you to come with me.”

For a long moment Sherlock simply stared at him. He bit his lip, knowing his lover was replaying that horrific moment when his mother slapped him when she first came over to Baker Street. Ever
since then Sherlock hadn’t exactly been keen on meeting the rest of his family, and who could blame him?

“You do remember what happened the last time I met one of your family members?” Sherlock challenged, eyes narrowing.

John nodded nervously.

“Yeah, but my dad likes you!” He pointed out. “Seriously, he’s a fan! He wants you to sign the book. He really wants to meet you. Please Sherlock, for me?”

His partner let out a dramatic sigh, and John smiled.

“Fine,” Sherlock finally agreed, “for you.”

They met John’s father at a quiet café for coffee that afternoon. For a good, long, five minutes the consulting detective simply stared at the older man- who stared right back. John couldn’t help but to smirk: his father, like John himself, was an army vet and wasn’t easily intimidated.

“Undiagnosed hypertension, trouble sleeping, worried wife might be-”

“Do not finish that sentence,” John warned.

The last thing he wanted was Sherlock deducing everything that was wrong with his family. But to his horror his father glanced to the floor, as though caught- embarrassed.

“At least two of those things are right,” his dad admitted. “My doctor just gave me pills for high blood pressure, and I haven’t been sleeping very well.”

A pit fell in John’s stomach: he knew his father had a habit of not being honest about his health problems, but why couldn’t he come to him about something like hypertension?

“Why didn’t you tell me?” John demanded. “I could have helped. What did you doctor put you on?”

Waving him away, his father simply took a sip of his coffee and replied:

“I don’t need to worry you with all that. You’re my son, not my doctor! And I have a perfectly capable doctor, mind you. I’m fine. Now enough about me- let’s see this book of yours!”

John couldn’t help but to allow a grin to spread across his face as he reached into the backpack he brought along to reveal a shiny new copy of his book. Every time he looked at the cover- with his name on it- he still couldn’t believe this was real.

“Wow, it’s a beauty!” His father exclaimed with a grin. “I love the outline of London on the cover.”

“Yeah,” John nodded. “I wanted to keep it simple. Plus London is at the heart of our cases.”

He winked at Sherlock, knowing how much his partner loved the cover. It had even been Sherlock’s idea: instead of a silhouette of the two of them or a cheesy deerstalker hat, showcase London itself. The inside covers contained maps of the city, including many streets he and Sherlock tended to cover during their cases.
“Wow, this is beautiful!” His dad announced. Carefully he opened to the first page and flipped through the book. “I just can’t believe you did this.”

“I can’t either,” John laughed. “I keep pinching myself to remind myself this is real.”

Sherlock playfully pinched him; John threw him a glare.

“I’m just reminding you this is real,” Sherlock teased.

“I like him,” his dad laughed, pointing to Sherlock. “To be completely honest with you I never imagined my son settling down with another man, but I couldn’t be happier that he found you.”

His partner’s eyes narrowed for a moment, as though he was trying to decide if that were a compliment. At last he decided on:

“And I couldn’t be happier that I found him,” Sherlock said, placing his arm around John’s shoulder.

With an uneasy laugh John settled back against his arm, determined not to ruin this.

“So will you do me the honour of signing my book?” His dad asked.

A bright smile crossed his face as he reached into his bag for a pen.

“Of course!” John replied.

His father smirked.

“I meant Sherlock, son,” he teased.

Sherlock smirked at his partner as he accepted the book and scribbled his name in the cover. John practically snatched it for him when he was done, grinning as he took the pen and wrote a simple: For Dad. Thank you for everything. I love you. He watched his father’s face as he read the note, and he couldn’t help but to feel proud that he was able to do something like that for his dad.

“So this must be very exciting for you two,” his father commented, “at the least I’m sure it will be nice to have some cash flow coming in.”

He nodded, a bit surprised. His family never talked about money ever.

“Yeah, it will be,” he agreed. “You know, it also puts less pressure on which cases we take. We can take all the interesting ones. We can take breaks from cases when we need to. I have another book due by the end of the year so that will be good.”

“Well I’m glad you’re keeping busy,” his dad offered. “Someone in this family should make something of themselves. I can’t tell you how many people I’ve told about your book.”

John felt his cheeks growing hot.

“They?” He asked.

His dad used to brag about him quite often in school- when he made good marks on tests, when he got into uni, when he got into medical school. He bragged about him when he went into the army. But ever since John was shot his father seemed to stop talking to his friends like he used to; almost losing his son had clearly shaken him to silence, and truth be told John had never really considered that before. He had to admit that selfishly it made him happy to know his dad was bragging about
him again- that he was truly proud of him.

“Yes really!” His dad replied. “I’m extraordinarily proud of you, as I’m sure Sherlock’s parents are proud of him.”

His heart skipped a beat and his stomach twisted into knots. Beside him, Sherlock folded his hands into fists underneath the table and stared hard at the cup of coffee in front of him.

“Actually, dad, Sherlock’s mum passed away when he was a teenager,” John admitted quietly. Underneath the table, he placed a hand on Sherlock’s knee. “And his father has never really been in the picture.”

“Oh.” His father’s eyes shifted down to the floor. For a few long moments none of them could look or talk to each other until at last John’s dad whispered: “I’m very sorry to hear that.”

Swallowing hard, Sherlock simply shrugged.

“It’s okay,” he stated quietly, his voice uncharacteristically hollow. “It’s something that I’ve come to terms with. I’m just thankful I’ve reconciled with my brother, and I actually discovered I have a sister I never knew about last year. We’ve become quite close now- her family has just moved to London. So even though it’s been awhile since I’ve felt like I’ve had a real family I certainly feel like I do now…especially since I have John in my life too.”

To John’s surprise, Sherlock took his hand in his own and raised it to his lips to kiss it. John blushed a bit before replying:

“And I couldn’t be happier to have you in my family as well. I just wish I could fix things with Harry like you did with Mycroft.”

“Mycroft?” His dad snorted.

For a moment John was afraid Sherlock might actually be offended, but he was pleased when his boyfriend just snorted.

“Yes, I’m afraid I wasn’t the only one with the unusual name in my family,” Sherlock confessed.

“Well anyway,” his father went on, “I wish that you and Harry could patch things up as well. She’s just struggling so much. I…I think she should go back to rehab.”

A lump formed in John’s throat. Selfishly he tried not to think of his sister: he considered it up to her now to take rehab seriously, and if she continued not to and continued to not take John’s advice there wasn’t much he could do to force her to do so.

“Has she really sunk that low again?” John asked.

His father nodded and ran a shaky hand through his hair.

“She got fired- again,” he sighed. “She’s been sleeping a lot and slept through a couple of shifts. Mind you, I haven’t physically seen her drinking, but it’s just her behaviour, you know? I just know that’s what’s going on. Her personality switches on and off like a light switch. She’s either very reserved and down on herself or angry and raging. She and your mother have been getting into it quite a bit. And to be honest, your mum isn’t in much better shape.”

“Undiagnosed depression,” John suddenly realised, looking up to Sherlock with dark eyes. His partner only stared back, giving him no confirmation that he was right or wrong: but just by that
blank stare, John knew. “You think mum is depressed.”

Reluctantly, his father nodded before dropping his face into his hands.

“My poor girls,” his father whispered. “I think they’re both just so lost. Sometimes I think…quite frankly I sometimes secretly wonder if they both might share a personality disorder we’ve never known about.”

John’s eyebrows shot up. He had always been so focused on the physical symptoms and actions of his mother and sister that he hadn’t given much thought into what they were going through mentally. They were both so unpredictable and unstable, so abusive to both themselves and others that there was ample cause to worry about their mental state.

“Have you talked to either one of them about that?” John asked softly.

His father shook his head furiously.

“Oh no,” he said, “your mother would just…well I don’t know what she’d do, but she wouldn’t take me seriously. I’m afraid your sister might just run off and, well, I don’t want to risk that. I’m worried to death about both of them, but at least I have them under one roof.”

_She wouldn’t take me seriously._

The words echoed through his head as he realised what his father wanted him to do: he wanted John to take care of it. John was the doctor, the strong one. He was already on his mother’s bad side, so it’s not like he could make things _worse_.

“You know, I need the loo,” Sherlock suddenly announced.

He jumped up and practically fled from the table, as though sensing the uncomfortable conversation ahead. John folded his hands and stared down at them, determined to stay silent for as long as possible to procrastinate having to talk about this.

“I don’t want to put any pressure on you,” his dad said quickly. “I just wanted to let you know what I thought.”

Taking in a deep breath, John closed his eyes and asked:

“Do you think I should see her?”

His father hesitated, shrunk back into his seat, and replied:

“That’s up to you. I do think that might upset her-“

“Yeah, especially if I go in talking about how she could have mental problems,” John muttered.

His eyes flashed open to find his father glaring at him, and John stared him down.

“I think it might be good,” his father finally admitted. “You’ll see what I mean if you see her. Maybe seeing you again, after all this time, will make her realise what she pushed away.

Swallowing nervously, John reluctantly nodded. If his father was legitimately concerned about her mental health then she did need to be seen by _someone_. And he had to admit that as angry as he was at her, he did miss his mum.

What he really yearned for was for his family to be back together again. It was just so incredibly
silly that the four of them were alive and in the same city- three of them living under the same roof- and they all hardly spoke to each other. It was wrong.

“Okay,” he agreed, grabbing his coat as he spotted Sherlock’s coming out of the loo. “We really have to go though. Busy day. Thanks for meeting us…I hope you enjoy the book.”

His dad stood up, and they shook hands. Hugging just felt too awkward at the moment. He wanted to distance himself from this physically so he could wrap his mind around it.

“I really am proud of you,” his father said. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Dad,” he muttered quietly.

Turning away, he practically grabbed Sherlock’s arm and dragged him out of the restaurant. He was breathing hard as he led them down the street, not stopping until they reached the far end, where he knew his father wouldn’t walk that far to get a taxi.

“Are you alright?” Sherlock asked softly, turning John toward him.

John could only shake his head and let it fall against his lover’s shoulders. He accepted the embrace as his fiancé wrapped his arms around him and held him: solace in the middle of chaos.

Chapter End Notes

I knew it would take me awhile to write this whole chapter so I went ahead and decided to give you guys the first part! Hopefully it won't take too long to write the second part! Thanks as always for all your kind words! It amazes me how many new readers read through the story- each week it seems like sometimes! I love hearing your feedback!
Written By Dr John Watson

Chapter Notes

So if you happened to see what I posted last night and noticed a big continuity error...just don't tell me LOL. I don't want to know how many people noticed! Luckily it's an easy fix, and I'll still be able to take the next story arc where I want to.

If you have absolutely no idea what I'm talking about, just ignore me ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John massaged his wrists and drew in a deep breath. He stole a glance to the clock on the wall above the bookstore door and had to bite back a smile when he saw it was a quarter to four.

Only fifteen minutes of madness.

When his publicist scheduled a three hour block for his first book signing he thought she was jumping the gun and setting them up for disappointment. He figured there might be a few people waiting when he arrived and then maybe people stopping by just as they shopped.

What he wasn’t expecting was a line down the block and a constant stream of fans not only wanting to get his autograph but wanting to talk to him too. This time his publicists insisted on bringing security, and as the girls in line got clingier to him he found himself grateful the guard standing behind him. Most of them even wanted pictures with him! And these were true fans too. They demanded to know where Sherlock was, they asked him about Mrs Hudson- one person even asked if he could bring her book back to her with Greg’s signature. They knew all of his and Sherlock’s biggest cases, and as they stood in line he could hear them debate about which ones were the most interesting who they all thought the culprit would be.

“Hounds of Baskerville,” a male voice suddenly spoke up as a book was sat down in front of him on the table. John couldn’t help but to be relieved to talk to a male fan and have a break from all the fan girls. He put on a genuine smile as he reached out for the book. “That was definitely the most interesting case. What was that place really like?”

“I could tell you, but I’d have to kill you,” John said mysteriously, winking at the man. But when he looked up he was startled to find the man was younger, with short cropped brown hair and wearing tight fitted t-shirt and jeans. He was quite, well...hot, if he did say so himself. Not that he actually had feelings for him or anything, but that was natural human instinct, wasn’t it? You meet someone and in the back of your mind, no matter how much you try to deny it, you acknowledge they’re cute. Swallowing nervously, he could only hope the guy didn’t think he was hitting on him.

“Who am I making this out to?” He asked casually, trying to hide the embarrassment he felt.

His head rolled forward when the clock finally struck four and his book signing was over. Luckily the crowd had fizzled out so he didn’t have to fight off people still waiting in line; he even took a
taxi instead of the tube so he could face as little people as possible. As he threw open the flat door he let out a long sigh and simply stood in the entrance, drinking in the silence.

“Is being famous harder than you thought?” The teasing voice of his lover spoke up.

John’s eyes flashed up to find Sherlock leaning against the wall, smirking at him. He was dressed in his purple dress shirt and slack- a look his fiancé knew very well turned him on. A wicked smile crossed his face as he waltzed over to his lover, took his hands, pinned him against the wall and captured him in a fierce kiss.

“God it’s so good to see you,” John said in between kisses. “I feel like you owe me after I’ve been talking about you for the past three hours.”

“Mmm,” Sherlock murmured as their foreheads lingered together. “And what were you saying about me?”

Letting out a laugh, he confessed:

“Well Jill from Sussex gave me her number in case we were ever interested in a threesome.”

Sherlock let out a bark of laughter, trickling off into giggles as he held a hand to his mouth.

“You have fangirls,” Sherlock teased. “Did any of them ask you out?”

He couldn’t help but to smirk, because he was certain if he hadn’t made it perfectly clear how serious his relationship with Sherlock was- and if his fans didn’t respect Sherlock so- much they would have been all over him.

But that thought brought him back to the guy at the signing and even though he knew it was irrational he knew he’d feel guilty if he didn’t confess.

“They weren’t all fangirls,” he said. “There were a few guys. And, well, one was sort of…”

He hesitated, wondering if this was really a good idea. He had no clue how Sherlock would react: most likely he’d laugh, but what if he was hurt? Or jealous? He thought back to when Victor was in town, when he kissed Sherlock and Sherlock didn’t even kiss back or even think about (as far as John knew). His partner had walked around sulking for the longest time, feeling like he had cheated.

With past relationships many of his girlfriends just rolled their eyes if he made a comment about another girl- it was expected of guys by their girlfriends, he supposed. His mates were even worse about it than he was, usually earning themselves slaps or refusal of sex- if not a drink to the face and a break up in the middle of the pub.

But Sherlock was different. His relationship with Sherlock was more intimate, more permanent, than any he had ever been in. He shouldn’t be having those kinds of thoughts about anyone. Not even for the slightest moment.

“Tall?” Sherlock suggested when he didn’t answer. John glanced up, horrified, having almost forgotten his partner was staring right at him. “Short? Fat? Old?”

“Hot!” John blurted out. He bit his lip, instantly feeling silly. “I mean…cute. I mean…Christ I’m an idiot.”

To his relief, Sherlock only let out a bark of laughter.
“It’s not funny!” John insisted as Sherlock pulled him closer. “I’ve never thought about another guy like that, even for a second. It was…strange. It feels wrong.”

His fiancé gazed at him for a long moment, looking almost—dare he think it—sympathetic.

“Oh Dr Watson, you and I both know sexual thoughts are just a part of human nature that we can’t control.”

John’s own eyes lit up, grateful his partner understood.

“Honestly it was just a momentary, fleeting, thought,” he promised, and then proceeded to lie: “I’ve already forgotten what he looks like.”

“Good,” Sherlock growled, his voice suddenly rather dark. “So then you weren’t picturing him doing this?”

Without warning Sherlock placed his hands over his zip, where his cock twitched hopefully inside his trousers. Closing his eyes, John shook his head and croaked:

“No.”

His partner grinned mischievously before gripping his cock through his trousers; John had to bite back a moan. They kissed again; his hands came up to take ahold of Sherlock’s curls. Heat rose through his body.

“I really, really want you right now,” John murmured.

Without warning Sherlock grabbed a hold of his arse and squeeze.

Then a wicked grin crossed his face.

“Too bad, you’ll have to wait,” Sherlock teased. Before he could explain, Sherlock grabbed his coat from the rack and headed for the door: “We have dinner with my sister’s family.”

John’s body swirled with a mixture of fury, arousal, frustration, and awe. Shamefully, he hesitated, having to stop himself from admitting that the last thing he wanted to do right now was see family. Selfishly, all he wanted right now was Sherlock.

“But…why?” He whined instead as he was pulled outside.

As his partner hailed a cab he explained:

“Laura’s house is all finished, and they wants to cook us dinner to congratulate you on the book.”

But…sex! He thought bitterly to himself.

And yet, the other part of his brain was thinking…food! After all, it had been a good five hours since he ate lunch— and that was just a sandwich. Food, then sex, sounded like a good enough compromise after a crazy day.

“You’re evil for teasing me,” John growled as they climbed into the cab.

The tension between them was almost too much to bare as they endured the almost half hour ride out to Laura’s house.

“I don’t remember them living out so far,” Sherlock muttered.
“Mmm,” John replied, grabbing his lover’s knee. “It is a bit nice to relax. I’m so tired of signing my own name. God I’m starved.”

“Even better, we get to have someone cook for us,” Sherlock grinned.

They laughed, and for the first time that afternoon John felt like himself. Smiles were still on their faces as they pounded up the steps of Laura’s home and Sherlock knocked on the door. It didn’t take ten seconds before Laura opened the door- and immediately threw her arms around John.

“Oh John!” She exclaimed. “I love the book so much. I’ve already finished it! Of course I’m reading it to Dan: he demands a new chapter every night at bed. But I read the whole thing in one sitting and it’s just brilliant! You truly, truly have a gift!”

“Thank you,” John said, hugging her back before they broke apart.

“I’m the star of the book, you know,” Sherlock whined.

His sister slapped him in the shoulder before hugging him as well.

“Yes, and you did very well,” she teased. “Come on, everybody’s inside. We’re doing burgers tonight.”

Sherlock scrunched up his nose, while John’s stomach grumbled. He hadn’t had a decent burger in ages; Sherlock wasn’t a fan of them, which greatly reduced the types of restaurants they could go to. They hadn’t been out to a pub in some time, and he had been trying to cut down on fast food.

“Burgers?” Sherlock whined.

“Yes, **burgers.**” Laura mocked. “Dan misses our local burger joint so Jason made some burgers and fries-“

“Chips,” Sherlock corrected.

“Shut up,” his sister said, rolling her eyes as she led them into the house.

John felt totally at ease as he was led into the new home. It was amazing how at home he felt around Sherlock’s family- he truly felt like he was one of them. They didn’t try to push him away or treat him like an outsider. Even Greg was beginning to feel like a brother to him.

*And he soon practically will be,* he thought to himself.

The thought made him stop and pull Sherlock aside before they entered the family room. His partner stared at him, confused, but John explained in a whisper:

“We should tell them about us.”

His fiancé’s eyes lit up and butterflies settled in his own stomach. Sherlock agreed with him, he could tell before he even opened his mouth.

No turning back now.

“You sure?” Sherlock asked quietly, giving him one final out.

Nodding, John breathed out:

“Yeah…you do it. It’s your family.”
He loved seeing his partner smile so much in one night; he loved seeing the partner who used to talk to skulls and lock himself in his room for days on end so relaxed and happy.

“Ohay,” Sherlock agreed. “Let’s do this, then.”

They shared a quick kiss before walking into the living room, which was now staged like a real, livable home. Gone were the buckets of paint, brushes, and tools and in their places the familiar furniture that was in the Carters’ New York home. The same paintings and pictures hung on the wall, along with a new paintings of the Thames and London skyline that John quite liked.

“Wow, everything looks really nice,” he commented.

“Thanks!” She said with a tired sigh.

_She always sounds so exhausted_, he thought.

“Didn’t you have a doctor’s appointment this week with your new OB-GYN?” He asked.

“Oh yeah, that went great!” She replied, sounding as though she had already forgotten. “Dr Walker was terrific, thanks for recommending her.”

Beside him his partner’s smile turned wicked, and he announced the very thing John had been dreading:

“Is that the same Dr Walker you slept with during your residency?”

John choked and covered it up with a laugh. He could feel his cheeks blushing red hot. Luckily Laura was laughing when she turned around and rounded on him.

“Is that why she kept asking about you?” She teased. “She’s single, in case you ever get tired of my brother.”

He couldn’t help but to smile to himself, knowing the announcement he and Sherlock were about to make.

“Oh I think I’m done with women for good,” he said. “No offence.”

Shaking her head, Laura offered:

“She’s really a great doctor, and with all of her experience working in New York City years ago she’s been great at making me feel comfortable delivering in a new country.”

“The baby’s healthy, then?”

“Oh yes, she is.”

The two men stopped in their tracks.

Sherlock stared at his sister straight-face, unmoving. Not even blinking. John was wondering if he was hearing things. Laura was grinning madly at them.

“She?” Sherlock finally blurted out.

“Yes!” Laura said and exclaimed: “We’re having a girl!”

“Oh my god!” John cried. He and Sherlock nearly knocked her over as they engulfed her in a hug.
“I’m having a niece!” Sherlock said. Then he froze again when they all broke apart. “I don’t know anything about girls.”

Laura laughed, waving his concerns away as she continued to lead them to the kitchen.

“Girls are fun,” Laura told him. “I’m so excited to have a little girl of my own! I mean, obviously I would have been thrilled if it were a boy too, but one of each is nice. Also I’m a bit relieved I won’t have two boys constantly fighting with each other.”

“Brothers fighting?” Mycroft’s voice mocked from the kitchen. “Never! Not in our family.”

The eldest Holmes’ sibling’s eyes twinkled as they entered the kitchen, where not only was Jason cooking burgers on the gas stove but a cake reading “it’s a girl!” sat waiting on the counter.

“I knew you wouldn’t be able to wait to tell them,” Jason teased.

“Sorry!” Laura said. “You told your mum and dad without me being there, so we’re even.”

“Even,” Jason agreed, kissing her.

“I’m having a sister!” Dan screamed, running in from the hall and jumping into Sherlock’s arms.

The little boy was getting a bit too big to be held, and John had to chuckle as Sherlock obviously struggled to hold him up (being all skin and bones himself).

“Are you going to be a good big brother?” Sherlock asked.

Dan simply shrugged as his uncle put him back down.

“Maybeeee!” Dan sang.

John almost felt bad to announce their big news on the same night Laura and Jason were announcing theirs- almost. After all, nothing was wrong with adding on good news, was there?

“Those burgers smell amazing, honey,” Laura told her husband as she stepped up beside the stove where a pile of hamburger patties were waiting. “Is it okay if I start serving everyone?”

“Like I’m going to tell my pregnant wife she’s going to have to wait to eat dinner until all the burgers are done,” Jason replied.

“That’s right,” Laura said, patting his shoulder. “Dan why don’t you wash your hands and help me set the table?”

Dan didn’t hesitate to step up onto his the stepstool they had just for him in the kitchen and wash his hands. He supposed Sherlock must have decided now was as good of a time as any because out of the blue he announced:

“John and I actually have some good news of our own.”

The entire family turned to stay at them; the room fell silent and Sherlock grew visibly nervous. John reached out, grabbing his hand to remind him he wasn’t alone: they could do this.

“I don’t think it would be a surprise if I said that John is the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” Sherlock started off, rather quietly. John’s body felt all tingly; he drew in a deep breath. He hadn’t thought about how emotional he might get during this. “I don’t think it would be a surprise to hear me say that I want to spend every last one of my days on earth with him…and as it turns
out, he feels the same way about me. And that is why we’ve decided that we would like to get our own Civil Partnership.”

He squeezed John’s hand, and John let out a long breath he had forgotten he was holding.

But everyone else in the room simply stared at them. No one said a word. For a few long moments the house was completely silent.

At that moment Greg walked into the room, and while he completely startled John and Sherlock no one else seemed to notice.

“I hope you don’t mind I let myself in. I knocked, but no one answered so I thought it be okay. Sorry to be late, my shift ran a bit long. Paper work and all that.” The DCI stopped when he noticed the state of shock everyone was in. John wasn’t even sure how Dan managed to be silent for so long- he must have been looking to his parents for cues on how to act. Greg was grinning like an idiot, completely oblivious to what was going on. “What did I miss?”

Swallowing nervously, Sherlock explained:

“John and I are getting a Civil Partnership.”

Now it was Greg’s turn to freeze.

Sherlock swallowed again, turning to John for guidance on what to do next, but John simply shrugged.

“We just thought it was the natural thing to do, considering this is what couples tend to do after a certain appropriate amount of time together,” Sherlock said.

A terrifying thought occurred to him: maybe that’s why everyone was so shocked. Time. Did they think they hadn’t been together long enough to justify a Civil Partnership? While it was true when he was younger John always imagined himself being with someone a couple of years or so before proposing, he and Sherlock were just right for each other. He knew they were. He had never been so sure about anything in his life.

“Also John proposed to me at Rockefeller Center, and it was incredibly romantic and I would have been the world’s biggest arse if I had said no,” Sherlock offered, clearly attempting to lighten the mood.

Still no reaction.

He and Sherlock glanced at each other, both fearing that this Civil Partnership idea was about to backfire in their face. Maybe no one would get it. Maybe they just simply didn’t support it.

But…but how could that be? The family loved him and Sherlock together- or at least it always seemed that way!

“And Civil Partnerships have really great tax benefits,” Sherlock added.

John wanted to slap him for saying that (even though selfishly, it was a good point). Needless to say, there was still no reaction. Just silence.

“Well I think it’s bloody brilliant!” Greg finally announced, startling everyone. “I mean, Christ, Sherlock to be honest with you you’re the last person in the world I would ever think to want to do something like this, but it’s brilliant! You and John are just perfect for each other. I’m really, really
proud of you mate. I’m really happy for you.”

The DCI embraced his old friend, and it was obvious on Sherlock’s face how relieved he was to hear that.

“Yeah, I’m just…shocked!” Laura admitted at last. “I can’t believe you hid this for so long!”

Ah! Maybe that was it. They had waited too long and everyone was disappointed.

“I hope you’re not angry,” John said.


Without warning Laura’s eyes were suddenly flooding with tears, and while John knew pregnancy hormones were in part to blame he adored how moved she was.

“You’re my brother-in-law now!” She squealed, embracing John in a tight hug.

“Too tight!” He croaked after a moment. “Can’t…breathe!”

She only laughed as she let him go, only to round on her brother next.

*My sister,* John thought.

Just like that, he had a new family. One that accepted him for who he was, one that didn’t spend every waking moment destroying themselves and their relationships. Dare he say it, he had a *normal* family- and by god how weird it was to think he was a Holmes now and could consider them ‘normal’.

“Congratulations,” Jason said, sticking out his hand to shake on it. “Welcome to the family-officially!”

“We haven’t signed any of the paperwork yet,” John said as he shook hands. “But thanks. I love all of you like you’re my own family. It’s great to make that official.”

Now Dan was jumping up and down, and he had to admit he was grateful when Jason lifted him up on his shoulders instead of asking John to pick him up.

“So are you my uncle now?” Dan asked.

John laughed, giving him a high five.

“Pretty much!” John chimed in.

It was Greg’s turned to greet him now, and John was grinning ear to ear as he thought about the first time he met Greg during their first case.

“If you had told me a couple of years ago that you would be my brother-in-law I would have laughed in your face,” John admitted.

Greg let out a laugh as they shared a quick hug and shook hands.

“I grew up an only child,” Greg said. “Now look at me! Two brothers and a sister! And a sister’s husband so, you know, technically three brother-in-laws. I couldn’t think of anyone better I’d want in my family- that I’d want with Sherlock. You really are perfect for him. I’m so happy for you two…and quite frankly I’m amazed you got him to agree with it!”
John found himself laughing as he explained:

“Yeah, that surprised me too. But Sherlock’s more of a romantic than he lets on. He actually pre-proposed to me in Paris- gave me a promise ring and everything.”

He tuck the chain out from around his neck that still safely held the promise ring. He noticed his lover blushing, but John was proud to show off Sherlock’s romantic side.

“That is the sweetest thing!” Laura said, practically grabbing the chain and choking him as she observed the ring. “I can’t believe you proposed to him at Rockefeller Center, that’s like every girl’s dream proposal.”

Her husband glared at her, and she quickly let John go and promised:

“Honey you know I loved your proposal on the front porch!”

Secretly John really loved stories of proposals at somewhere intimate like that- at home, at somewhere special the couple both loved. But the moment at Rockefeller Center just seemed so perfect. They were both just in such a good place: the mood was right, the atmosphere was right, and the proposal really just slipped out of him. And he didn’t regret it.

“Did John give you a ring?” Dan demanded to his uncle.

Sherlock, who was still blushing, sheepishly pulled out his own chain he had been hiding around his neck that revealed John’s grandmother’s engagement ring.

“Oh wow John, that’s beautiful!” Laura exclaimed.

Slapping him on the back, even Greg complimented:

“Well done, mate!”

“It belonged to John’s grandmother,” Sherlock explained. “It’s perfect. I never could have dreamt of this… the thought of anything close to marriage never even occurred to me throughout my life. Not until now. But this is perfect- John’s perfect.”

He and his lover shared a deep kiss before falling into their own embrace.

“I love you,” John whispered into his fiancé’s ear, his hands tightening around his back. “You’re pretty perfect yourself.”

Sherlock laugheded in his ear before whispering back:

“I love you too.”

It quickly became realised that the only person who hadn’t congratulated them was Mycroft, who had stood silently in the back of the kitchen sipping his wine during the entire scene. He simply watched his brother, rather in awe or in shock John still couldn’t tell.

But at last Mycroft stepped forward and held out his hand to his brother.

“Congratulations, baby brother,” he announced. “I honestly never thought I’d see the day…but you’ve changed. You’ve changed so much. I’m proud of you, Sherlock. Very proud.”

Without another word he embraced his brother; everyone stood silent in respect.
“Thanks Mye,” Sherlock muttered.

John could have sworn for a split second that when the two brothers broke apart there was a single tear in Mycroft’s eye, but as the older man stepped back he was convinced it was just a trick of light.

“Right!” Laura said, clapping her hands to break the ice. “Burgers and cake! We’ve got lots to celebrate tonight!”

They were all grinning madly and buzzing in excitement as the food was served, and John knew every single one of them could agree that they all needed a night full of good news.

Chapter End Notes

Coming up in the next story arc...Sherlock tries to help John with his family problems, John contemplates again getting back into medicine, and a certain evil villain returns (you didn’t think I’d leave him out, did you?! muwahahaha!) Oh, and Mycroft starts his new job!

Thanks so much for all your kudos and feedback! I hope you enjoyed the big reveal! And the baby news as well! I just love the idea of Sherlock dealing with a baby girl lol (not unlike in my Amelia series!). As always, I appreciate your feedback and would love to know what you thought!
The sharp scent of Chinese takeaway flooded the flat as the door slammed shut downstairs. Sherlock looked up from his violin, which had been attached to his shoulder for hours while John had been out at yet another book signing. When he wasn’t at signings, John was working on his first draft of his next book- and when he wasn’t doing that he was paying bills and straightening out their finances.

Dull.

It was all so utterly dull.

What he would give to have a new case that would send them running around London…even something simple- hell, he’d take a love affair at this point. But cases had gone dry in the past couple of weeks, leaving him to mope about the flat while his fiancé was about. Of course he had been invited to the book signings…but he wasn’t that desperate yet.

“I thought we agreed on getting Indian food,” Sherlock pointed out. One unamused look from John’s face told him that was not a good comment to make at the moment. “But Chinese sounds good too. How did the signing go?”

“Dull,” John moaned as he tossed the bag of food and collapsed onto a chair. “At least I got out of that bloody radio interview tomorrow.”

A grin spread across his face as Sherlock began to dish out the food.

“Ah, and we were all so looking forward to hearing your thoughts about me broadcasted live over the airways,” he teased.

“Somedays I want to go back to being unemployed,” John muttered. He ran his hands over his face and let out an exasperated sigh. “But unfortunately the one thousand five hundred pounds of credit card debt I still have says otherwise.”

Scunching up his nose, Sherlock began slurping up noodles and thought of his own financial situation.

Actually…now that he thought about it he had no idea what his personal financial situation was. He could always easily use Mycroft’s credit cards; otherwise money from cases easily covered his little personal expenses.

“I still don’t see how you’ve accumulated so much debt,” Sherlock confessed.

“Oh I don’t know,” John muttered, “maybe because I like things like eating, clothes, and transportation. I don’t have an older brother to mooch off of.”

Sherlock let out a huff and flicked a piece of broccoli at John. The teasing made his fiancé laugh, but John was still clearly stressed out.

“Mycroft likes it when I use his credit cards,” Sherlock replied, even though he didn’t believe himself as he said it. “He likes to help out.”
Smirking, John dug into his own noodles and shook his head.

“At least nothing’s going on tomorrow,” John said. “I’m definitely having a lie-in.”

He perked up at the thought of having his fiancé all to himself for an entire day…and of course the first idea that crossed his mind was that he had to find a case for them.

But as he watched his partner dig into his food, hand twitching and sighing in between bites, he realised what was really going on with John probably had nothing to do with exhaustion. He realised- at that moment- that John looked small. He was lacking confidence. John had been acting like this whole book ordeal was his alone to deal with, and perhaps Sherlock hadn’t been as supportive as he should have been. He had been more than happy to let John go off on his own to do the signings, to deal with the agent and publishers, to even deal with his fans. As much as he absolutely dreaded those things, they were about to practically be married, and marriage (as Laura liked to point out) was about compromise. John needed a confidence boost, and he would be an incredibly selfish person to not talk to him about it.

“You’re doing great, you know, with the whole book thing,” Sherlock spoke up quietly. John’s eyes lifted up to him hopefully, like he had been secretly wishing someone would complement him like that. “It’s something that’s totally new to you, and you’ve handled it with grace.”

Swallowing nervously, John sat down his fork, flexed his arms, and replied sheepishly:

“You really think so?”

Sherlock stole a kiss to John’s cheek as he stood up and wondered over to the fridge for a bottle of German Riesling they had been chilling. He poured them each a glass before taking his seat again- and stealing an extra dumpling from John’s plate.

“I’ve told you how proud I am of you, right?” He asked.

“Yeah,” John nodded. “I appreciate it, Sherlock. I just still feel overwhelmed about all of it, and I don’t understand it. The press has never bothered me before, when it came to our cases. I’m a bloody army doctor for Christ’s sake, why is this giving me so much anxiety?”

“This is on a much bigger scale,” Sherlock pointed out through a mouthful of food, “and it’s about your personal life- our personal lives. You have a lot of money coming in, without knowing how well the book will keep doing. Your future is literally in your hands.”

“Our future,” John muttered. “All of this makes me want to think more about opening up a medical practice.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to snort as he sat his wine glass down.

“Right,” he teased, “because owning your medical practice would be far more stable and less stressful than writing books.”

Stretching out his arms and letting his head rest in them, John let out a groan.

“I don’t know what to do with my life!” The doctor whined. “I’m too old to not know what I want to do with my life.”

His fiancé seemed to forget all about eating as he leaned over the table, wallowing in self-pity. Sherlock hated seeing John like this; he had to fix him. He stood up behind John, lifted him into a sitting position again, and began to message his shoulders.
“Your life hit a crisis when you were shot in Afghanistan,” Sherlock began. “Then you came back to London and fell in love with a man. Your whole life has changed in a very short amount of time. I think you’ve handled it beautifully. You should give yourself more credit.”

He leaned down and kissed his partner on the cheek. Reaching out to the table he picked up a dumpling and carefully pried it into his fiancé’s mouth. The smallest of smiles crossed John’s face as he let Sherlock continue to feed him bits of his food.

“Are you going to feed me the wine, too?” John teased.

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and John let out another groan.

“I’ll get it,” Sherlock offered, running his hand through John’s hair before heading toward the stairs.

*Please let it be a case,* he begged silently, *anything!*

Hopeful, he threw the door open, all smiles- and froze.

Standing at their doorway, with a hand pressed against her bleeding neck and tears streaking down her face, was a young woman of Indian decent. He immediately noticed that her sweater was ripped at the left wrist and right shoulder, and she wasn’t carrying a purse.

“I need a doctor!” She pleaded.

She barely managed the frantic cry of help before she fainted into Sherlock’s arms.

“John! Patient!” Sherlock yelled up the stairs.

“What?” John called from the kitchen, concerned and confused.

Sherlock let out a grunt as he pulled the woman inside and lay her down careful in the floor of the foyer. On cue Mrs Hudson rushed in from her flat and let out a gasp when she saw the injured client.

“Oh goodness!” She exclaimed. “Perhaps you should phone-”

“No!” Sherlock shot. This girl had come to them for help when she could have easily found someone to phone for an ambulance. “John! Med kit, now!”

“Sherlock-” Mrs Hudson warned, her voice quivering with worry as she brought a hand to her mouth.

Finally John appeared by his side, swearing at the sight of the amount of blood that had already been worse.

“Call 999!” The doctor ordered. “She’s lost a lot of blood already. Neck wounds are nothing to-“

“She came to us!” Sherlock protested. “She clearly needed to see someone she could trust.”

His eyes darted toward his partner, begging him to trust him. With a sigh, John pressed Sherlock’s hand hard against the wound.

“Hold pressure here, tight. Don’t let go. I need to disinfect the wound- and quickly.”

Before John could even fish around his medical kit the woman’s eyes suddenly shot open. It
startled John so much he fell back onto his knee; even Sherlock nearly let go as she startled them with her awakening.

“Don’t invite him in!” She cried out hysterically. Her eyes were wild, reminding Sherlock of the drugged out young girls in the drug dens he used to hang around. He swallowed nervously, hoping that drugs weren’t involved here.

“Don’t invite who in, dear?” Mrs Hudson asked bravely.

With wide, staring, eyes her whole body shook furiously; it took quite the effort for her to get out:

“He attacked me…he…he’s…he’s a *vampire*!”

Just like that her eyes fell shut and she once again passed out in Sherlock’s arms. Mrs Hudson let out a scream, and Sherlock and John turned to each other in disbelief. A long moment of silence followed the abrupt outburst; Sherlock wasn’t sure what could be said that could even begin to bring sense into what the victim just told us.

“She’s in shock. I’m phoning for an ambulance,” John announced, shaking his head as he reached for the mobile in his pocket. Grabbing his arm, Sherlock pleaded with his eyes for John to listen to him, but the doctor warned: “To ask me to do otherwise would be risking her life.”

He dropped his hand in defeat, knowing that John would know best about what to do.

“Mrs Hudson, go get some clean towels,” John instructed.

He stepped over Sherlock and the girl to look out the open door, checking to make sure no potential suspect was still lurking nearby. When he stepped back into side he locked the door, took out his mobile, and dialed for an ambulance.

Chapter End Notes

I am SO sorry for the long wait! Honestly part of it was I hadn't considered just how long it's been since I updated! Work has been INSANE, I was sick for awhile, and I wrote a new Amelia fic. I wanted to get out *something*, even though this chapter is shorter- really just a teaser! This case is loosely based on "The Sussex Vampire"!

Thank you all for reading and for your lovely reviews and kudos! I'd love to know what you think of this so far!
Their victim had had her throat slashed.

And, as it turned out…

“Bite marks,” John pointed out to Sherlock when the consulting detective was finally allowed to enter the patient’s room. The woman- named Adri, aged 30, born in Manchester- was sedated. Peering over the patient, Sherlock could clearly see the bold-red, deep, indentions where bite marks were made on the left side of her neck while the bandage covering the slash was on her right. “And she had fingermarks on her hips and waist under her clothes.”

“Was she raped?” Sherlock asked quietly.

Thankfully, John shook his head.

“Her doctor doesn’t think so, and neither do I,” he said. He hesitated before continuing and swallowed nervously. “I’m actually wondering if this might have been some sort of…erm… sex play gone wrong.”

Without meaning to, Sherlock snickered.

“Sex play?” He mocked. He found it amusing that his fiancé was shy about talking about sexual activities considering all of their shared experiences. Then he paused, thinking about what John was implying. “Is vampire… play a thing?”

His partner shrugged.

“Hell if I know,” John muttered. “But I suppose just about anything can turn into a… sex thing.”

Sherlock shook his head and closed his eyes, telling himself he needed to get serious.

At the same time, in the back of his mind he made a mental note to try to broaden John’s sexual horizons later. After all, their encounters lately had been pretty routine. But now he had to focus on the case.

“We need to phone the police before the hospital does,” John said. “We make sure Greg gets the right people on the case.”

Shaking his head, Sherlock insisted:

“This girl told me she was attacked. Even if he didn’t rape her, she was still abused and still scared enough to not go to the police. She trusts us. We don’t need the police all over this, scaring her. We can solve this before the police even send someone out to speak with her.”
“This is a criminal case, Sherlock,” John warned under his breath. “We have no business—”

“It’s fine.”

They both jumped at the sound of the victim waking up. She tried to offer them a faint smile but instead winced in pain.

“I’m going to let her doctor know she’s awake,” John announced, placing a hand on Sherlock’s arm and throwing him a warning with his eyes for him to be nice.

Once he was left alone with the victim he put on a brave, confident, face and turned to her. He had so little talking to victims of sexual assault that he decided perhaps it would be better to wait to get into details when John returned. John would have worked with assault victims back when he still worked in the A&E.

“It’s not like you think,” Adri announced, as though reading his mind. “I wasn’t raped.”

While he initially felt relief, he also considered she could be protecting her attacker. If it was some sort of roleplay gone wrong, she could be worried about throwing her partner under the bus and leading to his arrest.

“When you arrived at my doorstep you said, and I quote ‘he attacked me’,” he pointed out.

He saw her tense up, and he took a seat beside her instead of pacing the floor, helping she felt more at ease talking to him. After all, wouldn’t women usually prefer to talk to other women about something like this?

“Can I ask why you came to us for help?” He said.

Instead of answering she played with her hospital wristband. Her eyes fell to a close, and she brought her hand up to her forehead, as though she suddenly had a headache. Before he could speak up again the hospital door opened, and Adri’s doctor returned with John.

“Hello, Adri,” the doctor greeted calmly. “I’m glad to see you’re awake. Gentlemen, if you wouldn’t mind giving us some privacy?”

Nodding, Sherlock didn’t argue as he followed John back out into the hall.

“Did she say anything?” John asked quietly as they began walking down the corridor.

“She says she wasn’t assaulted,” Sherlock admitted, “but she could be trying to protect her partner.”

“Victims of assault and abuse tend to do that,” John said quietly. His eyes were distant, and Sherlock didn’t want to imagine all the examples of patients he had in the past who had done just that.

“We need to locate her partner,” the consulting detective said. “Notice he didn’t exactly bother to make sure she got help. She might say she wasn’t raped, but she was brutally attacked. He knows he did wrong- and she knows that he’s dangerous. She got away from him.”

The hospital room door opened and the doctor stepped out, looking rather collected and unperturbed.

“I trust you two have phoned the real police?” The doctor asked. He and John exchanged glances,
hesitant to reply. “Look, I appreciate you making sure she got help, and I know she went to you but her clothes are full of DNA evidence. We really should inform the police before her attacker gets away.”

“He’s right,” John sighed. “We could be dealing with someone who has attacked women before-and who might again.”

Sherlock stared at the hospital room door, reluctant to leave his client without even getting a chance to really talk to her.

“I just need to talk to her one more time,” Sherlock pleaded. “Then I promise we will be out of your way.”

The doctor looked to John, as though needing his reassurance that he could trust Sherlock to get out of the way.

“Five minutes,” the doctor finally agreed.

They wasted no time in re-entering the room, where the patient was sipping on some water.

“Adri, what happened to your partner?” Sherlock asked. “Do you know where he is?”

Adri’s eyes darkened as she looked away; she wringed her hands together and chewed on her lip.

“I can’t talk about my partner,” she whispered quietly. “You see…he’s a patient of mine.”

She looked directly at John, as though challenging him to judge her based off of her revelation.

“You’re a doctor,” John realised out loud.

“I’m a therapist,” Adri explained. “I can’t…I can’t reveal much about him.”

Sherlock nodded, pretending like he understood. He knew John was just as protective of his patients- but why couldn’t she just break the rules to tell them about the man who attacked her?

So he would have to put together the pieces without his client’s help.

Easy enough.

It wasn’t like he’d never done that before.

“Were you afraid to go to the police because you were trying to protect your partner- your patient?” John asked.

Hesitating, Adri drew in a deep breath and shuddered as she let it out.

“I just began practising,” she explained. “If people find out that I’ve slept with a patient it would ruin my career.”

“Then perhaps you should have thought of that before sleeping with him,” Sherlock muttered under his breath.

John elbowed him hard and took over the talking:

“It’s noble of you to want to protect your patient,” John said, “but your patient didn’t exactly care about protecting you. You’re not alone- I’ve known people who have hooked up with patients. It
might not be the most...ethical...thing to do, but attraction is human nature, no matter your profession. But your partner attacked you, and you came to us for help. Surely you must have wanted us to do something for you.”

Adri froze, and Sherlock was quite proud of John for speaking up like that.

“I was afraid the police would arrest him,” she finally confessed. “He didn’t mean to do it! He didn’t realise what he was doing. I don’t want the police to investigate this like an assault. I need to help him. You have to find him...look he’s due for another prescription for his medication. He knows what will happen if he can’t get it. The practice opens tomorrow at nine. He’ll be there in the morning, I know it.”

“As will we,” Sherlock promised. “What will you tell the police?”

Hesitant, Adri chewed on her lip for a moment before confessing quietly:

“I could always tell the doctor the truth. It was just...just an accident. I don’t want them to phone the police.”

He could sense John’s disapproval beside him as the doctor shifted on his feet and crossed his arms. Even Sherlock wasn’t sure what to believe- on one hand he wanted to believe her, to believe this was just all a horrible scene gone wrong. But if he agreed to side with her and it turned out she really was being abused, he wasn’t sure he could live with himself.

At least they had gotten her medical care, he decided. She was safe.

The most important thing was to make sure she stayed that way.

“So you have any idea where he might go?” Sherlock asked. “Any idea where he might stay, so we can try to track him down tonight?”

Shaking her head, Adri replied;

“His name is Ian. He has family lives in Wales, but I really don’t think he’d go to them. He hasn’t spoken to his parents in years. He has a flatshare in London, but I’m not sure where. But the thing is, he’s out of his meds. He has to go to his appointment tomorrow at my office to get a refill. He knows what he’ll go through if he doesn’t. Another therapist will be there to fill in for me...I know he’ll be there.”

Sherlock ultimately decided to take a look at Adri’s flat before the police got their hands on it. Adri gladly gave them a key so for once they weren’t breaking and entering, but still John didn’t seem too comfortable with the idea.

“You don’t have to work on this case if you don’t agree with the ethics of it,” Sherlock said as they walked through the dark foyer of the flat.

“The ethics of it?!” John hissed. “Sherlock, we have absolutely no business being on this case! This is far above our heads.”

At that moment Sherlock found the light switch, and they both froze at what they saw when the room was lit up.

The flat was a small studio style place, with the bed in the centre of the room and a tiny kitchenette
off to the side. He was surprised, to say the least, that a successful therapist would ever live in such a place, but perhaps he was too out of touch with current London rent prices. Mrs Hudson was far too lenient with them about not raising their rent.

But what was most startling was the...the state of the bed. The sheets were made of red satin. There was no duvet. The pillows were on the floor. And attached to the headboards were two chains. What was undeniably used condoms were on the floor along with a whip- similar to the style he owned- lay abandoned on the bed.

“Erm…” John finally spoke up beside him after a few moments of staring. “Are we...seeing the same thing?”

Sherlock suddenly felt hot, embarrassed, and he didn’t understand why.

*Maybe it’s because in the back of your mind you know exactly what this setup is, and you’re curious,* he thought.

“Yes you do,” Sherlock announced. Because they didn’t have time to waste being embarrassed. This was a case. They had to be at least somewhat professional. “What does this scene tell you?”

He watched, amused, as his fiancé worked up the courage to admit he knew exactly what he was seeing. The handcuffs weren’t real, they were a fake kind commonly found at adult stores. He was certain if he searched the drawers beside the bed he’d find more toys and evidence of just the kind of acts Adri was attracted to.

“She...she likes it,” John finally spurted out. “The erm...sex play. The vampire stuff. She likes it.”

“Yes,” Sherlock muttered. “It’s all consensual. But something made him turn against her. She acts like things just got out of hand, but what if it was a conscious decision? Her going along with these games could be fueling his obsessions.”

“It makes you question her abilities as a therapist,” John muttered.

Sherlock’s mobile suddenly buzzed, and he frowned when he took it out and saw that it was Greg who was phoning him. Even though they were family now, Greg still didn’t typically call him up these days unless it was about a case. So of course the one time he had a new case for them it was during one of their cases.

“Hello, dear brother,” he teased.

But the tone of the DCI’s reply was all business:

“Have you been watching the news?” Greg asked, without any greetings or explanations. Sherlock glared, though he was on his mobile, wondering why Greg would ever think he would just be sitting around watching the news. “What am I saying, of course you haven’t! Well there’s this bloody disturbing case that’s just happened. Get this: a body turned up with bite marks on the neck. It looks like...it looks like someone tried to suck blood out of her. The blokes are saying...they’re saying it looks like she was attacked by a vampire. But clearly that’s rubbish.”

Sherlock was already tuning him out and turning toward John, jaw open and mind reeling.

Yes, clearly the attack was conscious.
And clearly their attempts to find the suspect were too late.

“Where are you?” Sherlock demanded.

There was a slight hesitation, as though Greg was surprised he’d want to take the case, but after the moment’s thought the DCI gave him the address.

“What’s wrong?” John asked as soon as he ended the call.

“There’s another victim.”

After quickly wiping up any fingerprint evidence that might show they were at the flat, Sherlock whisked John into a cab a few streets away and within fifteen minutes they were at the next crime scene.

He could only hope the hospital hadn’t yet phoned in Adri’s case to the police.

“But if they didn’t call it in, aren’t we obligated to tell the police?” John pointed out quietly as they climbed out of the taxi. “Greg will kill us if he found out we are hiding that kind of information from him. Hell, Sherlock, we could have serious legal consequences by not telling!”

As much as he hated to admit it, he knew John was right, but that didn’t make him want to expose Adri’s story too quickly.

“Fine!” He shot. “We’ll tell him...just, not right away. And only if he asks.”

John groaned behind him but didn’t protest as the two stepped into the crime scene. They were at another flat building, a rather shoddy looking one in a poor, lower class neighborhood. There actually wasn’t a lingering crowd around the crime scene tape, but there were a few strung-out looking younger men loitering in front of a liquor store across the street.

“Oi!” Greg’s voice called from the entrance to the flat. He nodded toward the door, and Sherlock and John ducked under the tape to reach him. “I figured this case would be up your alley. Definitely a seven. Maybe even an eight. For starters, check out this flat.”

When they stepped inside Sherlock was immediately reminded of the shoddy places he had stayed after dropping out university, when he and Luke were still living off the last of their university funds. They had not yet hit rock bottom, and yet their living conditions weren’t exactly...ideal.

The first thing he noticed was the flat was freezing, and the place was horribly lit. Like the therapist’s flat the home was a studio flat, but instead of a real bed there was simply a mattress on the floor with the naked body of a young woman lying on it.

“The landlord came around to collect rent,” Greg began, watching Sherlock as his eyes roamed over the trash that littered the floor, the mess of unwashed dishes in the tiny kitchen, and the opened bottles of alcohol propped against the wall. “He said the lodger’s been avoiding paying up for so long that he entered the flat himself and found it like this. At first he thought it might be an overdose or alcohol poisoning- understandably. Then he saw the bite marks.”

Bending down, Greg pointed out the deep marks littering the right side of the victim’s neck. However, Sherlock didn’t see any other obvious marks of violence, like with the slash in Adri’s neck.
“I don’t see any blood on the bed,” John noted as he knelt down next to the mattress. “Those bite marks wouldn’t have caused near enough bleeding to kill her. Maybe the landlord’s line of thinking was right.”

“Perhaps, but that still leaves us with the question of who was with her, and where did they go,” Greg pointed out. “Did you notice her arms? Look at her back.”

He handed John a pair of latex gloves so he could move the victim. As the cloth sheet fell down her back, his fiancé visibly stiffened at the site of what Sherlock recognised as whip marks. Her arms were covered with thick finger-sized bruises.

“Jesus,” John muttered, holding a hand up to his face. “Make sure they run test to check for signs of rape.”

“Of course,” Greg muttered; sometimes they still had a bad habit of forgetting he had at least some clue how to do his job. “Notice anything else interesting?”

Sherlock took another look around the flat, thinking that if Greg had already figured out something important it should be at least somewhat obvious. Something the potential suspect wouldn’t want them to notice…

But the more he examined the flat the more he realised how normal it was. Normal for a shoddy flat, at least.

And that was the problem.

The suspect hadn’t made much of an effort to clean up. He had possibly been so high that he rushed out without even thinking of the need to clean up the crime scene- or he could be a frequent visitor to his flat and he could have known the likelihood of the police finding fingerprints no matter how much he tried to clean up.

“She was just left here,” Sherlock announced. “We should check CCTV on the street.”

“I have someone on that,” Greg replied under his breath in a tone that made it obvious the person that was on that was Mycroft. “I asked the landlord if anyone had been coming around the flat recently with her, and he said there was actually an older bloke that had come around a few times in the past couple of weeks.”

Sherlock frowned- in Adri’s description of her patient she described him as being younger, perhaps a couple of years younger than he.

“Any other description?” He asked.

Greg shrugged.

“His arms were covered in tattoos,” he replied. “I’ll have someone ask around to all the neighbors to see if anyone’s seen anything else.”

The next morning they wasted no time in heading to the medical offices where Adri’s therapist practice was. They knew the receptionist wouldn’t give them patient information without a warrant so they staked out at a bakery across the street while they watched the people going inside the
building. Sherlock had John researching vampires on his mobile while the consulting detective kept a steady eye on the street in front of him.

“There are actually people who drink other people’s blood,” John read out loud. “God this is disturbing. They get donations from people. You know, because it’s not like actual patients could use that blood or anything. Apparently some people believe they were born vampires. Jesus, so do you think this is something he’s believed since he was a kid? How does someone even come up with something like that?”

“Overactive imagination,” Sherlock muttered.

“Hmm?” John glanced up at Sherlock, curious.

The consulting detective simply shrugged the comment off, wishing he hadn’t said anything.

“Something people used to tell me when I was younger,” he mumbled. Clearing his throat, he went on: “It’s not like kids who like to play pirates and pretend like they’re really sword fighting. They truly believe this is who they are.”

“I just can’t imagine it,” John admitted.

But Sherlock could. He had met enough murderers, serial killers and rapists, and thieves to understand that there were people who truly believed that’s just who they were.

“Did you believe you were born to be a soldier?” Sherlock asked.

He didn’t realise until he blurted out the question that they had never had an in-depth discussion about why John decided to go to war. He knew John’s grandfather was a soldier, but his partner also didn’t talk about his grandfather too much. While he secretly yearned to know more about that part of his fiance’s past, he also respected that there were very good reasons John didn’t talk in detail about the army. He didn’t want to press him to open up old wounds.

“To be honest it was something I was afraid to do, and that was part of why I wanted to do it,” John confessed quietly. Sherlock couldn’t help but to tear his eyes off the street to look into his lover’s eyes, and his heart reached out for John at that moment. “I had heard all these stories about my grandpa, and while everyone thought of him as a hero I could only ever imagine how terrified he must have been. I told him when I was younger that I wanted to be a soldier, like he was, and he always said…he always said it was a sacrifice that shouldn’t be taken lightly. When I got to the point where I had the experience to be able to apply and join the army, I was pretty terrified.”

“I can’t imagine,” Sherlock murmured quietly.

It really was hard to imagine how one could be so young and yet so determined about what they wanted to do with their life. He never once when he was younger thought ‘what do I want to be’ or ‘what can I do for others?’ Even Mycroft had offered him work many times with MI5 or MI6- and he would have been very good at it- but he still refused out of sheer self-gratification. The world was too boring for him. It was all just too dull for him.

“I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it,” John shrugged, as simple as if he had wanted to prove he could chug down a few pints. “And it was pretty amazing, realising that I was strong enough to be a soldier and that I was capable enough to help save lives. It wasn’t just about the adrenaline rush- I was constantly trying to prove that I could be better. But as far as being a soldier goes…I don’t know. It feels like that’s still a part of who I am, even though I know I will never be on a battlefield again. It’s an odd feeling.”
Sherlock nodded, pretending like he understood, although he was certain he could never even begin to. Even after all the criminals and murderers he had put in jail he still didn’t think he had found any kind of redemption for the way he threw his life away in his youth. But he still didn’t like to think of himself as being a value to society- as being a hero. He didn’t think he earned the title, no matter how much the papers might push for it or no matter how much the fans might worship him.

“What about being a doctor?” Sherlock asked. “You always knew you wanted to do that, right?”

“Well, yeah,” John said. “But that’s a profession. What these people are claiming- that they are vampires- is a delusion. It’s like…”

“It’s like knowing you’re truly a woman, when you were born in a man’s body?” Sherlock suggested curtly. “Or knowing you have feelings for men, when society raises you to believe only men and women should be together?”

Swallowing nervously, John tugged at the collar of his jumper, and Sherlock knew he had made his point and shouldn’t push it.

“But those aren’t delusions,” John argued. “That’s just part of who someone is.”

“Only because so many have come to accept transgenders and gays as apart of society,” Sherlock said, “but a hundred years ago it would have been extremely frowned upon for me to see in a café and do this.”

He leaned forward, over the table, and surprised his lover with a quick kiss to the lips. John blushed, but Sherlock only grinned.

“But we’re still human,” John said. “It’s not like we’re off believing that we’re bears or…ghosts or something.”

Sherlock snickered; he knew John knew he was losing his argument.

“There are many people in this world who would think that being gay is just as delusional as believing you were born to be a vampire,” Sherlock said. “Who are we to decide what is and isn’t delusional?”

Frowning, John looked truly perturbed as he tried to think of a rebuttal.

“This man has hurt people,” John stated. “That’s where the line has to be drawn- when people believe that because they are these…creatures…that makes it okay to hurt people. Adri thinks what happened was just an accident. But she shouldn’t have to think that way.”

“She’s his therapist,” Sherlock sighed. “She’s going to feel partial to siding with him.”

“Yeah, well I think this is him.”

Nodding toward the street, John’s eyes carefully traveled to a younger man wearing a hoody who was watching behind his back as he crept around the medical plaza and went in through the main floor. Adi had shown him their picture, and there was no doubt in Sherlock’s mind that was him. Sherlock threw down some cash for the pastries and coffee, and they both quietly filed out of the café and across the street. The suspect was already in the building so Sherlock knew it would do them no good to chase after them inside. It would be easier to wait for him outside and corner him; they didn’t want to risk lingering in the café and missing him on the way out.
“Something had to make him want to seek therapy,” John pointed out as they leaned back against the railing of the wheelchair ramp. “People who truly believe in their delusions aren’t often too quick to accept help. It doesn’t seem like he has much family that would push him towards therapy. Maybe he’s hurt someone in the past and wanted to get help.”

“Then he should seek a new therapist,” Sherlock muttered.

They fell to a silence, and Sherlock glanced at his mobile, wondering just how long this therapy session would take. For ten minutes they watched the traffic on the road in front of them, resisting the urge to stare at the door of the medical building. When at last they heard the door open they both turned- and froze when they saw who was exiting.

“Mum?” John announced, mouth agape.

John’s mother looked quite older than Sherlock remembered. Her hair was greyer, she wore more wrinkles on her face, and she carried herself with a complete lack of confidence as she kept her eyes to the ground and clutched her purse at her side. At first she pretended like she didn’t hear anything, but John stormed toward her, blocking her way. For a long moment mother and son looked at each other, and it was all Sherlock could do to hold back and bite his tongue. He wanted to lash out, curse at her for putting her son through so much humiliation and distress. Though he admired how strong John had been since that fateful visit from his mother, he knew John yearned for nothing more than to have his family back together again.

“What are you doing here, Mum?” John finally asked after Mrs Watson never replied.

The older woman stared down at her son as though he were a stranger- as though she had totally forgotten he still lived in this very city. It was like she had really thought she’d never run into him again.

“I need to catch a cab,” Mrs Watson replied at last, sounding defeated.

“Mum, I…” John hesitated, swallowing nervously. Sherlock could only imagine all the thoughts going through his fiance’s head, all the things that he wanted to say but was afraid to. “I really want to talk to you. Please?”

Cold eyes roaming her son, Mrs Watson didn’t look interested at the least at his request, and Sherlock had never wanted to strangle a woman more than at that moment.

“You look busy,” she sneered. “Please John, I’d like to get home. Your father is expecting me.”

John snickered.

“Dad says you hardly talk to him anymore,” he shot, “neither you nor Harry do. He’s worried about you- and so am I. You might have disowned me, but you’re still my mother. It doesn’t have to be like this. I know you’re going through something. It’s great, if you’re getting help, but what good is that going to do if you still can’t even talk to your own son?”

Wrapping her arms around herself, Mrs Watson kept her eyes pinned to the ground as she replied softly:

“I’ve really got to go.”

She stepped out of her son’s path, and John looked utterly crestfallen as she took off down the street.
“Please!” John called after her. She stopped for just a moment, and Sherlock didn’t miss the
glimmer of hope in his fiance’s eyes. “Come around for dinner. Sunday is your birthday…I want to
see you.”

His partner sounded almost childishly desperate, and Sherlock’s stomach did flips at the heartbreak
in his voice. When Mrs Watson didn’t reply Sherlock placed a hand on John’s shoulder, and the
doctor wasted no time in turning to him and leaning against his chest.

“I’m so sorry,” Sherlock whispered. “She is getting help though. She needs to do this in her own
time.”

Drawing in a deep, shaky, breath John nodded as he pulled away.

“I know,” he sighed, wiping his hands over his face. “I know it’s just…it’s just ridiculous.”

“There’s no denying that,” Sherlock agreed.

To their surprise, it was only another five minutes before Adri’s patient walked out. He made a
beeline toward the corner where he could catch a cab, not even taking the time to check to make
sure no one was around. It was all too easy for Sherlock and John to catch up to him- and corner
him. At first he tried to fight, but Sherlock announced:

“Adri hired us to find you.”

That made the man stop.

“Ian, right?” Sherlock asked. A young man, no older than twenty-nine, turned toward them,
revealing a tired face and a black eye. His curly hair was a sweaty mess. He actually reminded
Sherlock of himself when he was younger. “Adri told us you would be here. She wanted us to talk
to you before the police.”

The younger man’s eyes roam ed over both of them, clearly picking up on how distraught John still
was and how out of place they looked on the street.

“Who the bloody hell are you?” Ian snapped, his accent reeking of Manchester.

His lips turning up in a wicked grin, Sherlock turned to John and teased”

“Do you have a copy of your book to show him?”

Rolling his eyes, John answered for him:

“He’s a consulting detective. We’ve worked with the police on a lot of cases, and Adri came to us
for help.”

Ian looked between them once more, but it was obvious from the hesitation in his eyes that he was
starting to trust them. He wanted them to talk to you before the police.”

“Ian, is she okay?” Ian finally asked.

He sounded sincerely worried, and Sherlock stole a glance to John. He knew his partner would
take that as a sign that this really was an accident.

“She’s in hospital,” John explained. “She lost a lot of blood, but she’ll be fine.”

“She told us what happened was an accident,” Sherlock chimed in. “Funny thing is we were
phoned by the actual police about a similar crime- except in this one the girl was bitten and killed. You wouldn’t happen to know anything about that, right?”

Eyes falling to a close, Ian turned even paler. He looked like he might faint.

“Jesus,” he whispered. “I knew these people were hardcore, but I didn’t think they’d hurt people like that.”

“You hurt someone too,” John pointed out. “And who are ‘these people’?”

Ian hesitated for a long moment; it was obvious he didn’t expect them to believe him.

“Vampires,” Ian replied coldly, as though daring them to mock him. “Adri calls it a cult, but it’s not. These people…they’re vampires. We’re vampires.”

Sherlock fought the urge to let out a sigh of frustration, but it was clear when he turned to John that he found this just as unbelievable.

“So you’re…a vampire?” John asked carefully. He was testing him, but didn’t want to call out his delusion or scare him.

“Yeah,” Ian nodded. His voice was suddenly filled with confidence; he didn’t even seem concerned now that they shouldn’t believe him. “But I try not to hurt people. I really do. Things just…got out of hand with Adri. I can usually control my urges better.”

Blinking, Sherlock had to take a moment to pull his thoughts together before replying calmly:

“Why are you seeking Adri’s help, if you’re a vampire?”

With a shrug, Ian explained:

“She was working on a book about people with so-called delusions. But as she got closer to me even she could see it…it’s true. I’m a vampire. It’s in my blood, it’s who I am. It’s who my family’s been, for centuries.”

Eyes closing briefly, Sherlock forced himself to not react. Clearly they weren’t going to get anywhere with inquiring about his habits.

“Look, that’s all well and good but someone in your little group killed someone,” Sherlock said. “The suspect’s described as an older man with tattoos down his arms. Ring a bell?”

Ian’s eyes lit up with surprise- and a faint trace of disappointment.

“Yeah,” Ian confessed. “He’s our leader. His name is Cedric. But he preaches anti-violence more than any of us. This doesn’t make any sense.”

None of this makes any bloody sense, Sherlock thought to himself.

“Any idea where we might find him?”

“Well, yeah,” Ian said. “We share flat.”

Sherlock and John turned to each other- was this really going to be this easy?

“Except this morning the flat was empty when I woke up,” Ian explained. “All of Cedric’s stuff was gone. He’s taken off.”
Drawing in a deep breath, Sherlock turned his back on Ian and motioned for John to do the same so they could walk off and talk and private.

“This is way too weird for our pay grade,” John muttered as they stepped away. “Actually, we’re not even getting paid for this!”

While that was a good point, Sherlock couldn’t help but to let his eyes twinkle.

“This case is far too fascinating to pass up!” He insisted. “And imagine the re-sell value of the story…Sherlock Holmes and the Vampires of London. It’s dying to be a hit.”

John only stared him down, biting his lip and holding back from saying something nasty that Ian would hear. With a bright smile on his face and his body rushing with adrenaline and keen interest, Sherlock swirled back around to face Ian and announced:

“I’m going to need to know everything there is to know about this group of yours.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh my gosh. This chapter! It was the chapter that would never end! Before I realised it I had written a monster of a chapter...which hopefully makes up for the wait! I'm beating a dead horse saying this, but life has been CRAZY. I was out of town, then I got sick...like FOREVER. But it probably only took me a few sessions to write this chapter, I could just never find out a good place to end it. It felt like everything belonged in it, so I hope you enjoyed this massive update :)

Thanks SO much for all your wonderful comments and for all the kudos! This case is one of those that definitely sounded easier to write in my head LOL, but I am enjoying writing this story arch so I hope you enjoy reading it! I'd love to know what you thought!
John Watson felt like he was living a fine example of *be careful what you wish for*. He had wanted a case- and this is what he got. He had wanted to see his mother again- and this is how it happened. Now he was stuck harboring a fugitive and fuming over his mother’s ignorance.

Sherlock was wary about taking a cab in case the news was covering any of the assaults so they began to walk aimlessly as the consulting detective tried to think of a plan. If he were honest John found himself grateful for the walk- it gave him a chance to think and cool off. He needed to concentrate on not killing his fiancé right now and not being confined to a taxi with him helped.

A mobile buzzed, and both he and his partner looked up and watched as Ian checked his phone. The man’s face instantly fell, and he ran a hand threw his disheveled hair in panic.

“That was Adri. The police have connected the two crimes- they’re at my flat.”

“Damn, the one day Greg’s on fire,” Sherlock muttered, “and he didn’t even need my help.”

“Speaking of which he is going to expect you to come back the Yard eventually,” John pointed out. “We need a game plan.”

Stopping suddenly, Sherlock took a look around the busy London street, like he was drawing inspiration from the heartbeat of the city. But when he looked into Sherlock’s dark orbs and noted the worry, the anxiety, even the regret John swallowed nervously.

They were officially in over their heads.

“I’m turning myself in,” Ian suddenly announced.

“Oh thank god,” John breathed.

Sherlock glared at him, and while he knew his partner didn’t like having to take an “easy way out” this was clearly the best solution for all of them.

“Ian-“ Sherlock began, but was cut off.

“Your detective friend will be pissed if he finds out you’ve been helping me,” Ian pointed out. “You two shouldn’t have to pay the price for what I did- what they think I did. I know I’m innocent and so does Adri. If I hide and avoid the police it will only make me look more suspicious.”

“He has a point,” John agreed, impressed with Ian’s proposal. “We’ll only make this worse for Ian- and ourselves- if we keep secretly helping him. He can turn himself in and explain what happened. At the worst he’ll have to argue his case in court, and with Adri’s support that shouldn’t be too hard.”

The consulting detective gazed at him, as though silently asking if he could trust this was really a good idea and John nodded, encouraging him.

“Fine,” Sherlock sighed. “But let’s go back to Baker Street and I’ll phone Greg from there. We can make it look like Ian came to us.”
Thankfully Mrs Hudson was out, probably doing the shopping, and they were able to go upstairs unnoticed with Ian in tow. Ian’s eyes scanned the flat in interest, noting Sherlock’s experiments, the violins, and all the books.

“Are you guys like…together?” Ian asked.

John rolled his eyes; by this point he was so used to being Sherlock’s partner that it seemed silly for people to be put off by them.

“Yeah, you got a problem with that?” John challenged.

He noticed Sherlock smirk at the comment, and Ian shook his head furiously. Suddenly John just wasn’t feeling this case at all: it had already been a long morning, after a long night, and after his run in with his mother he felt mentally exhausted. He knew they’d have a long afternoon ahead of them at the yard, and Sherlock would probably find an excuse to drag him around London. His instinct was to make an excuse to go lay down, but he didn’t like the thought of leaving Sherlock with a criminal so he collapsed on the sofa instead. Taking out his mobile, he pulled up a new text message to harry and hesitated for a long moment before writing:

*Ran into mum. How are you guys doing?*

That would be the safest way to put it. Ran into mum would imply that the meeting didn’t go to well and how are you guys doing would imply he was concerned after talking to her.

While Sherlock phoned the police Ian lingered by the window, gazing out over Baker Street and looking very much out of place. John had the feeling he didn’t get out much. He was surprised when his mobile buzzed only moments later, and he was even more shocked at Harry’s response:

*Things are awful. Can we meet up?*

John’s eyebrows shot up, and he had to stop himself from turning his lips up into a small smile.

His sister wanted to meet with him.

She *wanted* to meet with him.

Of course, judging by the tone of her text she was probably so desperate she was willing to push all of her troubles off to him.

But still.

He looked up to Sherlock, wondering how he’d react to him dropping out of the case. He *had* given him an out earlier, after all, but he had also been incredibly excited about the strangeness of the class and clearly wanted John there to “enjoy” it with him.

Jumping up from the sofa, he walked over to Sherlock as he hung up his phone call with Greg.

“Harry’s just texted me, she wants to meet up,” John said quietly, hesitantly, knowing Sherlock would be irritated. “I know we have a case on, but it’s just so rare that she wants to talk to me. Things must be really bad if she’s asking *me* to talk. And after seeing my Mum like that, I think I really need to see my sister.”

For a long moment Sherlock’s eyes searched his, and he held his breath. It was quite a
breakthrough for his partner- just a year ago he would have scoffed at the very idea of John ignoring the case. But Sherlock had matured, he had become more understanding- more human- and seemed to realise that at this moment this was more important to John than the case.

And that was okay.

“Yeah, go,” Sherlock offered. “You need to figure this out with your family. Go.”

Leaning forward, he stole a kiss to John’s cheek.

“Ring me,” Sherlock added quietly, “if you need me.”

John nodded appreciatively and squeezed Sherlock’s arm.

“Same,” he replied.

He met Harry at an Italian restaurant he knew she liked closer to his parents’ side of London. When they were kids and their parents let them pick a restaurant for their birthday dinner Harry would always pick this place- and every dinner she would always order the spaghetti. Their dad used to get frustrated, pointing out that he could have just cooked that at home.

John always thought Harry just liked the red and while checkerboard tablecloths.

Without fail, Harry ordered the spaghetti and John lasagna. For the first full five minutes of their meal Harry tore into the breadsticks, eating like she hadn’t eaten in days.

“Save some room,” John teased.

Harry’s eyes went wide and she dropped the breadstick, freezing as though someone told her she was under arrest.

“Sorry, it’s just that I’ve been starving,” she explained. “I’ve been on this new diet.”

He frowned. His sister wasn’t exactly overweight: he would guess she weighed about eight stone, and that certainly wasn’t a weight he would tell someone to diet over.

“Why? You don’t need to lose weight.”

He knew Harry would appreciate the compliment, but instead she seemed to sink into herself, falling back against the seat and abandoning her food.

“Mum told me I’ve gained at least a half stone since moving in,” she mumbled.

“Yeah, well Mum doesn’t exactly have the best judgement,” John snapped. He grabbed a breadstick, ripped it in half, and forced his sister to take it. “What sort of diet have you been on?”

With a shrug, Harry fell silent again, and John knew it wouldn’t be one he’d approve of as a doctor.

“Starving yourself is an extremely unhealthy way to lose weight,” he told her, trying to not sound too demanding or doctorish. “And again- you don’t need to lose weight! You look great. If you want to live healthier just make healthy lifestyle choices.”

Like, you know, giving up the booze. For good.
“Mum’s been on my case about everything lately. I really have been cutting down on drinking! Going cold turkey didn’t work so I decided to do it slowly, so in the past few weeks I’ve only had a couple drinks a week.”

John had to bite his tongue. He knew his sister tended to exaggerate to make herself sound better, and a few weeks probably meant two and a couple drinks probably meant five. But he supposed five in a week was better than four in a day.

“She makes comment about my weight, rolls her eyes when I mention dating.”

The corners of his lips turned up in a small smile. He wasn’t sure if he had ever heard his sister talk about dating before, at least in the way she meant- dating other women. In school Harry went through her fair share of guys, and he was sure she experimented some to, but she never openly talked to him about dating women before. Especially not after Clara. Even with Clara, all she knew was that they were in a relationship and Harry was a horrible influence when it came to his sister’s partying lifestyle. But Harry never actually talked about her, until they broke up.

“Dating?” John asked lightly, hoping she opened up even more.

“Yeah,” Harry said, blushing slightly. “A mate of mine introduced me to her. She’s a school teacher. She’s a bit…low key, but she’s nice. She’s…a good change of pace.”

“And what does she think about your drinking?” John asked.

Harry grimaced, and he knew the answer was she doesn’t know. He imagined her girlfriend didn’t think anything of Harry getting drunk once or twice a weekend, or having a drink or two with dinner, but she probably had no idea about the day drinking. Living at home gave Harry a great method of hiding her habit.

“Harry, that’s not fair to her,” he sighed.

“I know!” She protested. “I know, I just…I don’t know how to tell her. I’m trying to change, I’m trying to get better and I think I can before she even has to know.”

His fingers tightened into fist, and he had to stop himself from lashing out at her. He knew the most important thing is that she was trying to change. But he just didn’t understand how she couldn’t see how serious the ramifications would be if her girlfriend ever found out about her hiding her drinking problem.

“All I know is if I found out Sherlock was secretly struggling with drugs I would be crushed,” John confessed. “I would wish he had come to me so that I could help him. I’m not sure how easy it would be to get passed a lie like that.”

Harry bit her lip, and John knew he had gotten through. He was pretty sure she tended to forget that he had a partner who struggled with addiction as well, making him understand even better how hard it was to overcome.

“Right,” Harry murmured. “I’m just…I’m just not sure how to tell her. How did Sherlock tell you?”

He snorted, thinking back to the first time Greg was at their flat after he moved in- for a drugs bust.

“I sorta…found out,” he replied, “and it hurt. I didn’t believe that he would be into something like that. But once I knew I could help keep an eye out for signs that he was struggling, and when things got really bad, I could be there.”
“He’s always struggling,” Harry whispered. John’s eyebrows furrowed, his body stiffened. “Addiction doesn’t just go away…even if you stop drinking or stop doing drugs. You always think about it. It’s like an ex…it’s always in the back of your mind. It just sounds like Sherlock’s better about pushing those thoughts away than I am.”

Swallowing nervously, John didn’t want to admit that he had spent the past year thinking Sherlock was— for lack of a better word— “cured” of his drug addiction. In fact, since they had become intimate Sherlock hardly even brought up drugs, and so John convinced himself it wasn’t a problem anymore.

“I can trust him, though,” John pointed out. “I really do trust him to tell me if it ever becomes an issue again.”

“That’s good,” Harry said with a half-hearted smile, as though she didn’t really believe him. “You and Sherlock are just so close. From the beginning…it was like you were always meant to be. With this, I’m not even sure where we’re headed yet. It’s just casual, you know?”

John nodded, understanding.

“I know,” he said. “I’ve been there. That’s how I know that casual can become serious very quickly…and suddenly you regret all the stuff you’ve been hiding.”

“Yeah, well casual can also lead to heartbreak,” Harry said, running her hand through her short hair. “So can any relationship. But I want to give this one a go. It gives me something to fight for, you know?”

A smile broke out across his face, his chest felt less tight and a weight seemed to lift off his shoulders. Maybe his family wasn’t in as bad of shape as he thought— maybe he wasn’t giving Harry enough credit. After all, during their whole time at this restaurant he hadn’t seen her so much as glance at the drink list.

“I’m proud of you,” John told her sincerely. “I just wish you weren’t stuck there with Mum.”

“I know,” Harry sighed. “I wish I could afford my own flat, but I’d have to get a flatmate, and I think that would just make things even harder.”

He almost blurted out you should stay with us again, but deep down he knew it wouldn’t work out.

“It’s gonna be amazing how better things get, once you can control this,” John said. “Once you can hold down a job and get into a relationship, everything turns around. Trust me…I was in a really dark place just a couple of years ago. You have no idea…I didn’t know what I was going to do. Then I met Sherlock.”

His sister’s eyes brightened a bit.

“Dad told me about you two deciding to do a Civil Partnership. Congratulations.”

“Yeah,” he smiled. “I never thought Sherlock would want to do something like this, but he’s really changed. You can too.”


Reaching out, he placed his hand over hers and squeezed it.

“Please don’t avoid me, Harry,” he pleaded. “Let me help you through this.”
After a long, anxious, moment she finally nodded and let out a breathy:

“I won’t. Promise.”

His mobile buzzed, and he somehow wasn’t surprised to find a panicked text from Sherlock:

-the Yard. Now.

He didn’t even have time to respond before another text came through:

-Greg= pissed

Well I wonder why, he thought bitterly to himself.

“Sorry, I’ve got to go soon,” John sighed. “Sherlock’s gotten us in a bit of trouble.”

“Surprise, surprise,” Harry teased. “I thought you were supposed to be the one influencing him, not the other way around.”

With a chuckle, Johns smirked:

“Well…sometimes it works both ways. In good ways and bad.”

Chapter End Notes

This chapter is really part one of two. I intended for this to be a much longer chapter, but I’m going out of town so I wanted to put something up for you guys. More exciting stuff to come, promise! Thanks, as always for being so awesome and all your nice comments and kudos :D
As John entered the department all eyes were on him, staring him down, warning him: be prepared. Drawing in a deep breath, John knocked on the door of Greg’s office and reluctantly pushed the door open. His fiance’s eyes immediately lifted up to meet him, relieved upon seeing him arrive to…defend him? Protect him? Bail him out? Against the far ceiling-to-floor windows leaned Mycroft with his arms and legs crossed.

And Greg…Greg stood behind his desk, rubbing his hand against the back of his neck frantically, looking like he had no idea what he should be doing.

“I just…I can’t wrap my mind around it,” Greg finally announced after a few daunting moments of silence. “You’ve done some pretty stupid shit but actually harboring a fugitive?! Forget about the danger you put yourselves in, but blatantly breaking the law. And a bad law. Do you have any idea how badly this could fuck up a trial?”

John’s eyebrows shot up- he rarely heard Greg swear. He was a copper, John knew he had to swear, but he was usually relatively composed around the family.

“No one has to find out,” Sherlock sighed, as though it was a point he had made a dozen times already. “Your freaking out is incredibly tedious. You’re ignoring the real problem, and we’re running out of time.”

“Sherlock’s right,” John chimed in. “The longer we stand here the longer Cedric has to get away.”

The look in Greg’s glare warned them “this isn’t over” but nonetheless let out a sigh and knocked his knuckles against the desk.

“Enlighten me,” Sherlock announced, “why are you here, Mycroft? Other than to scold me?”

Rolling his eyes, Mycroft pushed himself away from the wall and waltzed over to Greg’s desk and opened a file labeled “classified and confidential”. Immediately upon seeing the collage of women with similar bitemarks on their neck and blood streaming down his body, John swallowed hard and felt a pit form in his stomach. Clearly something big- something tragic- was going on here that was more than just a small London “vampire cult”.

“I’ve had experiences with cults like this before,” Mycroft announced, “both in London and abroad. Usually they’re groups of youth who feel out of place and unwanted, and these fantasies make them feel important. But sometimes the groups get violent- and sometimes it’s hard to set aside fantasy from the reality of dealing with murderers.”

“You mean like a cover?” John asked. “Some of these people join these groups for the violence of it all?”

Mycroft nodded.

“Ian seems pretty convinced this is all real,” Sherlock commented. “Cedric is an instigator. He’s praying on these young people.”

“Yes,” the eldest Holmes’ sibling replied. “There are similar groups currently active. One came up
on MI6’s radar after a member attacked a daughter of a diplomat. We think it was just an isolated incident, a coincidence—“

“You don’t believe in coincidences,” Sherlock snapped.

His brother’s eyes lifted to meet his, and it seemed to take all his will for Mycroft to admit:

“We wouldn’t find any evidence to suggest otherwise.”

The consulting detective snickered, and John knew why: Mycroft could have found evidence if he really wanted to.

“The closest group to London is Wales,” Greg said, “but we’ve established Cedric probably wouldn’t go there. I’ve put in a call to police in that district just to be safe. The next closest is Paris.”

John’s eyebrows shot up. Was it wrong that he secretly hoped this was leading to him and Sherlock being shipped off to Paris to investigate? He really wouldn’t mind a weekend away.

“That’s where the diplomat’s daughter was murdered. After interviewing Ian, he thinks Cedric wouldn’t go there to distance himself from the past crime.”

“Unless…they’re connected,” John blurted out, immediately feeling embarrassed when he considered the other three already knew that. A bemused smile crossed Mycroft’s lips, and John explained: “So…Cedric could have murdered the diplomat’s daughter too?”

“There was fingerprint evidence found in the daughter’s room,” Mycroft said. “They don’t match fingerprints from Cedric that Gregory’s team found in his flat.”

“Clearly running away was more important than cleaning up evidence,” Greg chimed in. “Which usually means there’s more the suspect’s hiding. Mye’s people are assisting with erm…keeping an eye on Cedric’s whereabouts, but in the meantime we’re concerned of a serial killing situation. Ian told us the cult—the…group—meets tomorrow.”

And knowing Sherlock, he knew exactly what that conversation was really about.

Closing his eyes, John sighed:

“Let me guess: Sherlock, you want to go undercover.”

A sly smile peered at the corners of Sherlock’s lips.

“Well I thought it’d be more interesting to have Mycroft dress up as a vampire…he declined. But this will be fun too.”

John had to admit, dressing Sherlock up to be undercover was more than a bit of fun.

It was totally a turn on.

Which he could never admit.

Because this was, after all, a murder investigation.

But it would never get old seeing Sherlock dressed up in his tight, dark, slutty, undercover jeans.
His outfit was complete with a beat-up pair of trainers, v-neck t-shirt, and a pair of fake, square-framed glasses.

Squared framed government-issued glasses with a hidden security camera feature that was.

He’d drawn in a few fake white scars on his face to make himself look less noticeable. There were even streaks of red costume hair spray mixed in with his bangs.

“How do I look?” Sherlock asked as he turned away from the mirror.

John simply grabbed him by the arms, pinned him against the sink, and trapped in a sharp, heated, kiss. By the time they broke from air and stared each other in the eye, breathless, Sherlock’s lips were swollen.

“Because I feel bloody ridiculous,” Sherlock muttered. “Real vampires wouldn’t actually look like this.”

“Yeah, well you look bloody hot,” John commented under his breath before stealing another kiss.

His fiance’s face was flushed as he backed away and swallowed nervously, as though admitting it would be dangerous to take this any further right now. The meeting was in only an hour. To his surprise though, Sherlock rummaged around in the cabinet for a medical kit and pulled out a syringe and vile.

“What are you doing?” John demanded, watching in horror as Sherlock began preparing a vein to draw from.

Sherlock refused to meet his eyes, clearly knowing John wouldn’t react well.

“Ian says to initiate yourself into the group you have to bring a…a treat for everyone,” he confessed.

The doctor’s stomach did flip-flops.

“Oh god,” he muttered through gritted teeth. “No, Sherlock. I don’t feel good about this.”

His eyes slammed shut when Sherlock struck his arm and began drawing blood.

“I figured this would be the easiest way,” Sherlock added. John opened his eyes, only to glare at him and try to make him feel guilty. “What? I’ll draw some extra so you and Molly can do the full blood count you’ve wanted to do. I know how obsessed you are with my potassium levels.”

When Sherlock filled one vile with blood he reached for another.

“Yeah, for letting you get to do this I get to do a complete physical,” John shot. Sherlock began reaching for another vile, but John held out a hand to stop him. “At least let me add some.”

Although he would never admit it, he knew Sherlock tended to get woozy when he lost a lot of blood. Plus it was probably time for him to get a bloody test of his own done too and see how his cholesterol was.

In the end John felt dizzy as he watched Sherlock stash a lunch box with viles of their blood- and it wasn’t just because of the blood loss.

“You have your mobile right?” John asked.
His heart was beginning to feel tight; the more he thought about it the more he really, really didn’t like the idea of his lover going undercover amongst a gang of delusional, murderous, fake vampires.

“Of course,” Sherlock said.

Reaching up, he planted a soft hand against John’s face, cupping his cheek. He leaned in and placed one last gentle kiss on his lips and offered him a reassuring smile as he backed away.

“It will be fine,” Sherlock said. “This is just to... get a feel of who we’re dealing with.”

“I think I already have a pretty good idea of who we’re dealing with,” John mumbled.

“I love you,” Sherlock announced softly. “I’ll be fine.”

He could only sigh and echo “I love you too” as his partner left the flat to catch a cab.

John’s stomach was in complete knots as he watched the security footage at the Yard with Greg and Mycroft. Funny enough, even though he could see everything that was going on he felt more nervous about his partner now that he couldn’t actually see his face. He stole a glance toward the older Holmes’ brother, expecting to see worry in his eyes as he watched his baby brother go into the lion’s den, but instead he only saw pure determination and focus. Of course: the Holmes brothers didn’t have time for emotions. That had to be bottled up on the inside.

But Greg…Greg looked sickened.

“He actually drew his own blood for them to drink,” Greg muttered, shaking his head as they watched Sherlock pass the vile around.

“And mine,” John muttered. “At least I’ll get a physical out of him.”

He caught Mycroft smirking, and somehow that made John a bit more at ease. This was just a meeting, right? To see what the “vampires” had to say about the deaths and what their next step would be. It’s not like they hurt each other.

Then Sherlock was handed his own cup of blood.

“Oh god!” John hissed, covering his mouth with his fist. Yes he was a doctor and was more than used to blood- but drinking it?! “That’s just not right.”

Even Greg grimaced, but like Mycroft remained focused on what was happening.

“So there’s no sound?” John complained.

“Sherlock refused to wear a wire,” Mycroft muttered. “He didn’t want any risk.”

“Even though it’s not exactly the riskiest undercover sting I’ve run,” Greg admitted. “In fact, if you have things to do, love-“

He threw Mycroft a concerned look, and John found himself wondering again what his new job was. Obviously Greg knew more than he let on, and his head exploded thinking of the sheer amount of things the DCI knew that John didn’t know.

“It’s fine,” Mycroft said. He hit a button on his laptop, which was connected to the Yard’s camera
monitors. The software on his laptop drew faces around each of the six other vampires in the room with Sherlock; Mycroft clicked ‘enter’ and it seemed to save them. He noticed John watching, and explained: “Face recognition software.”

“You mean…like to see if they’re in a criminal database?”

Mycroft smirked once again, and John knew that was definitely not what he meant, and he decided to leave it at that. With no sound the rest of the meeting was rather uneventful and really only lasted a half hour. There didn’t seem to be a new leader- in fact John was a bit surprised they even let a newbie into the meeting. The vampires seemed to be…gossiping.

He couldn’t help but to wonder what story Sherlock came up with to convince them to let him in.

The meeting ended rather anti-climatically, with the vampires filing out of the warehouse space, and he met Sherlock back at Baker Street. His partner promptly began washing the dye out of his hair.

“I dunno, I kind of like the red,” John teased as he leaned in the doorway of the bathroom.

“Too bad,” Sherlock muttered. Even after furiously washing his hair in the sink there were still faint red streaks in his hair, making him look rather like a sixteen year old at a Halloween party. Sherlock scowled and John snickered. “Shut up. You have great natural hair.”

John’s eyebrows shot up: never in his life had he been complimented on his hair.

“I have old man hair,” John protested. “You, you have fantastic hair. You have hair models would kill for.”

“Exactly,” Sherlock pouted. “I hate having to ruin it for undercover work.”

Rolling his eyes, John took his lover by the hips of his ridiculously tight jeans and pulled him close.

“Yet you were so eager to do it,” he challenged slyly. For the second time in the bathroom that day the two locked lips, and it was all John could do to not just have Sherlock right then and there.

But they were on a case.

And there was to be no sex on cases- especially cases this big.

So John broke away, still feeling anxious as he licked his lips.

“Erm...how did it go?” He asked.

“They were mainly confused,” Sherlock said as he grabbed his coat and they headed out the door. “They were totally blindsided. I think having a new person in the group was almost comforting to them...like they could move on.”

“Do you think they could have been afraid of Cedric?” John suggested.

He was imagining a cult-like environment where the leader appeared to be welcoming and accepting to newcomers while figuring out how to pray on their vulnerabilities.

“I think they might have been a bit, yeah,” Sherlock admitted as he hauled a cab. “But they’re not
bad people they’re just...”

“Delusional?” John asked, wondering if Sherlock understood now.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock confessed:

“Yes, perhaps a bit, but it’s not really their fault. I was once young and extremely vulnerable.”

Their eyes met, and John realised just how much Sherlock could understand how these young people could be convinced they were vampires.

“I still just think it’s too much of a coincidence that the attacks happen so closely together, especially when they’re flatmates. And one of the others in the meeting said Cedric doesn't actually have a job; without his flat with Ian he's nothing. There's no way he could afford to sneak out of the country. I think he's still here, in London. But Greg was right...this could turn into a serial killing issue. Not just locally, but abroad. I don't think the multiple deaths among the vampire groups is a coincidence at all. I need to talk to Ian again- he's the key to finding Cedric. I think he's still hiding something.”

With that they were off once again, heading back to the Yard.

And in the back of his skull, John started to form a dull headache as his mind reeled from all of the possibilities of the case.

Chapter End Notes

I hate to leave it there, but I'm not kidding when I say life has been incredibly full of suckiness lately. I've been totally stressed out about my job, and I'm trying to find a new one so that's taking up all of my spare time. And, I admit, I ran into some writer's block with this case :( But I'm trying to stay on track! I didn't want this case to be more than 3 parts, but I'd rather update shorter parts than keep you guys waiting for a month for a new chapter. So I hope you don't mind a longer case! More family stuff is coming up in the future...and of course their Civil Partnership ;)

Thanks, as always, for all the lovely comments and kudos! You guys totally make my day and make me want to keep on keeping on with writing!
“Friday at two,” John announced as they made their way back into the Yard.

“Hmm?” Sherlock hummed.

During their ride there John had been ranting on and on about something, but his mind was too wrapped up in the case to pay attention. He was trying to take some steps back: sometimes a case appeared far more complicated than they actually were. What they had on their hands here was really a total of three murders and one group of people tied to them. He just had to connect the dots.

“You doctor’s appointment!” John exclaimed, incredulous. “You haven’t been listening to me at all, have you?”

“We have a killer on the loose, John,” Sherlock pointed out, “and a case that MI6 possibly- no, very likely- botched. Every minute we waste is another minute the killer has to get away and clean his tracks.”

“Yeah, well sorry if I’m just a bit concerned about the fact that you just drank someone else’s blood!” His partner shot. Oh, right. That’s what he had been ranting about. And Sherlock had chosen to tune out. “Do you even know whose blood that was? That person could have had diseases- they could have had AIDS, Sherlock! You have to think these things through!”

With a groan, Sherlock took in a deep breath to collect himself. What he wanted to tell John was to just be quiet, stop worrying, and maybe even leave if the case bothered him that much. But they were to be practically married soon, and he knew they would get nowhere if they bickered like this during all their cases.

“They make everyone do a blood test before donating,” Sherlock said. “I’ll be fine.”

John stepped in front of him, arms crossed.

“So…you had one done?” He challenged.

Sherlock grinned, knowing going over his fiance’s head about doing a blood test when the doctor had been begging him to make an appointment for months would drive him mad.

“God you’re being insufferable this week,” John mumbled.

Stepping aside, John pouted as he and Sherlock stepped into the lift.

“The test came back perfectly fine, by the way,” Sherlock said. “Thanks for asking.”

“Yeah, well I’ll want to see those results myself.”

“Oh come on!” Sherlock said, rolling his eyes. “You can still keep the physical scheduled. How did you get one so soon, anyway? GPs book up weeks in advance.”

With a shrug and his lips turned up in a sly grin, John simply commented:

“I am a doctor. I have connections.”
As soon as they stepped into Greg’s department Sherlock could feel all eyes on him, and he scowled.

“Stupid hair dye,” he muttered to himself.

Greg himself was all grins when they approached him.

“Nice jeans,” Greg teased.

Rolling his eyes, Sherlock bit back his retort and instead demanded:

“We need to interview Ian, on our own.” He glanced around the department, noticing the absence of his brother. “Did Mycroft leave?”

“Work business,” Greg replied quickly under his breath, as though hoping Sherlock wouldn’t pry.

He couldn’t only hope ‘work business’ meant using his resources to find out more about these international vampire cults. Greg let them interview Ian without protest (he had a feeling Greg was a bit creeped out by the case and was more than happy to have Sherlock involved. He was surprised to find Ian looking paler than before- almost, dare he say it: vampire-like. He stole a glance to John, who looked more concerned than disturbed. Not only did Ian look pale, he appeared ill.

“Are you alright, Ian?” John asked as they took a seat across from him. “You don’t look well.”

Ian rubbed at his throat.

“I’m fine,” he replied with a scratchy voice and coughed. “I get these ulcers in my mouth sometimes- they make me feel like I have a cold. It’s not a big deal. I guess criminals don’t get to get sick.”

John frowned.

“You seem feverish,” he commented, “I’m going to go grab a med kit.”

He left without further explanation, leaving Sherlock to offer a cheeky smile and say:

“He’s a doctor. He sees diseases in everyone.”

This earned him a chuckle from Ian, who commented:

“My mum was a nurse; she was the same way. She worked in cardiology so every time she noticed someone out of breath or even looking faint she’d stop to help. She was...amazing. I’m fine though, really. It’s...it’s just been a long day.”

Mainly because Ian had sacrificed his own freedom and future to ensure John and Sherlock couldn’t get into any trouble with the law.

But Sherlock simply replied:

“Yeah, it has been.” He paused, resting his fingertips under his chin as he contemplated what all he should tell Ian. Greg hadn’t warned him to not get into details about the undercover sting, but Ian was going to be in holding so there wasn’t a risk of him passing on the information. So he decided to go for it: “I went undercover within your little group. None of them seem to have any idea where Cedric was.”
“Did they ask about me?” Ian asked bluntly.

Sherlock blinked.

Come to think of it, no one had even mentioned Ian.

“I think they were more preoccupied with the murder bit,” he replied.

At that moment John returned with a med kit- and Greg.

“Sorry, I have to be in here for this,” Greg apologised.

“No worries,” Sherlock muttered. “A murderer is on the loose, we have plenty time for a medical exam!”

“Sherlock, please!” John snapped. “Ian is important to this case so we can’t exactly afford for him to be ill.”

“I told you I’m fine,” Ian protested as John stuck the thermometer out for him.

With a groan, Ian gave in and let John pop the thermometer in his mouth. A moment later it beeped, and John shook his head.

“38.8 degrees,” John mumbled.

Sherlock’s hurt sank- definitely a bad fever. Not good for the case.

Or Ian.

But also for the case.

John felt around the suspect’s glands in his neck and shook his head.

“You said you have mouth sores?” He asked

Nodding, Ian opened his mouth so John could take a look around.

“Have you been having any headaches?”

The vampire’s eyes darkened and he nodded reluctantly.

“Yeah, really bad ones. Like some of the worst I’ve ever had. I just thought it was stress or something. I…I haven’t been sleeping well.”

Sherlock knew right away that this wasn’t good. He watched his partner carefully as he worked, trying to figure out what he was thinking before John said it.

“Have you had any rashes?” The doctor asked.

To his surprise, Ian lifted up his shirt to reveal a rather ghastly looking rash.

“Jesus, why did you never say anything?” John asked. “You knew I was a doctor! You can’t ignore a rash like that.”

“I know, but…” Ian trailed off, and Sherlock knew what he meant: he didn’t want to face the reality that something was wrong.
John stole a glance toward Greg, who looked equally as worried but probably not for the same reason. How did he go about containing a sick suspect?

“Do you feel comfortable answering some more questions in front of them?” John asked, nodding toward Greg and Sherlock.

Ian nodded anxiously, as though knowing he didn’t have much of a choice.

“You can trust Greg,” John promised, “he’s a mate of ours. And Sherlock…you already trust him, right?”

The suspect didn’t look very certain, and Sherlock tried not to feel insulted. After all, it was Adri who had insisted on working with the consulting detective.

“I hate to be blunt…but are you sexually active?” The doctor asked.

Beside him Greg stiffened, and Sherlock began to realise what his partner was thinking.

“Yeah,” Ian replied, as though surprised John hadn’t figured that out already. “Adri and I have a great relationship.”

For a long moment John stared down his patient, as though challenging him.

“Are you sexually active with more than one partner?”

At this Ian froze. His hand fell to the back of his neck and he massaged it frantically. His eyes darted away, looking at anything but them, and Sherlock could practically hear Ian’s heart pounding.

“I…” Ian started, his voice trembling. “I…why are you asking me that?”

Glancing down at the floor, John crossed his arms and confessed:

“Your symptoms are consistent with that of sexually transmitted diseases. In particular, given the rash…HIV comes to mind.”

“Oh god,” Ian breathed, running his hands over his face. He stood suddenly and spun away from them as he frantically began pacing. “Oh god, oh fuck.”

Suddenly Sherlock wished he didn’t have to be in the room for this. He didn’t understand how John was handling this so calmly- how he could ever handle giving news like this so calmly. He knew that now the case meant nothing to Ian. All he was thinking of was this disease, of what it meant, of what it could mean for his partners.

“Cedric,” Sherlock realised out loud; he really hadn’t meant to say that out loud. But everyone was staring at him so he went with it: “Cedric is your other partner. Does he know you’ve been sick?”

Ian looked even paler than before, like he might vomit, and let out a tiny, stiff, nod.

“Yeah…but Cedric’s been sick too. He told me it was safe. He told me we were being safe, I didn’t have to worry.”

Closing his eyes, John seemed sincerely sympathetic as he softly replied:

“Nothing’s ever one hundred percent safe.” He glared to Sherlock and shot quietly: “This is exactly why I was worried.”
Ian sank back into his seat, allowing his head to fall into his hands.

“He’s past the early stage of the disease,” Ian explained. “We use condoms, we’re safe. I’ve even been taking this pill thing that prevents me from getting it.”

“Have you been sleeping with Cedric longer than you were with Adri?” Sherlock asked.

The suspect looked up at him, defeated.

“Cedric’s not really a relationship kind of guy,” Ian replied dryly. “That’s why I’m surprised he was even involved with that poor girl you found.”

Sherlock looked at Greg, realising Ian didn’t know.

“We actually didn’t find any signs of sexual activity on her body,” Greg admitted.

The vampire seemed to be at least slightly relieved at this news, but Sherlock still couldn’t connect the dots. What motive did Cedric have then to kill this innocent girl he didn’t even have relations with?

“Look, to be honest Ian should really be in hospital right now,” John commented. “His fever is high, and he needs to get tested now. There are drugs that can help prevent AIDs.”

“I know,” Ian nodded. “Cedric has been taking them-“

He stopped, let out a long breath, and held his hands up to his face as though he were too traumatized by his realisation to speak.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

“Cedric he…I found a packet of those drugs that hadn’t been taken from the last week,” Ian confessed quietly. “He’s been sick lately. Very sick.”

He glanced up to John, who gravely stared back, as though silently reminding him it was crucial to give them all the information they could.

“He’s been losing a lot of weight. He’s just tired and angry all the time. I told him he should see his doctor, but he wouldn’t listen. He’s been so out of it lately. It’s like…it’s like he knows something’s coming from him.”

John looked over to Sherlock, who was slowly trying to put the pieces together and consider how this could have affected Cedric the night of the murder.

“Do you think that’s why he did it?” John asked Sherlock quietly. “Do you think it just all became too much…and he snapped? He could have found out he had AIDs and just…lost it.”

But Sherlock wasn’t as easily convinced.

“You’ve given patients horrible news before,” he pointed out darkly. “Did any of them go off and kill innocent women?”

Looking away, John obviously regretted his comment, and Sherlock regretted being so short with him throughout the case.

“Sorry,” he apologized quietly. He looked around the room, to the desperate faces staring at him, begging for answers and hope.
All Sherlock could connect was that if Cedric was sick with AIDs he wouldn’t be able to go very far without help or treatment. If Cedric had developed AIDs he would be afraid, hurt…betrayed, possibly.

His eyes went wide.

“Ian, how did Cedric get introduced to the whole…vampire thing?” He asked.

Ian shrugged; he was really beginning to look like life had been drained from him.

“His sister…she used to be obsessed with it,” he replied. He shuddered and wrapped his arms around himself. “She was convinced they came from a family of vampires, and she got Cedric obsessed with it too.”

Sherlock’s face turned to stone; he turned away from the group, staring at the two-way mirror with his arms crossed over his chest. There was no indication the girl found murdered was sexually assaulted. She almost looked…taken care of. If it wasn’t a crime of passion or opportunity it had to be…revenge.

His eyes went wide.

Maybe Cedric did just snap. Maybe he was going after people he felt were somehow responsible for his obsessions.

His mind was reeling and he had to stop himself from grinning like an idiot as it all finally became clear. Perhaps Cedric didn’t contract his disease from a partner- but from their blood.

_They could have had AIDs!_ John had scolded him.

Yes, they could have. And Cedric could be determined to find out which member gave him faulty blood.

“John, you’re brilliant!” Sherlock proclaimed, swiftly bending down to kiss his confused fiancé on the cheek. “Our fears are correct, we do have a potential serial killing on our hands, but we can catch him in the act.”

“Sherlock, what…?” John attempted.

“The blood!” Sherlock said, waving his hands wildly, wondering how no one else was catching on. “Cedric contracted HIV through the blood he drank. He’s probably thinking someone did it on purpose. He could be thinking everyone is against him.”

“But the girl we found isn’t a part of this syndicate,” Greg pointed out, clearly taking care to not call it a _cult_ in front of Ian.

“Exactly,” Sherlock replied, his eyes twinkling. His mobile buzzed, and he grinned when he saw it was Mycroft phoning him. “As much as I hate to say it, I believe my brother is one step ahead of us on this one. Hello, dear brother.”

He could practically hear the smirk from Mycroft’s voice.

“I take it you’re catching on?” Mycroft teased. Sherlock rolled his eyes but decided to not waste time bickering. “Greg’s victim’s name is Victoria Landrum. She was a university student in Paris. She moved to London around the same time as the murder of the diplomat’s daughter. I’ve obtained the daughter’s medical files-"
“She had AIDs,” Sherlock breathed.

There was a brief pause, but Mycroft continued:

“Yes. This next bit of information must be kept under-wraps. I mean it, Sherlock.”

The consulting detective took a quick glance around the confused faces staring back at him in the room before slipping out into the corridor.

“I understand,” he promised.

“The diplomat’s daughter wasn’t murdered,” Mycroft explained cryptically. “She committed suicide.”

Sherlock’s eyes fell close. Yes, suicide was quite bad for business if you were in politics. A random act of murder would draw much more compassion from the public eye.

“I’ve been able to obtain information that tells us the daughter was involved with Cedric when he was in Paris. They began their first group there: he, the daughter, and Victoria. There are three others we’re trying to locate. We believe at least one still lives in Paris and one is possibly in Scotland. I already have people there.”

Part of him was a bit bitter about Mycroft taking over the case and practically solving it for him, but at the same time he was impressed with how quickly his brother had made progress on the case.

“Your husband will be proud,” Sherlock commented, smirking himself now. “You might have missed your calling as a copper. You two would have been quite the team.”

He could just imagine his brother rolling his eyes.

“There’s too much paperwork involved with being a copper.”

“Yes, it’s much more fun to not have to worry about procedure,” Sherlock teased. “Phone me if you get anything else.”

As he ended the call Greg stepped into the hall with a knowing look in his eye; obviously he knew who the call must have been from.

“What did he say?” Greg demanded.

“I’ve been sworn to secrecy,” Sherlock announced cheekily.

The DI stared back at him, unamused.

“I’ll let Mycroft tell you,” Sherlock offered.

“Should I even be wasting my time?” Greg sighed. “I love him but god help me, between the two of you sometimes I feel like I’d be better off just sitting in my office and catching up on paperwork.”

Sherlock snorted. Of course paperwork was on Greg’s mind right now; Mycroft was right about that aspect of it.

“The higher ups are expecting results from me,” Greg admitted. “I love Mye, and I love having his help and resources, but what does it say if I can’t solve my own cases?”
In Sherlock’s opinion this was hardly the case to feel guilty about bringing in help on, but he knew Greg’s ego needed the boost.

“You know Mycroft would only step in if it were a matter of national or international security,” he pointed out, trying to get Greg to draw the conclusion on his own.

Greg stared him down for a long moment before sighing:

“There’s more to do with the diplomat’s daughter, isn’t there?”

"I'm not at liberty to say," he replied with a wink.

At that moment Greg’s own mobile buzzed, and the DCI shook his head when he read the text.

“Mycroft wants to meet me for dinner,” he sighed. “I don’t have the bloody time for that.”

“Go,” Sherlock said, placing his hand on Greg’s shoulder. “He probably just wants to fill you in. Have someone escort Ian to the hospital. John and I can go after Cedric.”

Raising an eyebrow, Greg asked:

“You have a lead?”

The consulting detective swallowed nervously, not wanting to admit to the already anxious copper that he didn’t have much clearer of an idea of where to look than he did a half hour ago.

“I have some ideas,” he lied.

Once he and John were back outside his partner threw him a doubtful look, and Sherlock admitted:

“I have nothing.”

“This case is hopeless,” John sighed. “It’s a cat and mouse chase that we have no business being on.”

“it’s barely a cat and mouse chase,” he mumbled. “That would involve us actually accomplishing something and having a trail. Mycroft’s having better luck than we are!”

“So your brother’s onto something?” John asked as they climbed into a cab.

Lips pursed, Sherlock stared out the window and ignored him. He hated that he couldn’t say anything. He hated that he didn’t have any idea what Mycroft was on about and that he was royally failing at this case. John seemed to get the idea that he wanted time to think and they fell into silence during the ride back to Baker Street. He just wasn’t sure where else to go. He needed to think…he needed his Mind Palace.

A small smile crossed his face as he stepped out of the cab at Baker Street and breathed in the afternoon air. He hadn’t had a good visit to his Mind Palace in some time and he was looking forward to returning.

“I’m making an egg sandwich, want one?” John asked as they pounded up the stairs.

Sherlock ignored him as he started to make a beeline for their bedroom, but the sight of a man standing in their flat with a gun pointed at them stopped them both in their tracks.

_Cedric._
Have I mentioned how sorry I am for the slow updates? I never meant for this case to take up so many chapters! But to say life has sucked lately would be...a severe understatement. Work had been so unbearable and awful that I finally decided to quit. And I did! Which meant my free time was spent job searching...luckily it took all of about a week to find one. But I was under so much stress and anxiety for so long that I was just never in the right mindset to write. I also had my dad in the hospital, and now he's back there again a month later :( I had planned to wrap up this storyarc this weekend, but with this going on I decided to go ahead and put up what I had while I could. I promise my heart's still in this story, and I'll get back to regular updates hopefully soon! I have some time off between jobs so that should mean plenty of time to write!

Thank you all SO much for your continuing support! I can't tell you how happy it makes me that you guys still enjoy the story and leave reviews. *hugs*
“Have I mentioned how much I hate this case?” John mumbled.

Closing his eyes, Sherlock tried to block out the hatred, worry, and pain in his fiancé’s voice as he tried to focus on how they could get out of this. They were handcuffed back to back in the middle of the flat by two sets handcuffs he had stolen from Greg months ago. Cedric had easily found them with a quick search of the flat, and Sherlock mentally kicked himself for not foreseeing a situation like this happening. He rested his head against his partner’s- and John promptly banged his head back against his.

“Oww!” Sherlock whined. “This isn’t my fault!”

“Shut up, both of you!” Cedric roared.

The vampire was shaking and pale. Judging by the sweat pouring down his forehead and how one arm wrapped around his stomach he was extremely nauseous and had possibly thrown up recently. He noted the bruises lining Cedric’s left arm, marking where needles had been stuck. The clothes he wore still matched the description of those who saw him in the flat building- so he hadn’t bothered to change, let alone leave town.

“Didn’t get very far, did you?” Sherlock spoke up. “Of course, you didn’t have much choice. In fact, you’re on the no-fly list. That tends to happen when you’re a prime suspect in an international murder.”

“I didn’t kill anyone!” Cedric snapped. “There’s no reason for me to be on the bloody list!”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk; he knew Mycroft and his people had come up with some kind of reason.

“You didn’t even bother getting out of the city,” Sherlock went on. “Something’s keeping you here.”

His eyes narrowed as he studied Cedric’s nervous, anxious, demeanor. It was very similar to Ian’s- who was currently sitting in jail though he believed he had not purposefully hurt his girlfriend.

“You’re telling the truth,” Sherlock realised. “You and Ian are innocent. At least Ian had the decency to accept my help. Like you’ll get anywhere holding me and partner hostage.”

The comment earned him a swift pistol whip to the face. The pain was so sudden, so shocking, that it knocked the breath out of him. The force of the blow was enough to send his head crashing against John’s, and he felt a twang of guilt when he heard his fiancé let out a moan of pain behind him. He managed to swallow his own pain, concentrating instead on staring at a scratched floorboard and trying to breathe normally.

“You will help me,” Cedric spat. “I’m not stupid. I know you have friends in high places. You have your brother’s chin.”

He tried to hide his surprise that Cedric not only knew who Mycroft was but had seen him. Not to mention if Cedric was telling the truth that meant Mycroft had lied to him about “finding” the
information on Cedric just now.

“I do not!” Sherlock protested.

Cedric tensed, and Sherlock prepared himself for a blow that never came. His head was spinning and he was certain he was going to be sick; suddenly he was grateful he and John hadn’t managed to find much time to eat that day. His face was throbbing, his heart pounding, and he really hated himself for taking this case.

Not that he could ever admit that.

“So that’s the plan then?” Sherlock sighed. “My freedom for your freedom? How original. How dull. I hate to break it to you, but you’re highly underestimating how much my brother likes me.”

He wasn’t exactly sure how Cedric knew about Mycroft, but he could only hope he didn’t have an idea that their brotherly relationship had been on the mend lately.

“Really?” Cedric asked.

He reached into a side table drawer that was already open from him searching the flat and pulled out a rather ghastly photo of him and Mycroft standing in Times Square. Neither one of them was smiling; it was a pretty terrible example to prove that they were close siblings.

“They made us take that photo,” Sherlock mumbled, which was true. “Anyone who knows my brother knows that he won’t be impressed with a hostage situation. It’s the absolute worst way to prove your innocence.”

“There’s nowhere I can go,” Cedric muttered to himself as he began pacing. His eyes were wild; Sherlock wasn’t even completely sure he was aware of what he was and what he was doing. “I didn’t do anything wrong. Now I have this sickness, and I have nowhere to go and no one and it ISN’T BLOODY FAIR!”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to flinch at the power of his voice; hopefully it was enough to disturb the neighbors and prompt them to phone the Met and warn them that “that Holmes bloke” is in trouble again- as had happened before with out of control clients...and suspects.

“We can help you,” John offered. Sherlock glared at nothing; how he wished he could telepathically tell John to shut up and let him handle this. He was obviously the pawn in the game here. John just had the misfortune of being with him.

“No, I’ll help you,” Sherlock cut in. “But only if you let him go. You want my brother; John doesn’t even need to be a part of this.”

“I’m a doctor,” John offered. “I know about your disease. It’s devastating to find out you have AIDs, but treatment is more advanced than ever, and we’re lucky enough to live in a country where it’s easily accessible.”

The consulting detective let out a frustrating sigh, but he decided to let John go with it. It would do them no good to fight in front of their captor.

“You’re clearly fatigued, nauseous, and have a headache,” John said. “I have medical supplies here. I can do what I can, but you should really be in hospital. Let me help you and we can figure this out together.”

He tended to forget that John was formally trained in these kinds of kidnapping situations. Maybe,
he thought, he should just let this play out. Holding his breath, he waited for Cedric’s response.

“They poisoned me!” Cedric’s voice suddenly boomed. “The vampires they poisoned me, and they poisoned her, and they just got away with it. And the government, they just brushed it under the table like…like it didn’t even matter.”

Cedric was shaking violently now and clutching the hand that wasn’t holding the gun to his hair. Sherlock kicked himself for not fighting back more- they could have definitely taken him now. He was beginning to think Cedric was high on something…and upon remembering the vampire had searched his flat he swallowed nervously, wrecking his brain to try to remember if there were any drugs he had hidden and forgotten about. When he and John became intimate he went around to all his hiding spots with his lover in tow and together they got rid of all the drugs. But what if he missed something?

“It did matter,” Sherlock insisted. “Trust me, the government is very interested-”

“I know,” Cedric laughed manically, “I know they’re interested in me. And now they’re going to hear what I have to say.”

A wave of dizziness overcame him, and Sherlock closed his eyes, trying to push it away. Pissing about like this would buy them time, but what did that matter if no one even knew they were held up? He had to think of a way out of this. He had to put a plan into action, and he had to be in control.

“What exactly was your plan?” Sherlock asked Cedric. “Because you’re not doing yourself any favors by appearing at a new murder scene.”

He braced for another blow but it didn’t come.

Instead Cedric broke a lamp.

A lamp that had in fact been John’s, and at this point he was certain if Cedric didn’t kill him John would.

“She was dead when I got there!” Cedric exclaimed. “I…I didn’t even realise she was back in the city. I happened to see her on the street and began following her. She was with some guy- some arsehole looking guy who was pretty rough with her out in bloody public. So I found out where they were staying and went to talk to her to see what the hell she’s doing in London and why she’s with this bastard and she was dead. I should have stopped her sooner. She was probably in the city to see me, to tell me something. You must have seen the bruises on her back, the bastard!”

Sherlock blinked, considering what Cedric had just said. Of course: that’s why there weren’t any direct signs of cause of death. She had already been dead, probably slowly poisoned by something that was hard to detect unless you were looking for it specifically.

“I don’t understand it, I don’t,” Cedric confessed. “But now they blame me for Adrianna’s death and Victoria’s. Now I’m a bloody fugitive, running from crimes I didn’t commit. And I’m…I’m sick. I’m going to die. I’m going to fucking die of this disease I was poisoned with and I just…I don’t deserve it.”

If he were being completely honest with himself, Sherlock felt badly for Cedric. He could understand where he was coming from…he knew well that his brother had a way of orchestrating events and getting rid of whomever he wanted. And if Cedric was telling the truth he didn’t deserve to be another pawn in Mycroft’s game.
“You really should have told us this before doing my face in,” Sherlock sighed. “My brother will be less sympathetic when he’s seen you’ve hurt me.”

Cedric looked like he was going to throw up and right on cue he suddenly bolted from the room into the bathroom.

“It seems like he’s in advance stages of symptoms,” John murmured. “We can hold that over Mycroft’s head. Of anything Cedric should be in a facility somewhere, where he can receive treatment.”

“I’m sure he’ll love that idea,” Sherlock sighed.

“Who: Mycroft or Cedric?”

“Both.”

When Cedric stumbled back into the room he looked even paler than before, and Sherlock wondered just how far along in his disease Cedric was. Had he even had any treatment at all?

“Please, let me examine you,” John begged. “You look like you might pass out. I have some medicine that could help your symptoms.”

John was a damn good actor because even Sherlock could buy that he was sincerely concerned for the man; but he knew how loyally the doctor followed the motto of do no harm. Even if it was a man holding them hostage, John had to help. After a long moment Cedric finally stormed forward and began undoing the handcuffs tying John down to the chair. He heard his partner sigh in relief and a tiny weight lifted from Sherlock’s shoulders, knowing his lover was free. He knew John could take Cedric at any moment. He was just playing his cards right and waiting until the gun was out of the equation.

“My supplies are in the bathroom,” he heard John say.

For a split second he stepped in front of Sherlock and offered him a small, reassuring, smile. Sherlock threw a pitiful attempt at his own reassuring smile back to him. He was just glad to see that John was relatively okay: besides the red marks on his wrist he seemed unarmed. He mainly seemed tired, and Sherlock felt guilty, knowing he was the reason John had hardly slept in the past couple of days. When this was all over he would have to make sure he and John had a proper lie-in, complete with breakfast in bed.

Cedric hovered halfway between the bathroom and the living room, gun shaking anxiously in his hand. John disappeared for only a minute before reappearing with a medical kit. The realisation that John might have some kind of sedative he could inject Cedric with hit him, feeling him with hope for a brief moment.

“Empty the bag!” Cedric barked as soon as John re-entered the room.

His fiancé looked startled but quickly obeyed, duming the contents of the bag on the floor. Bottles of pain and cold medicine scattered across the hardwoods, along with bandages, gauze, and disinfectant. He emptied anti-itch and anti-bacterial cream out of the pockets before taking out a thermometer. He had to admire his partner: he was getting far more up close and personal with their suspects than he knew John ever cared to be.

“You’re running a high fever,” John announced. “Are you taking any medication?”

Of course they already knew Cedric had stopped his meds, but John was being smart in not giving
Ian away. He heard the hesitation in Cedric’s voice, and Sherlock had to smirk—funny how even when they were holding a doctor hostage some people still couldn’t lie to them.

“Were you prescribed any antivirals?” John asked, his voice ridden with forced patience.

He knew his partner was also buying them time, trying to figure out an escape plan, and Sherlock knew he should be doing the same. He listened closely to try to determine if any neighbors were home, but the flat beside them sounded silent and he knew Mrs Hudson had planned to be out department store shopping all day. Mycroft and Greg were at dinner, so their only hope there was that either his brother still had CCTV that would catch what was happening or after dinner Greg would come looking for them for more help on the case.

“I…I…there’s just no point,” Cedric finally spat. He jerked the gun toward John, as though to point out he was still “in charge”, and Sherlock’s heart leapt. “I’m stuck with this disease until it kills me. I tried the drugs, and they didn’t help. They just made me feel worse.”

“It takes time—"

“There’s no point!” Cedric roared. “The drugs just buy me more time. More time to what…suffer? To feel sick, all the time? There’s no fucking point. The only thing I have to live for is clearing my name for good and getting the government off my back. I’ve got to do that.”

“You’re heart rate is far too fast,” John announced, shaking his head. He checked Cedric’s blood pressure next. “And your blood pressure is very high—even given the situation.

I suppose hold people hostage and waving a gun around tends to raise your blood pressure, Sherlock thought bitterly.

Next John listened to Cedric’s heart and then his lungs; as soon as the stethoscope hit the vampire’s back and he began to listen, John winced.

“There’s fluid in your lungs. I think you have pneumonia—it’s a common with AIDs, given your low immune system. We need to get you to a hospital.”

“No!” Cedric exclaimed.

Suddenly the vampire stopped. And he fell to the ground.

Somehow Sherlock knew what would happen next, but it was still a shock when he heard the gun go off as Cedric lost control of it. He managed to throw himself onto the ground and bit back a groan as his head smacked against the hardwoods.

“John!” He exclaimed.

“I’m fine,” his fiancé promised; he had also ducked, but a crash of glass caught his attention.

The bullet had gone in the opposite direction and hit the telly. As though John’s day needed to get any worse, his television’s ruined, he couldn’t help but to think.

He made a mental note to ask Greg for opinions on a new set.

“Well that’s one way to get out of this,” John sighed.
Sherlock had to admit, he couldn’t believe their luck. He breathed steadily, trying to calm himself down as he watched John first grab the gun and then use the handcuffs that had tied him down to cuff Cedric. Then he went for Sherlock.

“God, your face,” John scolded, shaking his head as he cupped the consulting detective’s cheek. He unlocked the cuffs from the keys Cedric had on him and helped Sherlock get to his feet. “Take it easy, love.”

“I’m fine,” Sherlock muttered.

His head spun as he stood, his face was pounding, and his arms were sore but none of that was a surprise. He and John gazed each other over, taking stock. He watched as his lover’s eyes melted when he saw how bad he really looked up close; Sherlock winced when John reached up to wipe some blood away from his face.

“I’m okay, really,” Sherlock promised quietly.

John nodded, but he didn’t look convinced.

“I’m phoning for an ambulance,” his partner said. “Maybe you should ring your brother.”

Their eyes met, and Sherlock was relieved to realise John agreed with him: Cedric did deserve to have his name cleared, regardless of the methods he used to do it. John collected their mobiles from the other side of the room where Cedric had put them away. He handed Sherlock his own while he immediately dialed 999.

Taking a deep breath, Sherlock closed his eyes and hoped he wasn’t making a terrible mistake as he hit Mycroft’s speed dial number.

An couple later, after a trip to the hospital for Sherlock for stitches, he and John found themselves standing before their disaster of a flat. It was still a mess from where Cedric had trashed it and the police searched it. Mycroft had officially taken over the entire case and assured Sherlock he would “take care of Cedric’s problem”, though he couldn’t be confident that was a good thing.

He decided all he could do was to be grateful he and John weren’t hurt any worse.

And he also decided that he was definitely in no mood to clean all of this up right now.

“So…” John finally announced. “Want to see if we can stay at your sister’s?”

Sherlock nodded and took out his mobile and phoned his sister.

“Hey Laura! We were thinking of popping by for a visit…you wouldn’t believe the day we just had.”

Chapter End Notes

Yay! Finally a semi-regular update! This case proved to be much more difficult to write than I originally thought! But it seems like you guys liked it so I’m glad! There will be more explanations in the next chapter...and lots of fun family stuff to come!
This story's due for some more light-heartedness.

And thank you all so much for the wishes and kind thoughts! My dad's finally starting to do better. I'm officially in between jobs and happier than I've been in a LONG time now that I've gotten away from that madness!
John leaned against Sherlock as they stood on his sister’s front steps. To say they were utterly exhausted was an understatement- John didn’t even look like he could make it through the dinner Laura promised them. When his sister opened the door she stared at them a long moment, looking sympathetic and almost bemused before finally sighing:

“Oh Sherlock.”

She threw her arms around him, and he relaxed into the hug. He was surprised how comforting-how safe- it felt being there after the events of that day.

“You poor face,” Laura said, shaking her head as her finger hovered over his bruise. Her eyes travelled over to his fiancé next, and she let out a laugh when she how John was barely able to hold himself up. “You two look awful.”

“Thanks,” John mumbled. “Nice to see you too...is there food?”

Sherlock snorted and nudged his partner in the side; usually it was John reminding him to be polite.

“Yes, there’s food,” Laura laughed. “Come on in.”

She made to lead them straight to the dining room, but as soon as they stepped into the house Dan came running toward him.

“Hi Uncle Sherlock!” He exclaimed, practically jumping into his arms as he hugged him.

“Careful, sweetie,” Laura warned him. “Your uncles have had a rough day.”

“Did you fight someone?” Dan asked, grinning ear to ear as he gazed up at his bruise in awe.

“Not exactly,” Sherlock muttered.

“Come on, Dan,” his sister said, shaking his head as she ushered her son toward the table.

Despite how tired they were, after they ate Sherlock still found himself on the sofa, chatting with Laura and her husband about the case.

“Are all of your cases this bizarre?” Laura teased. “Mysterious hounds, vampires, kidnappings?”

“I don’t ask for it,” Sherlock shrugged. His sister just laughed, and even John snorted. “What? I don’t!”

“You love it,” John accused. “Even the most bizarre cases. Admit it.”

“Okay, I admit it. Of course I love the bizarre cases.” Sherlock confessed with a smile. “I could have done without the being held hostage in my own flat bit though.”

“We’ll help you clean up tomorrow,” Jason offered. “I have the day off, for a change.”

“No,” Sherlock said, shaking his head. “Don’t waste your day off. We’re fine. Just...thanks, for
“Of course,” Laura smiled. “Any time.”

His fiancé was already stretched out on the sofa, drifting off with his head resting in Sherlock’s lap as the consulting detective ran his fingers through it.

“Ready for bed, love?” Sherlock asked.

John only “mmmed” in response.

Even though it felt much later than it was it was only half seven, and now that he was around his family Sherlock felt too hyped up to think of sleeping. He was almost relieved when Dan bounced into the room, holding a DVD.

“Can we watch it, Mommy?” Dan begged as he climbed up onto the other sofa where his parents sat. “You said we could soon!”

“It’s getting a little late,” Laura replied, “maybe this weekend.”

“But Uncle Sherlock is here!” Dan pointed out. “He needs to see it.”

“I’m sure Sherlock’s seen The Jungle Book,” Laura said, taking the DVD from her son.

Sherlock frowned, and John smirked.

“Do you even know Sherlock?” John teased before yawning and returning to his dosing off.

“I…” Sherlock thought back, searching the memories of his childhood for a time his mum might have made them watch what appeared to be an animated movie about a boy and a bear…and a jungle, obviously. But he came up with nothing. Not that he wanted to admit that, if it was something he should have obviously seen. “It’s been a very long time.”

John’s smirk lingered, but Sherlock ignored him.

“You know it’s only a about an hour and a half long movie,” Jason said, patting the sofa beside him, signaling for Dan to join them. “I’ll probably have to work this weekend. Why don’t we bend the rules a bit? We’ll do movie instead of a bedtime story.”

Laura didn’t look too amused at having her rules overruled, but nevertheless she sighed.

“Fine. But we’re not making a habit out of it.”

Whatever Sherlock might have thought The Jungle Book would be about, he didn’t expect it to be this. There was…there was singing! And dancing! Why was the bear singing? And if this was set in Asia why did everyone speak English?

“It makes no sense,” Sherlock muttered.

“Just shut up and watch it,” Laura grinned.

She was sitting on the floor in front of the sofa; Dan was in a sleeping bag barely keeping his eyes open beside her. Turns out that just because there was a movie on didn’t mean a kid wouldn’t still be tired when it got closer to bed time.
“Did you watch many of these as a kid, then?” Sherlock asked. “This animated…music stuff?”

“You mean Disney movies?” His sister said. “Of course I did! The Little Mermaid was always my favorite. Your mum never showed those movies to you?”

Sherlock shrugged.

“Then again, maybe it’s different with boys,” Laura offered. “The Jungle Book is pretty cool, and then there’s been Cars recently. Dan loved that movie. But I it’s not like I can picture you and Mycroft sitting around watching princess movies.”

“…I’d think not.”

His fiancé had fallen asleep only fifteen minutes into the movie- for which Sherlock was grateful for because he could not imagine how long John would tease him for actually sitting through these so-called Disney movies. At that moment his mobile buzzed and he had to bite back a sigh of relief at having a reason to excuse myself.

“Mycroft,” he greeted as he answered the call. “I do believe we have some catching up to do.

“Look outside,” his brother replied dryly.

“I’m not at home.”

“I know.”

He strode over to the windows facing the street and peered outside to find his brother standing in the street. A black car was parked down the street. He frowned, wondering why his brother would hide the fact he was there.

“I’m going to take this outside,” Sherlock called out to no one in particular, and no one protested.

He hung up as he stepped out into the cool night air. His face stung as the wind hit his wound, and his brother’s face melted into disgusts when he saw the bruise and stitching.

“Why won’t you come inside?” Sherlock asked.

Mycroft began walking away from the house and Sherlock followed.

“I haven’t the time,” his brother replied simply. He paused for a long moment before grimacing and confessing: “Greggory and I had a bit of a…disagreement.”

“Oh?” Sherlock said, raising an eyebrow.

It wasn’t surprising that Mycroft and Greg would fight- they were pretty much married, after all- but he was surprised his brother would come to him afterward.

“Yes, it seems he’s rather angry at me for essentially ‘stealing’ his case,” Mycroft confessed. “Not that I meant to…”

The younger Holmes brother snorted.

“It appears he’s getting criticism from higher ups about his success rate with cases. They’re not very happy about how often he has to use consultants- even if they’re not paid to help out. I suppose they’re worried about their reputations…despite the fact that the rate of cases solved at the Yard has increased tremendously over the past couple of years.”
Sherlock found himself feeling a bit guilty, though he knew he had no reason to. After all, who cared who solved the case as long as the suspect was behind bars? But he supposed he should give Greg more credit, publicly. He could admit that he could see how Greg would feel like he was taking the back seat when it came to his own cases.

His brother sighed and continued:

“Anyway. I thought you would want to know that Cedric is in a facility, receiving medical attention. Ian will be cleared of all charges and released. I’m sorry that this case turned out like it did. Gregory informed me that if I knew I would have to be involved from the beginning that I should have taken over the case from the start. Perhaps I should have. You and John wouldn’t have been in danger.”

Mycroft’s eyes travelled to the wound on Sherlock’s face, and the consulting detective felt his body stiffen.

“You don’t know that,” Sherlock said quietly.

He looked away, admiring how normal all of the houses on Laura’s street looked. They were all full of normal families who got to spend time together and didn’t have to worry about getting kidnapped as a part of their job. They didn’t have to wonder about their children and siblings being in danger every day. There was a sort of beauty to normalcy; it was something he and his brother had never experienced. Normalcy was something that, in the past, he never even thought he wanted. He had always avoided normalcy at all cost: he hated uni, despised the thought of traditional relationships, and did drugs to protect himself from how dull he thought the world was.

But now…now he could get used to normalcy- although he never would admit it. He could picture himself living in one of these houses with John, living happily married, maybe even one day having…

“Nice neighborhood, isn’t it?” Mycroft commented out of the blue, as though reading Sherlock’s mind.

Sherlock smirked.

“For the right kind of family,” he offered. “It seems safe enough, for them.”

Mycroft nodded.

“Oh, it is. It’s one of the most sought after neighborhoods in this suburb. Life is rather…slow-paced, out here, but with that comes good schools, job opportunities, safe streets.”

He realised his brother knew even more than he did about the area and he laughed because of course-

“You ran background checks on all their neighbors, didn’t you?” He teased. “Probably even all the teachers at the local schools.”

His brother smirked.

“Can you blame me?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“Of course not,” he admitted. His eyes trailed over to his sister’s house, where his fiancé slept on
the sofa and his nephew fought sleep in his sleeping bag. “I’m glad they’re safe…relatively.”

Their eyes met, and Sherlock knew what his brother was thinking: their family was never truly 100% safe as long as they were around. Neither was John. And John, John had opportunities. He had his book deal and his idea of opening up his own practice. As much as Sherlock loved working cases with John he loved John even more. He wanted him safe.

“I was thinking…” he spoke up, clearing his throat. “John mentioned awhile back that he might want to start practicing medicine again- not in a medical setting, but in a private practice. He hasn’t talked about it much lately, but I think it’s just because he’s not sure what I think of it.”

“And what do you think of it?” Mycroft asked.

Sherlock noticed they had been walking back toward the car his brother brought, and he reminded himself they didn’t exactly have all night to chat. Taking a deep breath, he finally decided to come to terms with what he had been thinking for a while:

“I think it’s a good idea. It…it killed me to see him in danger today. Which is strange because used to that was like a…”

“High?” His brother commented, eyebrow raised.

Letting out a long breath, Sherlock nodded. His breath danced before him in the night air.

“And it was for John too. What’s happened to us?”

He laughed, but his brother still looked completely serious.

“This is what relationships do to you…apparently,” Mycroft replied. “All you want is for your partner to be home with you, safe, at the end of the day.”

He nodded, thinking that his brother had possibly never been more right about anything. Perhaps normalcy wouldn’t be so bad…for a while. He knew that at least John would appreciate it. Taking his mobile from his pocket he checked the time, and his eyelids felt heavy when he saw it was still not even midnight.

Longest day ever, he thought to himself. Or at least in the past month.

“I should get back inside,” Sherlock said. “They have me watching some horrid movie by someone named Disney. The Jungle Book. Ever heard of it?”

He was surprised when his brother let out a laugh and smiled.

“You’re joking,” Mycroft replied. Sherlock stared at him; what was he missing out on? “Mummy showed us that movie when you were…about five, I think it was. You loved it.”

Sherlock had to stop himself from grinning like an idiot. He couldn’t believe he had deleted that memory so completely- hadn’t even so much as recognised a single song from it tonight.

“You went around singing that one song for ages,” Mycroft said. He had a feeling his brother knew exactly what the lyrics were, but there was no way in hell Mycroft would sing him a children’s song. “Thank god you started your pirate phase after that.”

He couldn’t even begin to imagine sitting with Mycroft and his mum as a child and watch an animated musical-movie…just like a normal family. He didn’t even know they used to do things
like that. But now that he knew, it made him think- what other memories had he repressed? After all, after their abusive father left and before their mother died they were a relatively normal family. They must have done plenty of normal family things.

“They’re called Disney movies, by the way,” Mycroft offered. “Walt Disney. Mickey Mouse. Disneyland.”

“Oh,” Sherlock muttered, feeling incredibly stupid. “That’s all the same thing?”

“Sort of,” Mycroft mused. “Perhaps Dan can teach you about it.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin.

“Perhaps. You know, you’re not going to be able to hide from movie night forever.”

His brother sighed and rolled his eyes dramatically.

“Don’t remind me.”

A long moment of silence fell between them. His mind couldn’t help but to wander to the imagine of him, younger Mycroft, and his mother sitting in the lounge of the Holmes estate watching movies. Maybe even eating popcorn. Did she let them stay up late? He could vaguely remember in school sneaking a torch to bed so he could read science book when he was supposed to be sleeping.

“You can ask me anything you’d like about our childhood, you know,” Mycroft offered quietly.

The day had already been emotionally draining enough without opening that can of worms.

“Thanks, but I should probably get back inside,” Sherlock said quietly.

His brother nodded and glanced toward the black sedan waiting for me.

“Well I should probably get home and make sure Gregory isn’t smashing my fine china on the floor,” he teased.

“I’m sure he’ll forgive you once he sleeps on it,” Sherlock replied.

“Yes, he always does. He’s too good for me.”

He placed a hand on his brother’s shoulder and squeezed it, understanding where he was coming from.

“Goodnight, Mycroft.”

“Goodnight.”

When he returned to the house the credits were already rolling on the film. To his surprise not only was John still fast asleep, but Laura was snoozing on the chair with a blanket thrown over her and Dan was asleep on the floor. In the kitchen Jason was cleaning up the last remains of dinner.

“I wanted to pick Dan up, but he wakes so easily,” Jason explained.

Sherlock nodded, wondering what he was supposed to do now. Jason didn’t look like he was about to head to bed: was it customary to stay up and chat? Perhaps have a cup of tea? If he was being
honest with himself, he didn’t feel like he was up for a late night of talking…and not just because he had virtually nothing in common with his half brother-in-law besides his family.

“I should probably wake Laura though,” Jason went on. “She’ll mess up her back sleeping on the chair like that. Feel free to take the guest room or the couch…whichever.”

He offered Sherlock a small smile, as though quietly acknowledging he understood the consulting detective would want to be as close to his partner tonight as possible.

“We can stay in in the living room with Dan,” he offered. “If John wakes up and wants to move I’ll put Dan to bed.”

“Thanks,” Jason replied with a genuine smile. A kettle whistled, and he found himself perking up at the thought of tea. “Would you like some? Laura’s already turned me on to English tea. I suppose I wouldn’t last very long in London without drinking it.”

“Yes, please,” Sherlock said. His head burst with pain suddenly, and he raised his hand to it, trying to remember when John last gave him medicine. “Do you have any aspirin?”

“Sure,” Jason said, opening up a cabinet full of cold and pain medicine. “Help yourself to as much tea and…anything else, really that you’d like. I’ve got some reading to do for a case.

He realised he had never properly spoken with Jason about his work as a lawyer. After all, law cases were similar to working police cases…just with less running around and violence.

“Oh?” He said, trying to sound interested. “What’s the case about?”

The lawyer shrugged; of course- there was probably a good deal of confidentiality involved with his law work.

“Just boring corporate stuff,” Jason replied.

“It’s probably not boring to your clients.”

Jason let out a stiff laugh.

“True. Though they’re mostly concerned about the amount of money they can win. I don’t know… I’m honoured to have the chance to move overseas and raise my family abroad. I’m thankful to have a terrific job that allows me to support my family like I can. But at the same time the work can become awfully…”

“Dull?” Sherlock offered.

With a stiff smile, Jason nodded.

“I can relate,” he replied. “Same old clients, same old cases.”

“Exactly. And some of these big business people are just so…ungrateful. They think they’re fighting for employee rights and to protect their products, but most of the time they’re just concerned about money. And yeah, that’s what business is about…sometimes I just wonder what it would be like to practice different forms of law. But don’t tell Laura I said that. She’ll go on and on about ‘pursuing your dreams’ but I’m a dad. We’re about to have another child. I don’t have time to shake up my career.”

All Sherlock knew to do was nod. He understood where Jason came from- he couldn’t imagine
getting lost in the humdrum of corporate law. Even parenting was very routine: wake up early, make lunches, drive to school, be back on time for pickup, cook dinner, help with homework, bedtime. He knew it wasn’t that Jason was just ungrateful—there just came a point where even responsible adults yearned to get their adrenaline pumping again.

“I thought things would change with work by moving to a new country,” Jason admitted, “but it’s just the same old crap. I guess I should just get over myself though. I must sound really ungrateful.”

“No, you don’t,” Sherlock blurted out. He glanced down to the floor and was relieved when he was handed his cup of tea. He took a sip of it and closed his eyes, welcoming its calming warmth. “Believe me, I understand. I could have had…anything…as far as a career went, but I threw all that away and now I’m doing this, simply because I don’t like being bored. And sometimes—quite often, frankly—the cases do get boring and I wonder what I’m meant to do next. Now John’s writing a book series and talking about practicing medicine again, and I’m wondering if I should just…leave it be. Perhaps change is good.”

Shaking his head, Jason let out a tired laugh before sipping on his own tea. “I bet you wouldn’t last a month as a retired consulting detective,” Jason teased, “and I don’t think John would want you to stop working cases either. I see you two, when you’re on cases, and there’s this spark in your eye. It’s amazing. It’s okay to let John pursue his dreams, his goals or whatever, and keep doing what you’re doing.”

Deep down he knew Jason was right: he’d feel useless and miserable with no cases to work. And Greg would miss him, that was for sure—no matter how bitter he was about his own success rate. “Anyway, sorry for laying all of this on you,” Jason said. “I know I just need to give it time. You never know where this job could lead…and life’s going to get plenty exciting once our baby girl is born.”

A grin spread across Jason’s face and Sherlock found a matching one across his own. He imagined the house soon being filled with the joys of a newborn baby—baby clothes and toys spread about, baby music playing on the stereo, endless feedings and late nights of no sleep. Yes, Jason was right: their lives would all totally change in a few months. Just as it wasn’t the opportune moment for Jason to be thinking of a career change Sherlock knew he shouldn’t worry about cases at all. He would be over here as much as possible, helping out.

…but not that he knew anything about taking care of babies.

Perhaps he should invest in some books.

“I know that face,” Jason grinned. “Follow me.”

He followed Jason to his office on the next floor up. When he flicked on the lights Sherlock expected to find bookcases full of law books and notes stacked on the desk for his case. Instead there were baby books everywhere.

“I don’t let Laura in here,” he confessed with a laugh. “She thinks it’s because I like to separate my work from my home life—which I do—but really it’s because…I’m clueless. Dan was well past his toddler years by the time she and I met. I’ve never had to take care of a baby in my life, to be completely honest. Frankly I’m…I’m a bit terrified. I haven’t told Laura about any of this. I mean, people raise babies for the first time all the time, right? I’ll figure it out.”
The book on the top of the stack on Jason’s desk was entitled *Suggested Sleeping Habits For Newborns*. Sherlock picked it up and flipped through it, but the words seemed to swim in the page in a dizzying manner. He closed the book immediately.

“You’ll be a brilliant dad to the baby,” Sherlock offered. “You’re right— it’s human instinct. We’re meant to reproduce and raise children. And I’ll be here to help. Not that that means much, seeing as I’ve got as much baby experience then you. But we’ve got Laura…and even Mycroft helped with me when I was born.”

His brother-in-law smirked, and Sherlock let out his own laugh at the thought of Mycroft changing nappies. He caught sight of a book at the bottom of the pile, which was full of post-it notes; turning it around, he saw it was a book specifically for first-time dads.

“You can read that, if you’d like,” Jason offered. “I know it’s not really the same…but there’s probably not a book out there for first time uncles of babies. I took down a lot of notes and marked some interesting pages. I know self-help books probably aren’t your thing, but they really have helped. I at least sort of feel like I might know where to start once the baby arrives.

Sherlock accepted the book with a quiet nod.

“Anyway, I’m sure you’re exhausted.”

Jason looked like he was exhausted as well, but Sherlock imagined his mind was too restless with anxiety to sleep much these days.

“Yeah,” Sherlock muttered. “I can wake Laura for you and get her to bed.”

A grateful smile crossed Jason’s face.

“Thanks.”

He descended the steps, finishing his tea as he did before reaching the living room once more. He turned off the telly and turned to his sister; she almost looked too peaceful to wake, but he knew Jason was right about her back.

“Laura,” he whispered as he bent down to shake her awake. “Laura, you should get to bed.”

Gentle she stirred awake, confused at first, but she smiled when she saw him.

“I missed the movie,” she mumbled.

“Yeah,” Sherlock grinned, nodding toward their sleeping loved ones in the room. “We all pretty much did. Come on, you should go to your bed.”

“Jason?” She asked, followed by a yawn as he helped her stand.

“In his study,” he replied, “he said he just had a bit of reading to do.”

Laura leaned on him and yawned again, unconcerned; Jason was right, she seemed totally oblivious that he was staying up to read parenting books. They made their way wordless across the main floor to where the master bedroom was. Flipping on the light, he was surprised to find how expertly the room was decorated. He also realised he hadn’t been inside the room since they first moved in and the room was filled with boxes. The master furniture was the same from their previous home, but the walls were painted a soft pale green. There was a collage of family photos on one wall and a dark wooden wardrobe against the other. As he approached the collage he was
surprised to find a single photo of him that was taken on the Carter’s New York property was included, along with one of Mycroft outside the Holmes estate. There was also one of he and John in Central Park and one of Greg and Mycroft at the London Eye.

“Ugh…I can’t even be bothered to change clothes. I’m so tired.”

His sister gently lowered herself onto the bed and pulled the duvet over herself. Sherlock’s cheeks reddened slightly as he realised he was probably lingering too long, but he was surprised when she called out to him:

“Sherlock…come sit with me a minute.”

Startled, he obeyed quietly and awkwardly took a seat on the bed beside her. She placed a hand on his knee and paused for a long moment, as though thinking of how she wanted to word something.

“I’ve wanted to ask you something,” she finally spoke up. “It just never seemed like the right time, but Jason and I figured…now or never.”

“Oh, Laura,” he exhaled, “Should I go get him?” Sherlock asked, already making to sit up, but his sister grabbed his arm.

“No,” she said shaking her head. She held onto his hand and he squeezed it, trying to encourage to show her it was okay, she could tell him anything. “Sherlock…Jason and I have gotten to the point in our marriage, in our lives- in our parenthood- where we really want to make sure our family will be taken care of in case anything ever happens to either of us. Or both of us.”

His eyes widened in horror at the very thought, and his heart rate quickened.

“That’s not going to happen,” he promised.

“I hope not,” Laura replied, with a reassuring smile. “At least not anytime soon. But of course…things happen. Unexpected, horrible things. And when you have kids you have to be prepared. What I’m saying is…we’d like to know if you would consider being our kids’ godfather.”

He froze.

He wondered if he was dreaming, if he had really fallen asleep during the movie and this was all a dream. It would make sense, after all, what with Mycroft appearing out of nowhere and all the baby books. But she squeezed his hand and sat up in bed, and he knew he had to snap out of it.

Godfather.

First someone proposed to him and no one wanted him to be a godfather.

What kind of madness was this?

But of course what could he say but:

“Of course.” He smiled and swallowed nervously. “Laura I…I’d be honored. But are you sure? After all, I have a fairly high-risk job. Just look at today.”

She smiled and wrapped an arm around him.

“Of course I’m sure,” she replied, “and I know the risk. But I think you’re perfect for this. I love you, Sherlock, and I trust you with my life…and with my children’s lives. I trust you to raise them, to be there for them. I want my kids to be able to trust you. If there’s anything they’re afraid to talk to us about I want them to feel comfortable coming to you.”
Sherlock blinked.

He had never really thought about what it would be like when Dan and the baby were both older, as they became teenagers and needed help with school and romance and peer pressure.

*Peer pressure.*

He had been rather horrible with that himself.

Subconsciously he rubbed his left arm, where white scars from his old track marks still lay beneath his shirt.

“Are you sure I’m really the best person?” He asked quietly. “I don’t exactly have the best track record.”

“Have I ever given you any impression that I don’t trust you around Dan?” Laura challenged, sounding genuinely offended. He actually felt bad for questioning her judgement.

“No,” he said quietly. “I just…just never imagined anyone would ever entrust me with their kids. But I adore Dan, I love him, and you know I’d never let anything happen to him or the baby. And of course I’ll be godfather. I hope it never comes to that…but I will always be there for your family.”

His sister threw her arms around him and buried her head in his shoulder. She let out a long sigh of relief and yawned as she pulled herself away.

“Sorry I…I’ve just been worried,” she admitted. “I know kids have never really been your thing.”

He shrugged.

“Neither was love,” he said quietly. “Funny how people change.”

“Funny how people can change *you,*” Laura pointed out. Slowly she lowered herself back to bed and stretched her arms. “You should go get some sleep. Goodnight, Sherlock.”

She smiled and he smiled back, but as he stepped away from the bed his mind began to race.

*Godfather.*

What was he thinking? They didn’t even have space for kids at Baker Street! And money…he wasn’t nearly financial stable enough to take on kids if an emergency happened! And what would he do about their education and healthcare? Sure he would do anything for his family, but how could he have made a decision so important without even thinking about it?

He gulped as he realised- *he hadn’t even talked to John about it!*

He was due to be married- Civil Partnershipped- and didn’t people usually discuss things like this with their life partners? Surely Laura knew someone who would be better suited, better prepared, for potential parenthood? There was even Mycroft and Greg…at least they were financially stable!

“It’s you, Sherlock,” Laura called out to him. He shook himself out of his panic, having forgotten he still hadn’t left the room yet. “We chose *you.*”

Sherlock paused.

“You already asked Mycroft, didn’t you?”
He heard Laura let out a sigh, but nevertheless she confessed:

“I talked to him. I didn’t ask him, I just talked to him to get his advice about what he thought about this decision. And he agreed: it’s you.”

He blinked: even his brother thought he could do this?

“For the love of god, go to bed,” Laura laughed. “We’ll talk in the morning.”

He still felt uncertain as he closed the door behind him.

Maybe he really just needed a decent night of sleep.

Maybe this would all make more sense in the morning.

His mobile buzzed once again in his pocket and he sighed as he took it out. He was really done with surprises today. When he saw it was a text from Mycroft he closed his eyes, trying to summon the energy to deal with whatever it was his brother had to tell him.

But his heart skipped a beat when he saw the text:

*You’ll be fine, baby brother. You’re the perfect choice.*

And somehow, at that moment he really felt that…maybe he *was* panicking too much. Maybe he could do this.

After all, he had John.

And for all he knew Laura and Jason would grow old together, their kids would grow old and never need a godfather. All that mattered was that Laura and Jason knew their family would be taken care of in the rare chance something happened to both of them. He shouldn’t be worrying about his own fears.

He sent a quick *Thanks* text before finally retreating back to the living room and joining his lover for a long night of sleep on the sofa.

Chapter End Notes

I had a lot of fun writing this chapter...I love Holmes family time moments! Hope you enjoyed it! Thanks, as always!!
A few days later John sat with Sherlock in an exam room as they waited the results of Sherlock’s HIV test. Up until this moment his partner had acted like the test was just an unnecessary annoyance and made it clear he was only complying because John had threatened to sex-starve him if he refused to go. The consulting detective was on his usual holier-than-though, couldn’t be bothered, behaviour he was usually on at hospitals.

Then he had the HIV test, and as soon as the doctor left the room Sherlock fell silent. John didn’t taunt him, he didn’t say anything. He just held his fiancé’s hand and Sherlock accepted it. He secretly wished he could ramble, go on about statistics and likelihoods and even if it is how much treatment has advanced. But he knew he wanted to do that almost more for his own benefit than Sherlock’s.

This whole case was just such an eye-opener. He was in a relationship, a proper, permanent relationship that he wanted to be in for the rest of his life. He was at the point where if anything happened to Sherlock he wasn’t sure how he’d make it.

For the past couple of years at times it felt like his life was on pause. Between figuring things out with Sherlock and figuring things out with his career he was stationery. At times the feeling was frustrating and at times it was wonderful. Sometimes it felt like he had nothing to lose, that this was his time to explore and just live. Whatever happened, happened. After decades of school, training, work and years of war he felt like he deserved that freedom.

But now reality was hitting.

Now he realised he had everything to lose.

Proposing to Sherlock was a massive step for him: it was the moment he knew he wanted to settle down, to make this his life.

He couldn’t lose that. He couldn’t lose everything they had worked for, everything they had deserved, when their life together was just getting started.

Suddenly the door opened; he actually felt Sherlock jump and he let out his own long breath. He knew their doctor from back in the day- Dr Whiteman was at the top of his class all through medical school. He had the kind of career John could have had at the hospital level if he hadn’t decided to join the army. Doing this test for them was probably far below his paygrade, but John wanted to get in with a doctor he knew he could trust. Just in case…

“The HIV test came back negative,” Dr Whiteman announced right away, saving them any unnecessary small talk, which both he and Sherlock appreciated.

John let his head drop as he ran his hand through his hair and let out a “thank god”. Beside him Sherlock stiffened and simply nodded.

“Both of your blood tests came back fine,” Dr Whiteman went on; while they were there John had decided they might as well get standard tests done as well. “Though John, your cholesterol is a bit high and Mr Holmes, your potassium is too low.”
“Told you,” John muttered.

Sherlock smirked, surely preparing plenty of taunts about John’s cholesterol.

“Any other questions?” Dr Whiteman asked. They both shook their head, and his old friend offered him a kind smile. “You know how to reach me if you need anything else.”

As soon as the doctor left the room John allowed himself to melt into his partner’s arms. Sherlock quietly wrapped his arms around John and kissed the top of his head. For a long moment they sat like that, holding each other, until John finally broke apart, wiping his hands over his face.

“Right, well, we should get you a banana or something and I should probably go for a run,” John teased.

His fiance threw him a small, forced, smile, clearly still trying to come down from his own hidden anxiety.

Once they stepped outside the building it felt good to feel the fresh air hit his face. It was later in the afternoon and a little warm for early March, and he knew Sherlock thought nothing of the weather so he suggested:

“How about a walk? I was thinking I haven’t had a good smoothie in ages and there’s a great spot a few blocks down. We could catch a cab back to Baker Street from there if you’d like.”

Sherlock only nodded.

He knew his lover was still feeling vulnerable- how dare his transport be put at risk like that- so he took Sherlock by the hand and began a steady pace down the block. The walk was silent, and even as they ordered their smoothies (Sherlock a simple strawberry banana and he a raspberry) they just couldn’t seem to find the appropriate words. They made their way to a park and sat down on a bench, just enjoying the fresh air. For John, it finally like he could breathe again. It felt normal, sitting in a park, drinking smoothies with his lover.

But in the back of his mind a nagging thought still lingered: where did they go from here?

“I want a Civil Partnership,” Sherlock suddenly announced.

John looked up at him, surprised and confused. His lips turned up in a bemused smile.

“Yeah, I know,” he teased. “I proposed to you. Rockefeller Center…remember?”

“No,” Sherlock said, shaking his head. His eyes finally turned to John, sincere and desperate. “I want to do it now. I don’t want to wait...I don’t even know what we’re waiting for. All we have to do is get the paperwork, right?”

Nodding, John tried to wrap his mind around it all. Sherlock was right- what were they waiting for? It wasn’t like they had a wedding to plan. They hadn’t even discussed ceremonies or parties.

“We could do it however you’d like,” John said. “We could just get the paperwork…we could have a sort of ceremony about it. We could do a party, like your brother and-”

“I just want to do it,” Sherlock interrupted. He took John’s hand and swallowed nervously. “And I want you to practice medicine again, if that’s what you want. We should have a proper life together, John. We’re not just flatmates anymore.”
He could feel his heartrate speed up. It elated him to hear Sherlock speak so candidly about their relationship, to be reminded he truly did want this life together too.

“You’re right,” he agreed with a smile. Sherlock’s eyes softened; he seemed reassured that John was on board. “We should really talk about this.”

Sherlock nodded.

“Great,” he replied, before letting out a deep breath. “So…”

“Oh?” John blinked. “You mean now?”

Sherlock looked like he wanted to melt to the ground, reminding John of just how extraordinarily out of his comfort zone his partner was when it came to this subject.

“Now works,” John quickly said. “I guess the first thing we should decide is where and when we want to register. We have to know that before we can give notice of intention.”

A long silence followed, and he knew what Sherlock was thinking: Baker Street. While normally John was all for special moments at home, you only had one wedding day. He knew men weren’t “supposed” to be big wedding dreamers and planners, but he had always secretly known the exact kind of wedding he’d like to have: something small, perhaps on the beach or in a park. Just very close friends and family. Some kind of practical meal afterwards, none of this finger food and a hundred pieces of cake crap. In the end of course he would let his wife have the most say in it…but he couldn’t imagine Sherlock had had very many ideas about his wedding day.

“Have you ever had any ideas about what you would want on your wedding day?” Sherlock asked quietly.

John’s eyebrows shot up and he leaned back in his seat, wondering how much he should confess to his partner.

“Well…kind of,” he admitted with a small smile. “I always thought I’d like a small wedding, to be honest. No ceremony with a hundred guest and wedding planning that takes over a year. No hiring bands or spending hours trying wines…”

“Actually, I think I’d quite like that part,” Sherlock teased.

Letting out a surprised laugh, John offered:

“Okay then. We’ll do the wine tasting bit. What’s a wedding without alcohol, anyway?”

“I think I have an idea for music too,” his partner announced, a mischievous grin poking out at the corners of his lips. “No big bands or anything, promise.”

“Do I need to let you take over the planning?” John chuckled. He let out a deep breath, feeling relieved that they were actually agreeing on things. “Where were you thinking, as far as location?”

He had to bite back a sigh of relief when Sherlock shrugged and replied:

“I’ll leave that up to you. There’s always the family house, I’m sure Mycroft wouldn’t mind. But he just did his party there…”

“We should do something different,” John agreed. He eyed Sherlock carefully before blurt out:

“Like…an outdoor wedding?”
His partner turned to him, and he knew the consulting detective could sense that’s what he truly wanted.


“March is just around the corner.”

Their eyes met, and John’s heart skipped a beat.

He couldn’t believe he was wedding planning with Sherlock Holmes. Wedding planning their wedding! He found himself grinning madly and laughing at himself.

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

“Nothing!” John lied, shaking his head. “It’s just…it’s bizarre, isn’t it: Me and you planning a wedding? Would you have ever thought?”

They were both laughing at that point, and his arm slipped around Sherlock’s shoulder.

“No,” Sherlock admitted quietly. “I supposed I could have dreamed it though.”

His soft eyes met John’s, and his own heart fluttered. Feeling a bit shaky he leaned in, stealing a sensual kiss to his lover’s lips. Mindful of the fact that they were in public they kept the kiss short and sweet, and John felt downright giddy as he backed away.

“An outdoor wedding in March,” he announced. “You’ve got the music, we’ll do a wine tasting. I guess wedding planning isn’t so bad after all.”

“It’s as bad as you want it to be,” Sherlock commented. “But if you don’t mind, could we keep it between us? You can tell your family, but I don’t want Mycroft on my case about this. And Laura has enough going on with her pregnancy.”

John had a feeling that was the real reason Sherlock wanted to do their Civil Partnership in March. Laura was due to have her baby in August, and Sherlock being Sherlock wouldn’t want to draw attention to himself during that time.

But he was surprised when Sherlock drew in a deep breath and confessed:

“Laura wants me to be godfather…to both the baby and Dan.”

John blinked.

There was a hint of fear in Sherlock’s voice- uncertainty. This was clearly something he had been carrying around with him for a few days now…probably since they stayed over at his sister’s place. He immediately sympathized with Sherlock: it didn’t matter who you were, the request to be godparent was daunting. He remembered a mate from uni agreed on instinct to be godmother to her best friend’s baby, and tragically a year later her friend and her husband died in a car wreck. As far as he knew the baby and godmother were doing well, but having that kind of responsibility suddenly thrust on you when you’re so young, with little money and haven’t really started life yet. He couldn’t even imagine.

But Sherlock…he and Mycroft had their family money, of course. The consulting detective wasn’t exactly a career man, and there was practically no chance he would ever want to move outside of London. His life was about as stable as it ever could be…and Sherlock was at a place where John truly believed he was emotionally and mentally strong enough to take on such a responsibility.
Clearly, though, he needed to hear it.

“That’s amazing,” John announced. “I can’t think of a better choice. Laura trusts you, Dan trusts you. Jason trusts you. I can’t even imagine letting someone else take care of those kids. I mean… can you?”

This seemed to spark something from within Sherlock, and confidence and determination glittered in his eyes.

“No,” Sherlock confessed. “God forbid…if something happened…no, I wouldn’t let anyone else taking them. Even Mycroft told me I was the right choice.”

“You are,” John grinned, placing his arm around him and squeezing him. “Really the most important thing about being a godparent is for the parents to know their children would be in good hands. You’re a great man, Sherlock. Sometimes I think you still don’t believe you deserve the life you have now, but you do.”

At that his partner’s eyes melted into guilt, and John worried he might have just triggered something for him. He watched, biting his lip, as Sherlock’s eyes scanned the park before them, conjuring up a memory.

“What?” John asked softly.

Before them runners passed by, children lay in the grass with their parents and ate a picnic, and other couples lounged about, enjoying the unseasonably warm air.

“I used to hang around this park back when I was homeless,” Sherlock admitted quietly, barely audible. “Back in the woods there was a camp where some of us stayed.”

Heart sinking, John’s eyes fell to the grass. He couldn’t even bare thinking of Sherlock living on the streets, without access to proper food and water. Without heat on cold nights. Lonely, unsure of whom he could trust. Vulnerable. He knew it wasn’t fair for him to refuse to think about it, but the reality hurt every time he was reminded of his lover’s past.

“I’m sorry,” John whispered. “You should have said…we didn’t have to come here.”

Sherlock shook his head and sipped at his smoothie. He winced, as though the fruity taste suddenly tasted very bitter and unwelcoming. Then he swallowed hard, letting his eyes trail back to the tree line on the opposite side of the park.

“It’s good to be able to see how far you’ve come,” he stated softly.

John scooted closer to him, but Sherlock took no notice.

“Hey,” John whispered, placing his fingertips gently against Sherlock’s chin to turn his somber face toward him. “I’m proud of you, and I love you. We’re about to start this amazing life together, and we both deserve nothing more than to live happily ever after, okay?”

He was surprised when Sherlock let out a chuckle.

“Look at you being so cliché,” he teased.

The doctor rolled his eyes before leaning forward to kiss the man once again. For the moment he forgot they were in the park, forgot about the people all around him, and let himself melt into his fiancé’s arms. Their lips danced; it was feeling Sherlock’s tongue trying to slip between his teeth
that he came to his senses and pulled back. Warmth swept through his body, and he knew what he wanted - what he needed.

“Ready to go home?” He breathed.

Sherlock nodded with a look of desperation in his eyes.

As soon as they were in the flat they were in each other’s arms again. First he pinned Sherlock against the wall, kissing him deeply as he began tug his partner’s shirt out of his trousers. Sherlock tossed his coat to the staircase and swirled them around so it was John against the wall. Breathing in deeply, he dared to look up to meet Sherlock’s eyes. His lover had a wild look about him; in the way he held John against the wall, pinning his hand against it for support and pushing them as close together as possible he could see how much Sherlock wanted this.

He pushed his hands under Sherlock’s shirt, relishing in the warmth of his shirt and wrapping his arms around his back.

“God John,” Sherlock whispered; he planted a trail of kisses down his cheek, his jaw, his neck.

“I want you,” John breathed, finally freeing Sherlock of his shirt. He ran his hands through those dark curls, pulling just slightly hard in a way he knew turned his lover on. “I want you forever.”

*Cliché indeed,* he teased himself silently. But he didn’t care.

Sherlock was tugging off John’s jumper; neither was conscious of the mess they were leaving for Mrs Hudson to see. They could hardly part as they rushed up the stairs, almost tripping over as they burst into the flat.

“Is Mrs Hudson out?” John said in between kisses.

He quickly went to work unbuttoning his trousers, ushering Sherlock toward the sofa before he answered.

“Yes.”

Tumbling onto the sofa, they managed to roll around and he found himself trapped beneath his partner.

“Need you,” Sherlock breathed, his hot breath dance across John’s cheek.

“Please.”

His partner rocked against him and he groaned. Their lips danced again; John took charge this time, slipping his tongue into his lover’s mouth. His body surged with heat, with adrenaline. He shuddered as he felt Sherlock’s hands run across his bare chest, around to his back where he grasped him hard. They moaned; John felt his cock hardened and reached down, rubbing himself through his pants. He noticed Sherlock was still in his own trousers.

“Mmm, you need to get those off,” he growled.

Eyes twinkling, Sherlock slipped off of him and took a moment to tear of his trousers.

“I’ll be right back,” Sherlock whispered, leaning down to kiss him before taking off toward the bedroom.
John took the moment to breathe, to get comfortable. God he loved this. He loved being allowed to *want* this. He pulled off his pants and stroked himself a few times-

-and at that moment Mrs Hudson waltz into the flat carrying a tray of biscuits and three cups of tea.

“Yoo-hoo! Boys, I thought we could catch-“

Panic choked him; thank god there was a blanket hanging off the back of the sofa. He quickly grabbed it and flipped around on his stomach, covering himself the best he could. He closed his eyes tightly, hoping this was somehow a nightmare. His heart pounded, his chest felt too tight-

-and at that moment Sherlock walked in, carrying lube.

“I think we’re almost out, by the way-“ Sherlock stopped as soon as he saw Mrs Hudson and hid the lube behind his back.

John groaned and buried his head into the sofa. Out of the corner of his eye he had seen Mrs Hudson stumbled backward- miraculously she hadn’t dropped her tray. But she did scream.

“Oh my…oh I’m so sorry.”

“You were meant to be out!” Sherlock burst out.

He was blushing just as madly as John, though at least he was still in his pants.

“I finished the shopping early!” Mrs Hudson stammered. “Oh…oh I’ll just leave this here.”

He heard her sit the tray down and rush out of the room but John didn’t even move as Sherlock carefully approached the sofa.

“How much did she see?” Sherlock asked, sounding as though he was wincing as he did.

“Oh love,” Sherlock sighed, crawling onto the sofa so he could lay beside him.

He began to kiss John’s neck, and the doctor waved him away.

“I’m not in the mood anymore,” he muttered.

“Mmm,” Sherlock sighed against his neck. “Why don’t we go to bed anyway?”

He placed a kiss on his cheek now, and in response John turned his head away, burying himself deeper into the sofa.

“Come on, John,” Sherlock pleaded, jumping off the bed and tugging at his hand.

With a sigh John gave in, figuring at the least it might give him an excuse to go to bed early and for Sherlock to have a proper night of sleep. He wrapped the quilt around his waist as he followed Sherlock into their room- and they made sure the door was locked behind him. Sherlock dimmed the lights and John let out a sigh of content as he slipped into his warm bed.
“We’re going to set boundaries with Mrs Hudson, once we do the Civil Partnership thing,” John announced.

He almost wanted to suggest they buy a place of their own- after all, at the moment he was finally at a place financially where he could begin to think like that. But while he knew he could probably feel comfortable in a new place, especially a place they could truly call their own, he knew Sherlock would never feel the same. Sherlock had fought long and hard to be able to live in a place like Baker Street. Mrs Hudson was family to him; the flat was where he felt safe. And as much as John valued privacy, he could never take that away from Sherlock.

“But I love the tea and biscuits!” Sherlock whined.

John rolled his eyes when he saw that his partner had brought in the tray Mrs Hudson had been carrying; but of course he took a cuppa and biscuit for himself.

“I mean we need to be more carefully. We have really should keep sex to the bedroom,” he protested.

As much as he hated to say that, he couldn’t stomach the thought of risking an incident like this happening again.

“But-“ Sherlock began to whine. Then his face froze, and John smirked as he imagined his lover was imagining that it would be much worse to go without sex, period. “Fine.”

He crawled into bed beside John and for a long, awkward, moment they both ate their biscuits and sipped at their tea.

“It is good tea, though,” John finally announced a few moments later.

“A bit bitter,” Sherlock winced, sitting the cup on his bedside table.

The consulting detective turned his attention back to John, leaning down so he could plant kisses down his chest. As horrified as he still was, the feeling of his fiancé’s lips on his bare skin sent shivers down his spine. Out of curiosity he reached under the covers and grasped his lover’s cock, smirking when he felt Sherlock’s hardness.

“How are you still so horny?” John teased.

He rolled over to Sherlock and dipped underneath the covers so his face hovered over the shaft. Gently, he placed his lips over the head of his cock and immediately felt his fiance shift against the mattress as he began to suck him down.

Unsurprisingly when he woke up the next morning Sherlock was already awake. John could hear him, playing a waltz on his violin. He smiled as he rose from his sleep, feeling totally content after a night in bed with his lover. Rolling over he grabbed his mobile and sat up when he saw a missed call from his father. His father almost never rang.

His heart began to pound.

His hands shook slightly as he phoned his dad back, dozens of horrible thoughts going through his head. His sister fell off the wagon again. She was in the hospital. She drove. She died. Or his mother…
“Hello?” His father answered, sounding just as startled to see his son phone him as John was of him ringing.


“Oh! Oh yes, everything’s fine,” his father said with a laugh; John let out a sigh of relief. “I just wanted to see how you were doing.”

John let himself relax as he sank back into bed and ponder how much he should tell his father. He knew one thing his dad would get a kick out of, at least:

“Well…for starters are landlady walked in on Sherlock and I in bed,” he confessed. He let out a nervous laugh; he wasn’t sure if he had ever even sort of mentioned sex to his father once in his life. Let alone told him relationship stories like this. But his father let out a bark of laughter, and John grinned again. “And when I say in bed I mean on the sofa…and I’m saying too much.”

“No, no!” His father chuckled. “Poor lad. What did you do?”

He glanced around his bedroom- which now that he thought about it could use some cleaning. His and Sherlock’s clothes littered the floor, there were notebooks full of his notes from writing- not to mention boxes of his book.

“Hide in my room,” he sighed, “where I still am now.”

“Oh well, everyone’s had experiences like that.”

And it’s happened to me more than once, John thought bitterly.

He decided a subject change was in order immediately.

“So how’s Harry?” He asked somberly.

There was a long pause, as there always was after he asked that question, and he prepared himself for the worst.

“She’s okay,” his father finally replied. It sounded like he was shrugging as he spoke. “She says she’s still sober…and I believe her. She’s acting more like her old self. It’s nice…I’m remembering what it’s like to have my daughter around again. It’s just your mum. You know how she is…I think if Harry didn’t have to deal with her she would be doing much better.”

John bit his lip. The truth was he felt like if they all didn’t have to deal with their mother things would be much easier for them; they would be a happier, closer family. But he felt terrible for thinking that. He would never wish ill on his mother- he wanted to help her.

It was good that she was at least going to therapy- and he wished he knew what made her finally want to seek help. He just wished she’d let him be a part of his life again. He could do so much good for her…and she only continued to work harder to shut him out.

“Yeah, I know,” John finally agreed. “How is mum?”

Another long pause.

“She’s mostly quiet these days,” his father admitted, “but then she’ll just have these outbursts, like she just can’t hold it in anymore. I just wish there was a healthier way she could communicate with us. She just doesn’t know how to talk to her own family.”
A pit fell in John’s stomach, and suddenly he wished he hadn’t called his dad. He hated having to confront reality, the reality that he had no relationship with his mother— that she wouldn’t be at his wedding. He spent so much time pretending things weren’t this bad, and when reality hit it hurt worse and worse every time.

“And how are you?” He asked.

“Oh I’m well,” his father replied, much more quickly as before. Of course. His father had no hesitation when it came to lying about himself.”

“Dad—”

“I mean it, son. You don’t need to worry about me.”

John shook his head, unconvinced. His dad was so quiet about his own health and well-being that John couldn’t help but think he was hiding something.

“When did you last see your GP?” John questioned. “I even got bloody Sherlock to the doctor yesterday. You should let me take you. You’re due for a physical.”

“You would think since I helped you with medical school you could at least do a physical for me,” his father teased.

He rolled his eyes.

“You know I have no problem taking a look at you,” John said, “but I’m not a practising doctor. I can come over if you’d like, though. Or…you could come over here. Maybe have dinner while you’re here?”

Biting his lip, he found himself really hoping his dad would say yes. It would make him feel very adult—very loved—to be able to host his father for dinner at his own house.

“Alright,” his father replied. It even sounded like he was smiling, and his own grin spread across John’s face. “Just let me know the day, and I’ll be there.”

“Excellent!” John grinned. On a whim he decided to ask: “When in March was it that Grandma and Grandpa got married?”

There was a fleeting pause, as though his dad realised what he was really asking.

“The twenty-third,” his dad replied.

John drew in a deep breath before asking:

“Think you’ll be free on March 23?”

His dad let out a chuckle.

“I’ll be free whenever you need me to be. So you and Sherlock are really going through with it, huh?

At that moment his fiance waltzed into the bedroom, smiling at him when he saw John was awake.

“Yeah. Yeah, we are.”
Sorry for such a long wait! But I hope you enjoyed the long chapter! I'm excited to back to Johnlock lightheartedness and fun! Thanks so much for all the support. It just blows my mind that people still enjoy reading this story! I really do appreciate all of your comments and kudos!
“And with this one you should taste a hint of raspberry and chocolate.”

Sherlock’s eyes twinkled as they shifted over to John, whose cheeks were slightly flush from all the wine they had tried. His own stomach burned slightly; he wasn’t sure what he was thinking scheduling this wine tasting at eleven in the morning, but they were certainly going to be eating like pigs at lunch.

“I like it,” John commented. He took a second ship, his lips spreading into a grin. “This is really, really good. What dessert wines do you have?”

“Oh we have some amazing German ice wines!” Their hostess commented before disappearing back into her wine cellar.

After taking a sip of his water, Sherlock turned to his lover.

“Do we really need dessert wine?”

With a shrug, John finished off his sample. They had long since given up on the sip and swish technique, realising it wasn’t enough to get a true taste for which wines they liked the best.

“Your brother had appetiser wine, white wine for just the salad, two kinds of red wines with the entrée, and dessert wine. I’m not saying we have to be that extravagant, but we deserve to have fun at our wedding, don’t we?”

He reminded himself that if John were having a “normal” wedding there would definitely be multiple types of wines- probably a bloody bar- a huge cake, a reception hall, a DJ and a band…to say the least.

Although John had insisted he didn’t want any of these things, he probably would have had a wife that would have insisted upon it.

And he had a feeling John secretly wanted more than what he was saying.

“We can have as much alcohol as you’d like at our wedding,” Sherlock finally agreed, wrapping his arm around his fiance. “The drunker you are the more amusing our vows should be.”

Rolling his eyes, John blushed. They paused, expecting their hostess to return, and when she didn’t John spoke up:

“So you want to do that?” He asked cautiously, as though he were afraid Sherlock would realise what he had said and take it back. “Vows?”
Sherlock shrugged.

“You know how I love it when people have to listen to me give a speech,” he smirked.

He and John both laughed, and somehow Sherlock felt more at ease. It felt good when they talked openly about the wedding- starting with finally feeling comfortable enough with calling it a ‘wedding’. He wanted John to feel appreciated, loved. He wanted John to have everything he wanted and needed- and he wanted him to not be afraid to ask for it.

“Anything you want, you can have,” Sherlock whispered, kissing John on the forehead.

When he broke away a wicked grin was spread across his fiancé’s face, and he swallowed nervously, waiting for his partner’s first demand.

“So…can we do a proper honeymoon, then?”

Sherlock groaned; he had seen that coming.

“You mean a sex holiday?” He sighed. “Can’t we just do that at home without spending money?”

John snorted into his water, and as his cheeks turned red Sherlock knew what his argument would be.

“Do you not remember the Mrs Hudson incident?”

“That was two weeks ago!” Sherlock whined.

“And I still can’t look at her in the eyes!” John protested, stepping up to him. Sherlock had to grin; his partner couldn’t hide how much shorter he was than him, making him look ridiculous when he tried to size him up like this. “Come on, Sherlock. You know a honeymoon isn’t just about sex. It would be our first official holiday as life partners. Besides, this summer I’ll be coming up on deadlines for my next book and if I really start look into getting a practice that will start taking over things. We’re not going to have much time for a holiday…and I really want to do this with you.”

A pit formed in Sherlock’s stomach as John leaned up on his toes to steal a kiss. Truth be told when convincing John to get back into medicine again he hadn’t actually considered how much time away from them that would take. John would be working full time at least five days a week- and on his days off he would probably be doing paperwork. There would be long hours, skipped dinners, emergency appointments. And there definitely wouldn’t be much time for cases. Despite pledging to take it easy on cases for awhile after the vampires, Sherlock was already starting to miss the thrill.

“You okay?” John asked when he broke away and saw Sherlock’s face of stone.

Swallowing hard, Sherlock shook himself out of it and forced those concerns away. It wouldn’t be fair for him to back out now, after convincing John for so long that the doctor was ready for this.

What he had forgotten to take into account was if they were ready for this. They were embarking on this new marriage, John was enjoying the success of his book- was this really the time to basically open a family business too?

But if John was ready than he had to be ready, and he had to be just as supportive as he had been all along.

“Nothing,” Sherlock lied. “I think the wine is just starting to get to my head.”
With a smile, John kissed him again.

“Yeah, wine tasting at eleven in the morning was a brilliant idea,” John teased. “How about lunch after this? Maybe we can take one of these wines home and after we have full stomachs we can really try it out.”

There was a twinkle in his eye as he kissed him again, and Sherlock felt a bit more at ease. Of course he would- and could- do anything for John. John was worth it.

“Sounds brilliant,” Sherlock replied, his lips turned up in a small smile. “And of course we’ll go on a honeymoon. Anywhere you’d like.”

John’s face lit up like a kid at Christmas, which made Sherlock feel worlds better about the whole honeymoon idea. He admitted only to himself that he was a bit nervous about this wedding, nervous about living up to John’s wants and needs. They might “just” be getting a Civil Partnership in some people’s eyes…but this was the rest of their lives. And it should be just as special of an occasion for John as it would be if they were having a “real” wedding.

“That sounds amazing,” John said with a happy sigh. “I’m really, really excited about this. This is just…it’s perfect. It really is.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to grin: his partner was lovesick. John was absolutely head over hills in love with him and it felt so good to be loved like that. This was without a doubt the strongest, most healthiest, most trusting relationship he had ever been in and just a couple of years ago he never would have imagined finding love like this.

And suddenly, he realised he knew what he wanted to say in his vows.

His grin widened.

“Okay boys,” their hostess announced, grinning wildly herself as she waltz back into the tasting room with four bottles of wine in tow. “Sorry that took a minute, but I just knew I had one last bottle of this Riesling somewhere.”

That night Sherlock found himself lying on top of John with a warm buzz swarming in his body. His eyes were blown wide, his breath coming in shallow pants as he stared down at his lover. His lover, with his lips parted just so and his eyes closed in ecstasy as he panted and moaned through Sherlock’s thrusts.

“God John,” Sherlock groaned as he pushed in further.

He knew he hit just there, just at that perfect spot, when John moaned even louder than before, digging his fingernails into his back.

This was his life.

This was the rest of his life.

A wicked grin spread across Sherlock’s face as fire suddenly rushed through his body and he came, his release roaring out of him as he shouted out his lover’s name.
A week later it was half ten in the morning and they were still in bed, spooning. His long, lanky, arms were wrapped around his lover, and Sherlock felt totally at ease. In a way he already felt like they had entered the honeymoon stage.

If the rest of their life could go like this he knew he couldn’t have ended up any luckier.

“So…” John began, speaking for the first time since he called out Sherlock’s name during sex. A naughty smile lingered on her face. “My mates want to throw me a bachelor’s party.”

His eyes twinkled, yet he looked nervous as his eyes trailed up to Sherlock, waiting for his response.

But to be honest…Sherlock didn’t quite know what John meant. Sure he had heard of bachelor’s parties…but why would it be something Sherlock wouldn’t approve of?

“If you’re not comfortable-“

“Why wouldn’t I be comfortable?” Sherlock cut in, hoping for a cue from his partner. “If your mates want to celebrate your Civil Partnership they should be able to.”

John let out a nervous laugh, and Sherlock had a terrible feeling he was missing something here.

“Alright,” John replied, not sounding too convinced. “I told them to keep it small.”

An awkward tension settled between them, and Sherlock realised it must be because there was no one to throw him a bachelor’s party. His brother hadn’t had one, but were they really that much alike? Did Sherlock really care about something as rudimentary as a bachelor’s party?

He supposed, in the end, it was just one of those things that made you grateful someone would even want to do throw one for you.

“I’m really most focused on our ceremony, though,” John spoke up, as though he really thought Sherlock would be that bothered. Sherlock told himself he wasn’t, that any molecule of jealous he felt was horrendously subconscious. “And the honeymoon. I’ve been thinking…what about Iceland?”

Sherlock’s eyebrows shot up, it was the last place he had expected. To be honest he was thinking Spain…or even better, Italy.


He swallowed nervously, wondering if he was allowed to stand up for himself here and make a strong suggestion.

But John kept staring at him, demanding an explanation with that bemused smile of his on his face, and Sherlock finally confessed:

“I was thinking Italy: perhaps Rome- Tuscany, even- maybe a tour of the whole country.”

John’s grin spread, and Sherlock was happy to realise that his fiance was actually wooed- not just to give in for the sake of making him happy, but because he really liked the idea.

“That sounds amazing!” John exclaimed. “I mean, really! Italy…Italy, with Sherlock Holmes. On a honeymoon. Yeah…Italy. I think that’s a brilliant idea. And maybe…if it’s not asking too much, we could pop by France on the way home?”
Sherlock couldn’t help but grin as he kissed the top of his lover’s head.

“Of course it’s not asking too much,” he promised.

Chapter End Notes

I thought a short and sweet chapter was in order! Especially one about wedding planning :) I hope you enjoyed it! Thanks so much!!!!
Sherlock scowled as he stared himself down in the mirror, disproving of the dark charcoal suit and royal blue tie he wore.

“I think I like the red better,” he muttered.

His brother appeared behind him, sighing.

“No one wears bright red at a wedding, brother dear,” he quipped. “Here, try the navy.”

He squirmed as Mycroft took off the royal tie for him and switched it out with a sleek navy. As he stepped back and looked himself over Sherlock felt a knot form in his stomach- it was perfect. And every time something perfect came up in their wedding planning it made the wedding seem that much closer. Of course he couldn’t be more excited- and ready- to officially tie the knot with John, but he couldn’t help but to be anxious. What if he said something wrong at the ceremony? What if the press got wind of what they were up to? What if he let down John?

“Stop it,” his brother suddenly demanded. Blinking, Sherlock didn’t protest when he was spun around to face Mycroft’s stern, unamused, eyes. “Lest you forget, I’ve been here, brother dear.”

With a sigh, Sherlock found himself regretting even agreeing to do this fitting. Why couldn’t they just wear whatever was clean the week they got married? And what was he thinking bringing Mycroft along? He didn’t understand why John couldn’t just come along.

“Please don’t give me the ‘everyone has wedding jitters speech’, ” he moaned.

Mycroft straightened and raised an eyebrow, looking slightly offended.

“As the older brother I feel entitled to give that speech,” Mycroft protested. “And it is true. After all, you did decide on a wedding date rather abruptly. I imagine it feels quite like everything’s suddenly happening all at once. It’s a bit suffocating, isn’t it?”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to nod, feeling helpless. Why did he feel so nervous about this?! It was just a ceremony. Just words!

It was just…the rest of his life.

“You’re ready for this, Sherlock,” Mycroft told him quietly, placing his hands on his baby brother’s shoulders. He let out a small laugh. “I never thought I’d say this, but you’re ready for this. Once you do this with John it will feel like you’ve been given permission to truly move on with your life- to live the rest of your life. You deserve that.”

“I know that,” Sherlock muttered.

He wished people would stop talking to him like he had no idea what he was doing.

“Well,” Mycroft sighed with his lips curled up in the smallest of sympathetic smiles. “You just seem like you need to hear it again.”

“I don’t,” he snapped and began to tear off his tie. “I’m fine. It’s all fine.”
Mycroft smirked at him, and Sherlock had to resist the urge to punch him.

“If you say so, brother dear,” he sneered. Suddenly Mycroft’s face melted, and he reached inside his suit jacket and pulled out an envelope and a key.

“What is this?” Sherlock demanded, examining the key closely.

It was an older style key and unlike those of London flats; in fact the key had to be at least a hundred years old. It was an original.

“It’s 250 years old,” Mycroft commented, his eyes gleaming with pride, “and yes, it still works. It belongs to a quaint little bed and breakfast in Florence. Greggory and I have been quite a few times. It’s…charming. It’s discrete.”

It sounded like the kind of perfect place for The British Government/Just a Civil Servant to take his secret lover back in the day, Sherlock imagined. Where no one would care that Mycroft Holmes was gay…and where Greg was certainly not likely to run into any mates or colleagues. Of course, he and John didn’t have to worry about being discrete. But he appreciated where his brother was coming from- getting them away from the other tourists. Privacy- that was the kind of holiday he preferred.

He realised he still hadn’t opened the envelope and his brother was waiting for him to do so. Right away as he pulled away the flap he saw the airline ticket to Italy, with return tickets to Paris and London.

“What…” he breathed, not sure what to say except… “I can’t accept this.”

His brother just laughed.

“Sherlock, you swipe my credit card on a regular basis, you can accept a gift.”

“It’s too much-“

“It’s not,” Mycroft insisted. “I’m really very happy for you. Greggory and I both are. You’re…you’re a good man, Sherlock. And I’m letting you off the hook.”

Sherlock snorted.

“Letting me off the hook for what?”

“You don’t need a watcher anymore,” Mycroft explained. “Of course, I will always keep my eye on you. I can’t expect you to just stay out of trouble. But you’re your own man, Sherlock. All I’m saying…is I’m going to start cutting you a little slack.”

Eyebrows raised, Sherlock carefully looked up at his brother, unsure if he understood him correctly.

“Be careful what you promise, Mycroft,” Sherlock warned playfully. “Spying on me is your favourite hobby.”

His brother rolled his eyes.

“Spying on you has been a necessity,” he countered. “As it turns out, all this time lately you didn’t need my cameras or people following you. You figured life out on your own.”

Oh how Sherlock could wish that were true…how he wish he could take sole credit.
“No, I didn’t,” Sherlock whispered. He guiltily looked down at his feet; he couldn’t help but to notice his shoes had gotten a bit scuffed from the last few cases he wore them in. He supposed he needed new shoes for the ceremony too. He looked up at the mirror. And probably a new haircut.

“I would have died without your help… and without Greg’s. And without John… quite frankly I don’t know how long I would have made it sober even after…I just… even I’m not arrogant enough to try to take all the credit for where I am now.”

“Perhaps not all of the credit,” Mycroft gave in, “but for years I tried to offer help and you wouldn’t take it. You had to make that choice to change your life. Regardless, I’m incredibly proud.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to roll his eyes again.

“Must you be so sentimental?” He shot. “What’s gotten into you?”

His brother straightened up and frowned, looking stunned, as though he just realised how he was acting.

“I suppose I’m just in utter shock that my baby brother is actually getting married. I fear if I pinch myself I’ll wake up from this dream.”

“Sod off,” he muttered.

With a laugh, Mycroft held up the dark blue tie.

“This worked the best,” he announced, “it will be lovely with the baby blue John is getting.”

It was Sherlock’s turn to frown.

“How do you know what John decided to wear?” He protested.

Mycroft held his mobile up to him to reveal a text from John:

Make sure Sherlock picks something that goes with baby blue.

“Fine,” Sherlock sighed. “I suppose it will work.”

His mobile buzzed, and he wasn’t surprised it was yet another reminder from John reminding him about tonight- as though he could have forgotten the dinner his partner had been fretting over for days.

This time there was a request:

I’m out of milk. I need it for the soup Please get some… please. I’m begging you!

Sherlock let out an incredulous laugh- as though he were that helpless!

I’m not totally helpless, he shot back through text, I can get milk myself.

John texted back only seconds later:

I beg to differ.

The smells of baked chicken and vegetables- carrots and potatoes- overwhelmed him as Sherlock
stepped into the flat. He smelled as a whiff of mushrooms hit him, and he knew John was making mushroom soup. One step into the kitchen upstairs proved all of his deductions correct; there was even a gigantic bowl of salad waiting on the table.

“John, we’re never going to eat all that salad!” Sherlock teased. “You’re dad’s a meat and potatoes man, he would be happy just with the chicken and vegetables.”

“I know,” John sighed as he practically tore the bag of milk away from Sherlock’s arms. “But I know from Harry that he hasn’t been eating properly at home. I want him to have at least one decent meal this week.”

Sherlock frowned.

“Your mum isn’t cooking anymore?”

His fiancé let out a rather pissed-off sounding laugh, and Sherlock regretted asking.

“Mum doesn’t even get out of bed most days,” he mumbled, “and apparently since we ran into her she stopped going to therapy. But I just… I can’t think about her right now. This is about my relationship with my dad, and frankly we’re in a better place than we’ve been in a very long time. I just want it to stay that way.”

Wearing a proud smile, Sherlock leaned over to steal a kiss to his lover’s cheek. Words couldn’t describe how much he admired John for trying to piece his family back together, even when all they did was continue to try to push him away. Even when things didn’t go well with his mother, or even his sister, John still wanted a good relationship with his father.

“You’re amazing,” Sherlock announced. “Everything smells delicious, I’m sure your father will love it.”

His partner forced a grateful smile, but he still couldn’t help but to notice how tense John was. With his arms now free of groceries he stepped forward and began to massage the doctor’s shoulders…until there was a knock at the door just moments later.

“Oh shit he’s early!” John hissed, turning the heat up on the soup.

“It’ll be fine, I’ll talk with him in the living room.”

John’s eyes lit up in horror.

“Right, because nothing could go wrong with that,” he muttered.

Putting on a wide smile, Sherlock pounded down the staircase, threw open the door- and was surprised to find John’s father with his hand leaning against the doorframe, out of breath. He looked around the street, surely…

“Did you walk here?” He demanded.

Mr Watson let out a laugh and shook his head.

“No, just feeling a little breathless today. You know, old age. You have your good days and your bad. Well…you will know one day, son.”

Sherlock blinked, concerned for a moment that Mr Watson might be confused, but when John’s father smiled he realised he was serious.
“You called me your son,” Sherlock pointed out stupidly, just to make sure he was clear on this.

“Well, you are,” Mr Watson replied, “if it’s alright for me to call you that, of course.”

He was frozen in place, with a sort of half bemused, half incredulous smile on his face. He was a son.

Again.

It felt…good.

Not only was John a part of his family now, he was a part of John’s…for better or for worse.

“Of course it’s okay,” Sherlock said, reaching out to shake Mr Watson’s hand.

He had to admit though it didn’t feel quite right to call him dad yet…he at least had to talk to John about that first.

“Come in!” He practically exclaimed, realising how long they had been standing in the foyer. “John’s just finishing up dinner.”

“It smells delicious,” Mr Watson commented. “You two really didn’t have to go through this much trouble.”

“Oh this is all John,” he teased. “I would have just taken you out for Italian down the street.”

“Don’t give him any ideas!” John called from the kitchen. He was happy to find his fiancé smiling as they stepped into the kitchen. “Sherlock, why don’t you guys start on the salad?”

Mr Watson turned out to be really fascinating to talk to. He went on and on about when John was a boy- he found out about his fiancé’s failed choir audition when he was twelve and how he took up the clarinet in school to impress a girl who also played the clarinet. He learned when John first learned how to drive he pulled into a ditch by his grandparents’ house instead of the driveway.

By the time they finished dinner Mr Watson had pulled out some photos he had brought along.

“Oh no,” John sighed miserably, shaking his head even as a smile slipped across his face.

“Oh my god, your baby hair!” Sherlock grinned, picking up a photo of baby John with curly, long, blonde hair. “Why did you ever cut it, we would have matched!”

“Thankfully I grew out of the long hair phase,” John moaned.

Mr Watson passed around photos of John at his first Christmas, Easter, Halloween (he was a pumpkin, of course).

“You should ask Mycroft what you were on your first Halloween,” John shot with a wicked grin.

His cheeks were more than a bit red with embarrassment (and from drinking); he was clearly so over being gushed over, but Sherlock was loving it. It made him wish he had met John years earlier- though of course he knew it was that they met at such a crucial moment in each of their lives that helped prompt their relationship.

Suddenly Sherlock noticed that Mr Watson was acting strangely: he seemed to be out of breath again and he was holding his left arm, like it hurt. He glanced over to John, and it pained him to see the worried look on his fiancé’s face, confirming that he had noticed too.
“Dad, you okay?” John asked, placing his arm on his father’s shoulder. “You seem uncomfortable, are you in any pain?”

Mr Watson fiercely shook his head no and stood up, a clear sign that he was lying. John immediately stood up, looking a bit pale as his eyes examined his father up and down.

“I’m sure it’s just heartburn. I ate too much food!” Mr Watson shrugged. “I just need the loo.”

But as soon as he started to walk he stopped, hunched over in clear pain.


Sherlock’s own heart skipped a beat as he glanced between John and Mr Watson. In his head he was going through all the possible signs of a heart attack—shortness of breath, pain in the arm, heartburn-like chest discomfort. And then there was the older man’s history, with his minor heart attack just earlier this year.

“I said I’m fine, son!” Mr Watson roared, uncharacteristically forcefully. John looked taken aback, but not hurt.

“Why don’t I get you some more water?” Sherlock offered.

“I’m getting my med kit.”

As soon as John fled the room Sherlock didn’t want to leave Mr Watson alone. He began to pace, trying to think of other plausible explanations. Maybe Mr Watson was just stressed; if he hadn’t been eating properly, sleeping properly, or taking care of himself like he should that would make sense.

Of course, all of those factors might also lead to his body breaking down, to his heart breaking down…

Suddenly Mr Watson stumbled, and Sherlock caught him in time to lower him to the sofa.

“John!” Sherlock yelled, his voice unnaturally high-pitched with panic. “Mr Watson…”

He didn’t quite know what to say. His fiancé’s father was collapsed on their sofa, his breathing dangerously unsteady and his face coated in sweat. Sherlock took his pulse, finding it to be irregular.

“Mr Watson,” Sherlock called out, reminding himself that he needed to remain calm for Mr Watson’s sake. “Just try to take deep breaths for me.”

“I’m okay,” Mr Watson said, rubbing his chest as he did. “I’m just a bit dizzy. I just need to…need to get my breath.”

His eyes fluttered close, and Sherlock screamed:

“JOHN!”

His partner came running into the room, medical kit in tow, and Sherlock’s head was burning with emotions. He was afraid for Mr Watson, worried for John, and terrified for what could happen next. And he felt helpless because he couldn’t do anything but sit there in panic.

“Sherlock, call 999,” John instructed as he began taking his father’s blood pressure.
Sherlock didn’t hesitate to take out his mobile, giving their address.

“Hurry!” Sherlock exclaimed into the mobile when the operator told him the ambulance was on their way.

His fiancé’s eyes were wild with anxiety as he brought his stethoscope away from his father’s heart; Sherlock knew John knew this wasn’t good.

Then suddenly John looked up at Sherlock, serious and desperate, and pleaded:

“Phone your brother, make sure we can get everything we need at the hospital.”

John would never ask for him to pull favours like that- it was a true testament to how serious this was.

There was only room for one person in the ambulance. John didn’t even let him fight it, and Sherlock was left standing useless in the road, watching in the window of the back of the vehicle as his fiancé desperately tried to take over. Hands shaking, he reached into his pocket for his mobile and dialed his brother’s number.

Chapter End Notes

Of course I couldn't let things stay happy and fluffy for long...

Thanks everyone for your continuing love and support of this story! You guys are the best :) Happy Halloween!
He was numb.

Tonight didn’t feel real.

He hadn’t even heard any news yet, but deep down he just knew.

His dad had already had a minor heart attack last year, his vitals were terrible…and then there was the part about his heart stopping on the way to the hospital.

He had to help restart his own father’s heart.

He was numb.

“John?” Sherlock whispered in his ear. John didn’t move from where he sat in the waiting room chair. Running his fingers through the doctor’s blonde strands, Sherlock quietly went on: “Don’t you think you should call your mother? I know it’s the last thing you want to do right now…but she should know. She’s still his husband.”

John let out a shaky sigh as he sat up, filling a bit dizzy from heavy emotion and leaning over for so long. Deep down he knew Sherlock was right- it was even selfish that he had been sitting here forty-five minutes and hadn’t called. In his defence he had phoned Harry, who of course had not picked up.

“I know,” John sighed. “I just…I can’t wrap mind head around it. He was just at dinner. He was up and talking! How did I not see it coming earlier? Even you said he had been out of breath. I should have known. I should have made him go to the A&E.”

“John,” his fiancé said quietly, brushing his finger down John’s cheek. “You can’t agonize over this. We had no idea. All we can do is wait…and be with family.”

Swallowing hard, he felt tears well in his eyes. How sad was it that the only thing that might bring him and his mother together was his father being in the hospital?

How sad was it that that was almost okay with him, if it meant getting the chance to talk to his mother?

But first he had to be brave enough to make that phone call.

“I can phone her for you, if it’s too much,” Sherlock offered.

“No,” John insisted, shaking his head. “It should be me. She should hear it from me, I’m her son…regardless of what she thinks.”

With that he threw himself off the chair and with shaky hands took his mobile from his pocket.

His mother didn’t say anything when he told her that his father was in the hospital and that it was serious.
She just hung up.

He called Harry again and again she didn’t answer.

He sat in the waiting room again with Sherlock, wondering why he hadn’t gotten any information yet.

Something had to have gone wrong.

Something went wrong and they were into extreme emergency surgery to fix it. They knew that if they came out here and told him something went wrong he would demand to be in that operating room…and he was so tempted already to barge in there and take over.

But his hands were too shaky. His mind was swarming with guilt, with dread, with anxiety.

With fear.

He knew what was coming, and he was scared.

Clenching Sherlock’s hand he leaned against the wall; the chair had made his back too stiff. Sitting made him too anxious, though standing wasn’t helping much either. Sherlock had a cup of coffee in his other hand- he hadn’t drunk any of it.

Every now and then he would steal a glance toward the A&E doors, hoping to see his mother rush through.

She never did.

An hour and a half into surgery Mycroft waltzed in, his usual umbrella in hand. John’s eyebrows shot up: he couldn’t believe his brother-in-law was there his own immediate family. He hadn’t even thought of Mycroft coming by at all- it was still fairly early in the evening, he would normally still be working. Surely he hadn’t put off work for this?

“Mycroft?” Sherlock acknowledged when his brother stepped up to them.

The eldest Holmes sibling sized them both up, as though trying to get an idea of where they both stood emotionally. He must have felt pretty empathetic towards them because his face immediately softened as he declared:

“Laura is on the way. Greg’s stuck on a murder investigation but will be here as soon as he can.”

There was a sudden sparkle in Sherlock’s eyes, and John knew he was itching to know what the case was about, even despite the circumstances. Luckily he had the decency to not ask.

“You didn’t have to come down,” John blurted out. “I mean, thank you, it means a lot. But we’re just waiting. There’s not really any reason for you to be here.”

To his surprise, Mycroft offered him a small, sympathetic smile.

“You’re family,” he replied uncharacteristically softly. “Do you have everything you need?”

Everything except MY family, he thought bitterly. He let out another shaky sigh, trying to coax himself to calm down. But I suppose this is my family now. Maybe I should stop trying.

“I think we’re good,” John muttered quietly.
“Dr Watson?”

John’s heart leapt to his throat at the sound of his father’s doctor’s voice.

Then it began to pound.

The rest of the world seemed to fade away as he tried to focus in on the doctor; he felt dizzy again.

“I’m so sorry, John. He went into cardiac arrest during surgery. We couldn’t revive him.”

Everything stopped.

He felt Sherlock beside him, arm slowly wrapping around his waist, pulling him close. He felt Mycroft’s eyes on him, wondering what he could do.

He knew this cardiologist: he was one of the best surgeons in London. His dad had had the best treatment available. They had done everything they could.

And it was over.

“I’m so sorry, John,” the doctor said again, placing a brief hand on his shoulder.

All John could muster the strength to say was a very quiet:

“Thank you for everything.”

The cardiologist nodded.

“Let me know if you need anything,” he offered.

John swallowed hard, feeling extremely sick to his stomach.

“Can I see him?” He pleaded, his voice barely above a whisper.

The cardiologist nodded again and replied softly:

“Of course.”

“John?”

He swirled around at the sudden sound of his sister’s voice. His eyes widened at the sight of Harry, standing in track pants and a sweatshirt with their mother standing behind her, fully dressed in her usual formal clothes. Tears fell down his sister’s face; his mother’s face was stiff, pale.

Harry rushed up to him, and he let her throw his arms around him.

“No!” She whispered, shaking her head against his shoulder. “No, please no.”

He could only put his arms around her, holding her, his eyes on his mother, Waiting for her to say something.

When she didn’t he closed his eyes, burying his face in his sister’s shoulder.

He couldn’t remember the last time they hugged like this, but he couldn’t have been more thankful that she was there to be with him.

“Did you notice anything?” John asked softly when they finally broke apart. He hadn’t shed a tear;
he felt too numb to cry. “Has he been acting differently?”

Harry shrugged, her arms shaking as she ran them through her hair and shrugged her shoulders. John wished he hadn’t asked- he didn’t mean to make his sister feel guilty.

“He’s been a bit breathless,” Harry confessed. “I tried to get him to make a new doctor’s appointment but he wouldn’t let me. I should have come to you, I’m sorry.”

She let out another sob, and he embraced her again.

“He wouldn’t have listened to me either,” he muttered. He knew that was the truth. Despite his guilt he knew if he suggested his dad go to the hospital tonight he would have refused.

Closing his eyes, he thought of the state of his family over the past few years. Why hadn’t he spent more time with his dad after coming home from war? His dad hadn’t deserved his abandonment, despite what his mother had done to him. Even Harry had the guts to move back home and try.

“I’m just glad you got to spend so much time with him over the past year,” he whispered to her.

His sister couldn’t reply, she just held her fist to her mouth, trying not to completely lose it. At the same time they both turned, staring at their mother and waiting for her to say something. She seemed totally out of place, like she didn’t seem to know who they were. Finally she blinked and turned her eyes to Mycroft. John held his breath, having a bad feeling of where this was going.

“Mum-“ he tried to stop her, but she interjected:

“Who are you?”

Mycroft’s eyes sparkled a bit in interest, perhaps amusement, of being called upon, but his features remained unchanged as he replied:

“Mycroft Holmes. I’m Sherlock’s older brother.”

His mother paused for a long moment, her eyes shifting between each Holmes brother in disgust, and god if it was all he could do to not toss her out of the A&E.

*But it’s her husband who just died,* he reminded himself, his hands balled into fists.

“There’s no reason for you two to still be here, is there?” She scoffed.

John stomped his foot.

_Stopped his foot._

Without hesitation he strode toward her, uncaring of what anyone else in the department thought.

“Sherlock and Mycroft are my family, and they both have every right to be here! They’re more family than you are, anyway. I want them here- that’s why they’re here.”

He had a mouthful that he would have loved to say to her right then, but there was a time and a place and that wasn’t in the middle of the A&E moments after his father passed away. Out of the corner of his eye he could see how flattered Sherlock was at having someone stand up for him like that. Even Mycroft seemed impressed.

“I want to see my husband,” his mother declared, her voice quiet and wavering.
Like she needed his permission.

He gave a single nod.

“Let’s go.”

They were in the hospital most of the night. John had asked Mycroft to tell Laura and Greg to wait to see them the next day. He didn’t want to be too crowded by people right now. Sherlock stayed by his side the whole time, bless him. Even when he was with his family, at his father’s bedside, staring down at his stiff, cold body he could feel his fiancé’s presence in the hall. Sherlock himself had suggested it would be more appropriate for John to visit with just his mother and sister. He came in later, after his mother and sister left to speak with the hospital staff. He felt his lover’s hand fall on his shoulder, and John’s lips peered up ever so slightly in appreciation.

“I’m really glad I got to know him,” Sherlock announced quietly, his first words since they entered the room.

John, selfishly, hadn’t even thought of how Sherlock might feel- how disturbed he might be that this man that he had just gotten to know, that he had just hosted dinner for, was now dead. He hadn’t thought of the memories this would drag up for Sherlock of his mother’s death.

But Sherlock was right. He would have had a brilliant father-in-law, but at least for a short time Sherlock was able to get to know at least someone in John’s family. And someone in John’s family had gotten to know Sherlock.

“I’m glad you did too,” John whispered. “He really thought highly of you, you know.”

Gazing longingly at his father’s still body, at the way the wrinkles on his face still looked so real and alive, he missed Sherlock’s sad smile.

“He called me ‘son’ today,” Sherlock confessed. John turned to him in surprise. His father had known how much it meant for him to be accepting of Sherlock, but this…this was more than he could have dreamt of. “I was a bit put-off at first by it, to be honest, but then I realised that I was someone’s son again. I haven’t had real parents in so long…I would have accepted him like a father, you know.”

Now, for the first time that night, his eyes felt damp.

“I wish you could have had that,” John whispered. “Christ.”

Sherlock engulfed him into a hug before he could say anything else, and John knew he had to get away. He needed to do something.

“Whatever you need, I’m here,” Sherlock murmured, kissing the top of his head.

“I don’t know what I need,” John sighed as he pulled away.

Except for all of this to go away, for it to never have happened.

But that wasn’t reality, and the reality was that he had to deal with this now. Not only absorbing the news of his father’s death but he would have to deal with the funeral, the legal matters, his mother.
“I guess I need to get his body taken care of,” John muttered.

Everything would come down to him- and he was actually okay with that. If his mother was so distant when it came to her relationship with his father, that uncaring of her family then he didn’t want her to have anything to do with this.

“Mycroft’s taken care of it.”

Even as he said it, Sherlock looked a bit guilty for not asking him first, but John actually felt relieved. In truth he was still too numb to think properly, and he knew that somehow Mycroft always knew what to do.

“Okay,” John nodded. He glanced at his watch, surprised to find it was after midnight. “I’m not really sure what to do now.”

His eyes trailed over to his father’s body, which still looked so real, like he could open his eyes any moment. John crept closer, daring to lay one hand on his father’s chest and grasp a limp wrist with the other. It struck him then, that this would be the last time he would be allowed to hold him.

Sherlock was by his side again, just hovering, clearly unsure of what he wanted or needed.

“I’ll miss him,” John whispered, the words escaping him in a sharp gasp of air. “God I should have spent more time with him…it was all he wanted.”

“You did spend time with him,” Sherlock said quietly, “and that’s what matters. He got to see his son happy again, his daughter healthy. You can’t control death…I mean, to an extent at least. But you took control of your life, and your dad was very proud of you for it.”

He knew in the end he would have to admit Sherlock was right. This wasn’t his fault and there was nothing he could do to change what happened. He only had to be grateful for the time he did have with his father.

“Mycroft offered for us to stay the night at his house,” Sherlock spoke up. “He has a car outside, whenever you’re ready, but there’s no rush.”

John both wanted to get out of the hospital and away from this as fast as possible and wanted to cling to his father’s body for as long as possible. He simply nodded, and Sherlock kissed his head one last time. They stayed there like that for another hour- John knew eventually they would need to move the body and clean the room, but he appreciated being made the exception. When they left to go to Mycroft’s he didn’t say a word; he didn’t argue about not going home, although it felt like lately things kept happening at Baker Street to scare them away.

Once at Mycroft’s he changed into some pajamas he had purposefully left there, in case of emergencies like this one. He was grateful that Sherlock didn’t try small talk, empty words that both of them knew wouldn’t help. Instead they quietly slipped into bed; he allowed Sherlock to spoon his body, to wrap his arms around him to hold him warm and close.

Of course he couldn’t sleep. He just lay awake, remembering birthdays, Christmases, school plays and his graduation from medical school. Even though most of those memories were fuzzy and he could only recall bits and pieces, he would always remember how bright his father’s smile was.

His father didn’t deserve the marriage he ended up with.

He deserved a better family life.
And that thought was what finally sent the first tear down his cheek.

Chapter End Notes

Yes. I'm mean :( but all of this is moving us toward the *gasp* conclusion of the story. Because yes, I do actually plan to end this (eventually!). Up next is the funeral, of course, and John will learn that his father kept him well in mind in his will ;) And will John and his mother finally be able to truly talk again? Stay tuned!

Thank you, as always, for reading! I'd love to hear your thoughts! Thanks so much for all the kudos and reviews!
John's Offer

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

John thought he would be alone when he wondered into Mycroft Holmes’ kitchen at three in the morning to make tea, but then again he was forgetting whose home he was in. Not only was Mycroft wide awake and fully dressed, he was thoroughly snogging Greg right there in the middle of the kitchen. He considered bolting, but he did really want that tea and there was no way he could ever unsee this. So instead he cleared his throat.

The couple promptly turned, both of their cheeks flushed with embarrassment…and of course from passion.

“John,” Mycroft greeted, his voice wavering uncharacteristically.

He swallowed nervously while Greg just smirked…though his face fell when his eyes landed on the doctor.

“I’m really sorry to hear about your father,” Greg offered. He stole a glance toward his husband. “And I’m, erm, sorry you had to see that.”

“It’s fine, it’s your house,” John shrugged. “I just wanted to make some tea, if that’s okay. I couldn’t sleep.”

“Of course,” Mycroft replied. “I’ll make you some. Why don’t you have a seat?”

Honestly John had thought of the tea because it would give him something to do, but at the same time he was so mentally drained that having someone else boil water for him was probably a good idea. He simply sat and watched as Mycroft made his tea and Greg began making some kind of smoothie in the blender. He looked a bit sheepish as he turned to John and explained:

“It’s not one of those weird green drinks, just a fruit smoothie. I’ve been trying to cut back on coffee and pastries so I’ve been drinking these in the morning. They’re not half bad…course Myc says I use too much sugar.”

He threw a playful glare toward his partner, who rolled his eyes and sipped at his tea.

“Probably a smart idea,” John agreed. “I should start making those instead of eating eggs and bacon all the time. Apparently my cholesterol is pretty high.”

“I can make you one,” offered Greg.

The thought of any kind of food made his stomach churn.

“Thanks, but I don’t think I can eat,” he muttered.

“Of course,” Greg murmured as he poured his smoothie into a glass.

A silence fell in the room, and John felt like an unnecessary burden, like the two men felt like they had to entertain him- comfort him. He really didn’t want them interrogating him about how he was holding up so he thought it was best to distract them by asking the questions himself.

“Are you leaving for work or just coming home?”
“I just got home,” Greg admitted, “but I’ll be leaving again in a few hours. This new murder is just…bizarre. But I better not get into it. You two don’t need to worry about any cases right now.”

John nodded, appreciating that. Although he wasn’t so selfish that he would keep Sherlock from helping if the police truly needed him, it made him feel good—safe—having Sherlock around during this time.

“I appreciate that,” John replied. “How about you, Mycroft? Are you heading into the office?”

“I have a conference call at four—blasted time zones— but I can do that here. I’ll head into the office around six. If you need anything though—anything—do not hesitate to contact me. I’m lucky enough to have many, many resources at my fingertips and I do enjoy using them for good.”

“Thanks, I appreciate that.” More silence. He wondered how Sherlock was sleeping—he hoped he was managed to sleep well. He felt like the other two were waiting for him to say something else, so he reassured them: “I think I have everything covered. My father was actually very big about planning for his…death. He’s always had a will and life insurance. He bought a burial plot and even had his own casket picked out.”

“Sounds like a wise man,” Mycroft replied. “God only knows how many times I’ve asked Sherlock to work out his will.”

John’s eyes went wide.

“Sherlock doesn’t have a will?!” He exclaimed.

If it woke his fiance up, so be it. How could he be so careless?!

Mycroft looked rather bemused, like he had hoped to have an opportunity to bring this up to John because he knew the doctor would be able to get through to his brother.

“Trust me, my baby brother and I have been through this argument many times,” Mycroft said. “Perhaps you’ll have better luck.”

He knew he would.

“Yes, well, as I was saying, I think I have everything covered. I just have to manage to get through this…somehow.”

There was a long moment of silence—the other two clearly didn’t know what to say to that—until Mycroft placed a hand on his husband’s shoulder and encouraged:

“You still have a couple of hours before you have to leave, why don’t you go catch a bit of sleep?”

Greg shrugged and sighed, as though that was exactly what he needed to hear.

“Yeah, you’re probably right. But if you need anything John—anything—don’t hesitate.”

John nodded, though he couldn’t imagine actually needing to ask anyone to do anything right now. He really wanted to just get the funeral over with so that he could try to grieve…so that he could try to begin to get through this. But once Greg left it became apparent that Mycroft wanted to talk to him alone, some sort of brother-in-law to brother-in-law heart to heart, he supposed.

But perhaps an older brother was exactly what he needed right now.
“How did you get through it, when your mother died?” He asked quietly. “If you don’t mind me asking, I mean. I can’t imagine how hard that must have been…seeing her through her illness, helping to raise Sherlock. Plus you were at uni!”

His brother-in-law sighed as he sat their teas down, as though it had all been nothing.

“Well, Grandmother was still around for awhile,” Mycroft began, “and truthfully it helped, having to look after Sherlock. It gave me a purpose, it kept my head straight. But if I were completely honest, my mother’s death didn’t really hit me until a few years later, when Sherlock was starting to go through his drug problems.”

John’s heart sank- the last thing he wanted to think about right now was his fiancé’s former drug problem- but he knew it was a huge part of Mycroft’s story.

“It was easier getting him through school, getting him to study and just making sure he was in bed at night and ate three meals a day. But once he moved on to uni, and he became so…isolated…all I could think about sometimes was how horrible it was to be dealing with this alone. Of course I would have never wanted Mummy to see Sherlock as he was those days, but I secretly yearned for guidance. In the end I really had no choice: I had to get through it. And, I suppose, that’s how I managed: I had no other choice. But you, John, you have support. You have Sherlock, and the whole family is here for you. Are you sure there’s nothing else I can do for you?”

Shaking his head, John found himself secretly grateful that there were people offering to take care of things for him.

“It’s alright, really,” he assured, although he knew he didn’t sound too convincing. “What I really need to do is find a way to work with my mum and sister to figure out how we’re going to do this.”

Mycroft paused, thoughtfully, for a long moment before replying:

“Perhaps you need a lawyer’s help. I know it might sound drastic, but there are a lot of important things that need to happen in the next few days. Did your father have a lawyer?”

“Yeah,” John nodded, running his hands over his face. “I was hoping we just had to see him for the will, but maybe I should give him a call to see how this could go.”

“Good idea,” Mycroft agreed. He glanced at his watch, rolled his eyes, and sighed. “Sadly work is calling…literally quite soon, too. Feel free to text if you need me. God knows I’ll welcome the distraction.”

And so John was left alone. He blinked, staring at the dim light of the kitchen and wondering what he should do next. He certainly knew he wouldn’t be able to sleep, and he didn’t want to wake Sherlock. It was too early to get anything important done.

Then he realised what he really wanted- needed- was to write. To get lost in the past, in his imagination. It was good, he thought, that burning passion to write whenever things in real life got too tough. It meant writing wasn’t just a job, a paycheck. Writing helped get him through the trauma of returning home from war…and writing could get him through this too.

Quietly he crept to a study where he knew there were some notepads and pens, but the study felt too formal, too unwelcoming to write. Instead he proceeded to the back of the house where the Holmes’ sunroom was. He knew it was a room that was deeply personal to Sherlock and Mycroft, as their mother designed it, and now it was heated for the winter and had fans for the summer. As far as he knew neither Mycroft nor Greg spent much time out here, though he imagined the elder
Holmes brother might retreat out here in secret, to think.

The electric fireplace warmed the sunroom quickly. He let out a sigh as he settled into the settee and stared out in the black woods that gazed back at him. Everything was silent.

And he began to write.

“Uncle John! Uncle John, wake up!”

His eyes blinked as sunlight greeted him, welcoming him into the morning. John groaned as he shifted, his shoulder stiff from the way he was laying. At first he didn’t recognise where he was but as he looked around, noting the sunroom and old-fashion décor he remembered staying the night at Mycroft’s. The notebook was still in his hands, and he remembered falling asleep just as the first light of dawn was peering through the trees.

He could remember being at Mycroft’s, but he didn’t remember Dan being there. Rubbing his fists in his eyes, he cleared away the remains of sleep and looked up to see Sherlock’s nephew hovering over him on the settee.

“Hey Dan,” he greeted, his throat feeling slightly raw. “What are you doing here?”

“Mommy and Daddy wanted to bring you food,” Dan explained. “And comp-ny”

“Company?” John asked, finding himself giving up a small smile.

Dan nodded.

“There’s breakfast!” Dan announced. He stared at John for a long moment and his face fell suddenly, like he was remembering his family was here for a sad reason. In an uncharacteristically quiet voice that made him sound much older than five, Dan added: “I’m sorry your dad died.”

Hearing a five year old talk about death sent his stomach into knots. Holding his arms out, he coaxed Dan into a hug and whispered:

“Thank you. But it’s not for you to worry about.” He forced a reassuring smile as they broke apart and took Dan’s hands. “My father was pretty old, you know. He was seventy-eight. He could have lived longer, but he did a lot with his life. And he had me and my sister…it’s very important to spend time with family. So why don’t we go see what your mommy’s making for breakfast? And why don’t you give her a big hug when you see her?”

With a shy smile Dan nodded before leading John into the kitchen. There he found Sherlock, seated at the table and reading the paper while Jason was making tea and Laura was finishing up pancakes.

“Oh John!” Laura sighed when she saw him enter.

Before he could reply Dan ran over to his mum and threw his arms around her- now much more pregnant- body. A surprised smile crossed her face as she hugged her son back.

“What was that for?” She asked.

“I just love you!” Dan grinned.

Laura looked like she might burst into tears right then in and there so John swooped in, knowing
he’d distract her. As predicted, she turned from her son to him, wrapping her arms around him.

“John I’m so sorry,” she whispered. “I know you were just getting to know your dad again.”

“Yeah,” he sighed as he pulled away. “Honestly I still don’t know what to think. Thanks for being here for me…it means a lot.”

As he looked around at all the people in the room, all the people who made a point to be here for him, he realised how lucky he really was. Maybe his own family was in shambles, but at least he had this family.

“Of course,” Laura said. “Anything you need, we’re here. I brought you guys food for the next few days- because I know if you’re not cooking Sherlock won’t.”

She smirked at her brother, whose mouth immediately fell agape in despair.

“I cook!” Sherlock protested. “I was the one cooking dinner when…well perhaps that’s not the best example.”

John actually found himself letting out a laugh, though he knew Sherlock didn’t mean it to be funny. He couldn’t help but to run a hand through his lover’s curls.

“Oh love,” John sighed. “You’re a good cook…when you want to be. That dinner was just…poor timing.”

Sherlock offered him a small smile and took his hand as John sat down at the table.

“Sorry I was MIA this morning,” John said. “I couldn’t sleep. I was up all night writing.”

He showed Sherlock his notebook of writing and enjoyed watching his partner’s face as he saw what the story was about.

“The Second Stain?” Sherlock quoted. “Are you sure that’s novel-worthy? You didn’t even write a blog about it.”

“Exactly!” He replied. “My publisher thought it would be a good idea to put out a book of short stories about cases I never mentioned in the blog.”

His partner frowned.

“But can’t you just post these on your blog and save your readers the money?”

Rolling his eyes, John accepted a plate of pancakes from Laura, though he didn’t feel like he could eat.

“Yes, but now our readers will have copies of our cases they can carry around forever…and pay us for so we can actually have some income coming in.”

“John can reach new generations of readers with his books,” Laura chimed in. “Not everyone reads blogs, you know.”

“That’s true too,” John said, “though honestly I’ve been mostly writing again for me. Which I suppose is how it should be.”

“It is,” Sherlock replied, stealing a kiss.
A silence fell over the room— even Dan busied himself with a children’s book— clearly no one was sure how to act around him. He wasn’t sure what he was supposed to do either. He was almost grateful when his mobile buzzed in his pajama pocket.

“I’m going to take this in our room,” he announced.

But when he saw it was Harry phoning him, a pit fell in his stomach. He ran a hand through his Harry.

“Hey, Harry,” he greeted quietly.

There was a long pause before his sister finally replied, in a small, raw, voice:

“Hey.” She paused for another long moment. In the background he could hear the tea kettle. He couldn’t imagine how solemn— how awkward— it must be at his childhood home right now… and strangely he suddenly felt like he should be there. Even if he didn’t want to be, he should be there.

“Mum and I are going to look at caskets later. I wanted to ask if you wanted to come with us.”

Closing his eyes tightly, he pleaded with himself to keep it together. Now wasn’t the time for fighting, though he had to point out:

“Dad already had all that picked out. He had his gravestone sorted and everything. You know how good he was about planning.”

He could imagine his sister chewing on her lip, regretful that she had to be the messenger in this situation.

“Yeah, I know. But mum wanted to check everything out herself. I don’t think she wants to change anything… I think she just wants to feel involved. He was her husband.”

Deep down, he knew Harry was right. As much as he just wanted to deal with this alone, as much as he wanted all of this to go away as quickly as possible, as angry as he still was with his mother— she had just lost her husband.

“I know,” he sighed. “I’ll be there. Just text me the address. I’m at Mycroft’s so it’ll take me a bit to get into town, but it’s fine. And… maybe after we can grab some coffee or something somewhere. It could just be me and you if you want. I just feel like… we need to talk.”

At first the other line was so quiet he was afraid she had hung up, but at last she let out a slightly annoyed-sounding sigh and replied:

“Yeah, maybe. We’ll see.”

And then she did hang up.

Swirling around, he threw his mobile against the pillows of the bed and balled his fists.

What did I ever do to deserve such a fucked up family?

The casket shopping actually didn’t go as badly as he thought. His mum didn’t say a word to him; Harry did the talking on her behalf to the funeral home workers. He almost found it amusing, considering his mum had apparently been feeling so “left out”, and then when she had something to do she didn’t want anything to do with it. But John knew he had to be fair— she was mourning,
and everyone went through mourning differently.

It turned out his father picked out a sleek, dark oak casket and had already arranged for payment. Twenty years ago his father had been in a car accident that scared him into planning for what’s next, making sure his family would be taken care of if something happened to him. John had taken a page from his book once he decided to join the army. Although he had never had much to leave anyone, now that he was getting married and had a proper writing career he considered maybe he could revise his will.

And not to mention have Sherlock draw one up.

Truth be told he had been so lost in his head during the visit to the funeral home that when they stepped into the freezing London air again it was like being shaken back to reality. He remembered his offer to his sister and stopped her before she could call a cab.

“Still want to get lunch?” He asked, feeling a bit awkward.

Right away he could see in her eyes that she just couldn’t take trying to force themselves to make small talk at a restaurant right now. He stole a glance toward his mother, who stood on the curb, arms wrapped around herself, looking so out of it that she might just step into traffic without realising it. He realised what Harry was really feeling: she couldn’t leave their mum on her own. As estranged as their situation was, Harry had somewhat built up trust again with their mother, and if anyone should be there to watch over her during this time it would be her.

Realising this just felt strange, it made him feel out of place- he had always pictured himself as being the one to look after their parents once they were old or once one of them passed. He had never imagined he would be the black sheep.

“I should really take Mum home,” she replied. She glanced over to her mother, hesitating about something before adding: “Mum, would it be alright if John came home with us?”

That got his mother’s attention. Her eyes were wild, dark, not even hers as she turned toward him. Instead of being, hurt, angry, he found himself more worried about her than ever.

“We should really all be together right now,” Harry shot quietly, her voice wavering slightly. “This is all just…silly. It’s ridiculous! We’re supposed to be a family! John’s done nothing wrong at all. He doesn’t deserve this. He deserves to be with his family after his father’s death. We can’t be like this. Life’s just…life’s just too short.”

For a long moment their mother didn’t say anything, but John could sense that it wasn’t because she was considering her daughter’s words. She was angry with both of them now. They were inconveniencing her.

“I can take a cab if you two are going out,” she whispered.

That was it.

Harry was right- this was just ridiculous! There wasn’t even any rhyme or reason to how she was treating him. It was…insulting. It was demeaning, and he was sick of being the bad guy.

“No!” He snapped, taking an abrupt step toward her. His mother simply blinked tiredly. “I can’t do this anymore, Mum. I feel like I’m fighting a losing battle and I don’t even know why I’m fighting it! All I ever did was do well in school, not get into trouble, got into medical school, became a
doctor and a soldier. I’ve saved more people than I can count. I’d like to think I’m a good person. It seems all I’ve done wrong in your eyes is fall in love with a man. I’m sorry but I can’t help who I love…actually, I won’t apologise for that at all. It just blows my mind that my sexuality bothers you so much that you would just stop talking to your son. It’s like you won’t even acknowledge me. I don’t want it to be that way- I want us to be a family again. But now…I dunno, I wonder if I’m just fighting a losing battle. I’m wondering what the point is. Do you want me in your life or not?”

He was breathless, his hands balled into fists once again, and he could practically feel his blood pressure raising. An ultimatum was the last thing he wanted, especially right after his father died, but maybe that’s what they needed. He couldn’t just keep giving his mother space and hope she come around. Maybe it was time he separated himself from this. Maybe it was time he gave himself space, gave himself room to breathe.

What he didn’t expect was for his mother to start crying.

Her body shook, her eyes closed as tears raced down them, and she broke apart right there on the steps of the funeral home.

“Oh Mum,” Harry whispered, stepping up to her mother so she could wrap her arms around her. “It’s okay. He’s just upset. We’re all upset.”

But he wasn’t just upset about his father. He was upset that even with everything that was going on she still didn’t want anything to do with him.

“I’m not just upset about Dad!” He exclaimed. “I’m upset because we’re standing here, at the funeral home where we’re going to have Dad’s memorial, and you’re still treating me like I mean nothing to you. I have every bloody right to be angry with you. Harry is right- life is too short to treat family like this when there’s just no reason to. I won’t have you disrespecting me like this, I won’t have you making me feel like shit like this when I’ve done nothing. I won’t have you disrespecting my partner. We deserve better than this so please, tell me what it is you want. If you want me out of your life then fine, after tomorrow I’ll be gone. Or you can get help- we can get help together. Because seriously, name me one bloody good reason why we shouldn’t. You’re my mother and I’m your son. I’ve already lost my father. I don’t want to lose my whole family. I want to understand… I want to understand what it is I’ve done that makes you feel this way about me because it can’t just be my sexuality. I can’t, I don’t accept that.”

His mother just sobbed, and despite his words he found himself feeling like an awful son.

And he hated it.

“Mum,” he stated quietly, though he didn’t know what else to say.

“John,” she finally croaked, and it sent shivered up his spine to hear her say his name like that. “I never wanted to lose you. I don’t want to lose you. I don’t know…I don’t know what I’m doing anymore.”

She let out another sob, and his heart broke as Harry’s face fell and she pulled her mother closer.

“I don’t want to lose either of you,” their mother whisper.

“You don’t have to,” Harry whispered back. “We want to be a family again.”

“Yeah,” John chimed in quietly.
For a split moment they fell into another silence, and John was beginning to worry his efforts were fruitless but then his mother blurted out:

“Some days I feel like someone else is controlling me.”

He turned to her, careful not to startle her, and could feel his heart pounding. He had wondered if maybe something could really be wrong with his mother, that she might have an illness plaguing her mind that even she didn’t know about. Before he had thought he was just being desperate, trying to find reasoning for her actions, and he knew if he had ever suggested it to her she would have lashed out.

Taking a deep breath and dabbing at her eyes, she explained:

“I feel like there are two sides of me. Sometimes I say things and I don’t know why. Sometimes I’ll lash out and then after it’s like I’ve come out of a trance. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

It felt like someone stabbed his heart. Maybe his instincts really had been right- and he should have interfered much sooner. His chest felt like it was twisting as he thought of his mother suffering alone and her kids, probably even her husband, oblivious.

“What have you still been seeing your therapist?” He asked.

She shook her head.

“I stopped seeing her,” she admitted. “It just…wasn’t working out.”

He decided not to push it to find out what that meant. Instead his own therapist came to mind, the man who had helped him and Sherlock in ways he never could have imagined.

“I know someone!” He announced. “He’s worked with Sherlock and I before. He’s brilliant. His name is Dr Agar. He’s very easy to talk to. I could refer you to him or…we could see him, together.”

He swallowed nervously, wondering if he had done the right thing by offering to go. But maybe, he thought, part of why therapy wasn’t working for her was because only one side of the story was being heard. Maybe the way to really work through this was truly together…even if it meant therapy sessions with his mother.

“Yeah, and I could go sometime too,” Harry offered quietly. “We could all go together once, if you wanted. We should be in this together.”

She looked over to John, as though trying to suggest something but he couldn’t figure out what. Then she looked down at her arm, around her mother, and then looked at him. He wasn’t sure how his mother would react to him hugging her so instead he gently placed his hand on her arm.

“We should,” John agreed. “Whatever you need…we’re here to help.”

Because in the end, he really didn’t want this to be the end of his family. Even despite the awful things that were said, that were done, if there was any way they could work through this it would be worth it.

He could only hope.

Chapter End Notes
I wanted to put the funeral in with this chapter, but I knew I probably wouldn't be able to finish it before the holidays. Sorry for the delay!! Real life, ugh! Ya know? I know it's a tired excuse, but alas!

Thank you all so much for continuing to read and review! Sorry to bring down spirits with a character death...but out of it will come growth and strength.

I hope you all have a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays for everything you're celebrating :) Oh, speaking of which keep an eye out for an Amelia series Christmas fic! ;)}
John let out a shaky sigh as he tore his tie off in frustration. He must have put on ties a hundred times in his life, but he couldn’t focus. Even tying his shoes took three tries. Yet somehow he was expected to go out there and shake dozens of hands and tell all of his extended family and his father’s old friends that he “thanked him for coming and yes, I’m sorry he’s gone too.”

He just wanted the funeral to be over.

He wanted to go home to Baker Street, maybe work a case.

There was a knock on the door of the restroom he was in and a soft call of “John?”

His heart lifted upon hearing his fiancé’s voice. His lover, his partner, was all he had really wanted these past few days. Sherlock’s presence, just feeling him near, comforted him like nothing else. The door pushed open, and John let out another sigh, but one of relief. He practically threw himself into Sherlock’s arms, and his partner didn’t protest.

“I can’t get the bloody tie on,” his muttered. “Why is everything so difficult today?”

As he broke apart he felt his eyes water, which made him even angrier. Why couldn’t he hold it together? He wasn’t a child. He had to be an adult, he had to be able to do put on a straight face and show everyone he was strong.

But as he briefly met his fiancé’s eyes he knew Sherlock understood: you don’t have to pretend with me.

“What do you need?” Sherlock asked softly. “Have you had anything to eat?”

He shook his head. He hadn’t been able to eat actual meals for the past few days, but Sherlock had been there, making sure he was taking care of himself.

“I’m fine,” John lied. In return he received a look of doubt, and he knew he wasn’t that good of a liar.

“You’re doing fine, John,” he whispered in his ear. “We’ll get through this.”

John nodded, though he didn’t agree. Not only was he an emotional mess, he wasn’t even been of any use. He had been in here, hiding, for nearly a half an hour now.

“Look at me,” Sherlock breathed, placing his finger beneath John’s chin to face him toward him. Letting out a long breath, John obeyed, trying to find comfort in his partner’s sympathetic eyes. “If it’s all too much, we can post-pone the wedding.”

His heart skipped a beat. He hadn’t even thought about the wedding since his father died. That was just three weeks away! But all the same he knew right away the last thing he wanted to do was post-pone.

“No!” He insisted, shaking his head. “No, it meant the world to my father that we picked his parents’ wedding date for our date. He wouldn’t want us to post-pone on his behalf.”
“Okay,” Sherlock said, not daring to protest. “I just wanted to offer, in case-"

“I’m fine,” John cut in quickly. Maybe too quickly; Sherlock didn’t look convinced. He wasn’t convinced himself, but he knew he had no choice. “I will be fine. I should probably get out there though.”

There was a buzz, and Sherlock dug his mobile out of his pocket.

“My sister’s here. Laura says Greg and Mycroft weren’t able to make it off work. That’s weird, Greg didn’t say he had a case on.”

John swallowed nervously, hoping Sherlock didn’t think too much about it. After seeing the news that morning of a breaking lead he would have been surprised if Greg had been able to sacrifice a couple of hours out of his day for a funeral of someone he didn’t know. And Mycroft didn’t exactly have a job he could take an afternoon off of.

“It’s okay,” he promised. “We should go see her.”

Frankly he was happy to see a friendly face amongst the cold sea of faces of distant family members he barely knew but yet still seemed to disprove of him. He could feel the stares, the judgement, as he walked alongside Sherlock but he didn’t care. He wasn’t there to impress anyone.

He was surprised to find Laura in the lobby holding Sherlock’s violin case. Mrs Hudson was by her, and John realised she must have stopped by the flat to pick up both. His heart tightened when he saw Mrs Hudson, who was more of a mother-figure to him than his own mother had ever been. Her eyes were already watery, and he felt badly to bring her to a place so somber. She took others’ emotions to heart, and he knew seeing him in pain would make her feel terrible.

“As requested,” Laura announced to Sherlock as she handed him the case.

“Thank you,” her brother replied, offering her a quick hug.

“Oh John!” She exclaimed, throwing her arms around him without warning. “Oh sweetheart, I’m so sorry about your father.”

“Thank you Mrs Hudson. It was so nice of you to come.”

“Of course, dear,” Mrs Hudson reply. “Is there anything I can do for you? I brought those biscuits you like, Sherlock told me you haven’t been eating.”

Like a proper grandmother would, she pulled out a bag of biscuits from her purse, but he quickly waved it away.

“I’m okay, thanks,” John said. Mrs Hudson looked crushed, and even Sherlock threw him a glare of disapproval. He sighed, secretly wishing everyone would just leave him be. “Maybe later. Sherlock, would you mind showing Mrs Hudson in? We don’t have much longer.”

His fiancé didn’t seem to have the nerve to protest him not eating right now, so instead he stole a kiss to his cheek and nodded. He knew he had to sit up front, with his mum and sister- and he should, he knew his sister needed him- but he wanted nothing more than to cling to his lover’s side. Lately he just felt so alone when he wasn’t with him. It felt a bit pathetic, feeling that needy, but at the same time he had come to accept that he was vulnerable right now. It was good for him to need Sherlock.
The funeral was unbearable. It was uncomfortable. Despite his mother’s Catholic upbringing, his father wasn’t very strongly religious. Nevertheless, he had arranged his own funeral with his wife in mind, knowing the verses she would want to hear and the hymns that might bring her some comfort. He had even arranged for the pastor of the church John grew up in to do the eulogy. When John offered to do it Harry had immediately cut him off, informing him that his father wanted them to worry as little as possible about the arrangements. It was almost obsessive, how he had planned his death. In a way though John was grateful: he just wanted to get through the ceremony so he could grieve on his own and let life go on.

He tuned out most of the ceremony, thinking instead of things like the first football practice his dad took him to when he was six. It turned out John was completely rubbish at football and spent the entire practice tripping over himself and being laughed at by the other kids. He had left the practice nearly in tears, and his father took him out for ice cream to make him feel better. He had told him a story about when he was a boy in choir and he was supposed to have a solo at the Christmas concert, but when he stood into the spotlight he had forgotten all of the lyrics.

He remembered his first rugby game at school- and it turned out he was really good at rugby- and how proud his dad was after.

He remembered telling his dad he hated clarinet, and how his father let him quit lessons because “I’m not going to waste money on something that makes you miserable”.

He remembered how there were tears in his father’s eyes when he told him he was accepted in to medical school.

He remembered how his father pulled him aside the day he left for his first army tour to tell him how proud he was of him and how John had admitted, in a whisper, that he was a bit afraid. Okay, more than a bit afraid. His father had simply pointed out he could die crossing the street as easily as he could in Afghanistan so if he was going to take risks he might as well do it in a way that helped others.

He remembered when he lost his first patient how his father bought him an expensive scotch and stayed up the whole night, simply sitting in silence.

How had he spent the past year barely talking to him? His father had been brilliant. His father was there for him.

Before he knew it someone else was being introduced, and John was surprised to look up and see it was Sherlock, standing with his violin. He offered a simple nod to John, who felt a tightening in his throat. He knew whatever Sherlock played, it would be too much. Why did he need to be subject to more sadness?

But he knew if Sherlock had arranged to play, he done it for him. So his hands tightened into fists, he took a deep breath, and he listened.

Sherlock played “Peace in the Valley”, and John almost let out a laugh. How in god’s name had he known that was his father’s favourite song? Surely his father hadn’t gone that far with his funeral planning?

Beside him his mother began to cry for the first time during the ceremony. He stole a glance to Harry, who somehow still managed to cry even though her eyes were raw and red. She was shaking and fighting for deep breaths. He felt terrible; he felt like he was worlds away from them even though he was just right next to him.
If Sherlock had played this for him in the flat he might have cried. But he was so off-guard, so mesmerised by his fiancé’s secrecy and his talent. His father would have loved this.

Soon he found himself at the gravesite, feeling entirely like he was having an out of body experience. No eyes were on him here, but Sherlock was beside him now, with his arm around his waist. He had stopped caring what anyone thought; he had somehow known the gravesite would be where John would be most vulnerable.

But somehow he managed to keep it together. He thought he might explode the moment he got back to Baker Street, but for now, he kept it together.

At long last when the funeral was over, his family members parted, and he stood there unsure of what to do. He was apparently not invited to any post-funeral gatherings- or more than likely, there weren’t any.

“Come on, Mum,” he heard his sister whisper to his mother. “Let’s go home. We’ll just lie down the rest of the afternoon, yeah? Just you and me.”

She threw one last, sympathetic, look toward John. He realised then he must have wanted to talk to him but didn’t know if she was allowed- or maybe she just really didn’t know what to say. John was surprised when it was his mother that turned toward him instead.

“They’ll be lawyer around tomorrow to sort out your father’s things,” she whispered, staring at the ground, wrapping her sweater around her. “You need to be there for it. Mr Holmes…you may attend as well.”

John’s eyebrows shot up. He wasn’t sure which struck him more: that his mother was demanding his presence, or that she was asking for Sherlock. He supposed he should just be grateful she wasn’t making a fuss about having them over.

“Okay,” he nodded, stealing a glance toward Sherlock, who looked equally as surprised. “We’ll be there. I…I love you, Mum. You know that, right?”

She didn’t reply.

Sherlock wrapped a protective arm around him.

His family slipped away, and it wasn’t until the two of them were left alone that John finally turned to Sherlock and let out a long breath. Falling into his lover’s chest, he murmured:

“Oh Jesus…I didn’t think I’d make it through that.”

“You were so strong,” Sherlock whispered, rubbing soothing circles on his back. “I’m very proud.”

John could still hear the haunting melody of “Peace in the Valley”, and he pulled away, his face astonished.

“What was that song all about? How did you know?” He demanded.

His partner offered him the smallest of smiles and replied:

“Your sister. She said it was his favourite and asked if I could play it.”

John actually let out a single, choked, laugh.
“God I love you,” he whispered.

Sherlock ran a finger down his cheek, gazing at him with utmost concern.

“And I you,” he breathed. “Let’s go home. You need to rest.”

He nodded and followed Sherlock to the car Mycroft had hired for them. When they reached Baker Street he didn’t protest when Sherlock led him to the bedroom, helped him strip himself of his coat and suit jacket, and lay down on the bed. At last, after nearly forty-eight hours of no sleep and in the comfort of his own home and his lover’s arms, he could finally shut his eyes and let himself drift away.

Despite managing to sleep most of the evening and night, John felt emotionally and physically drained the next morning. Sherlock was already playing his violin at seven; he actually looked slightly guilty about playing- as though he just remembered his fiancé had been sleeping- but John waved him away, giving him permission to continue. His partner had been so supportive, so down to earth and just there for him during this whole ordeal that John didn’t have the heart to admit he had a raging headache from all the emotion and the violin was really not helping. He knew the violin was Sherlock’s own way of trying to calm him so he decided to not fight him and instead welcomed the soothing blend of minor keys as he wandered into the kitchen for breakfast.

He stopped when he found the kettle already on, beans and toast on the stove, and the newspaper waiting for him on the table.

“I thought you would wake up earlier,” the uncharacteristically soft voice of his fiancé appeared behind him.

John’s chest tightened and his heart fluttered. The romantic side of Sherlock was one he hadn’t seen in a while, one that tended to creep up on him when he least expected it. And he definitely hadn’t expected to wake up to this. From the slight waver of his voice, poor Sherlock probably didn’t even realise he was being romantic right now. He was just being there- again.

Without hesitation he swirled around, capturing Sherlock’s lips in a kiss. His hands trembled but Sherlock caught them, his warmth passing through John’s own body.

“John-“ Sherlock warned, his voice croaking a bit, when they parted.

He knew Sherlock was trying to say this isn’t the time for that, and John shook his head.

“Thank you,” he announced. “Thank you. You are…amazing.”

He kissed him again and Sherlock actually blushed.

“I can re-heat the food,” Sherlock offered. “Or just remake it.”

“It’s fine,” John laughed. “Thanks for letting me sleep. And feeding me. I guess our roles have switched a bit.”

“Well can’t have you peckish and falling asleep in front of the lawyer, can I?” Sherlock asked as he poured him his tea.

His heart sank. He had almost forgotten his appointment at his mother’s house. John knew it was silly to dread it, it would be quick and his mother would probably find some excuse to rush them.
out of the house the moment it was over, but it was still his mother’s house…with Sherlock. He wanted to make things work between him, he did, but if she said one thing about their relationship…

“It’s going to be fine,” Sherlock promised, reading his thoughts. John decided to busy himself with pretending to read the sports section. “What do you think your father left you?”

John stopped. Honestly, he hadn’t considered it. Honestly he didn’t really care.

“I have no idea.”

Once again John felt awful for forgetting how Sherlock felt throughout all of this when they approached his own childhood front door. His partner was a step behind him, practically hiding behind him as he rang the doorbell. He couldn’t imagine how uncomfortable Sherlock must feel coming here, after being ostracized so viciously by his mother. But of course Sherlock would never say anything. He would just quietly tag along out of obligation.

Yes, John owed Sherlock big time after this week.

Harry opened the door, and for a moment brother and sister just stared at each other. She looked, well, horrible. She looked sickly. Her face was drawn in and he just realised then how much weight she had lost recently. Bags were under her eyes; she propped her arm against the door like she could not physically hold herself up.

It was withdrawal, he realised. Withdrawal from alcohol in an honest attempt to get sober. And god, what a week for her to try to get sober. Maybe he didn’t give his sister enough credit.

“Hey,” he said softly.

“Hey,” she breathed. She just stood there for a moment, as though she couldn’t quite remember why they were there. “The house is a bit of a wreck.”

John let out a dry laugh.

“You know I don’t care what the house looks like.”

He tried to offer her a reassuring smile, but her face was so distant, so somber that she quite looked like it could be months before she could smile again.

That’s when a whole new guilt hit him.

Harry had been living with her father, spending every day with him. They ate meals together, watched television together, dealt with their mother together. His father was Harry’s rock, he realised. He had been there at times when John wasn’t- when John didn’t have even have anything to do with his family. In return, Harry had been there for their father: during his health problems, while John was away in the army.

“Come on in then,” Harry muttered.

No small talk. No “I’m so glad you’re here”. They saved themselves having to pretend.

His sister wasn’t lying about the house. They had to side-step laundry on the floor as they walked through the narrow hall to the living room. Two television dinner trays sat out, one by the sofa and
one by his father’s chair (dad’s and Harry’s, he thought miserably). Sitting in a chair from the kitchen table was a tall ginger man in an expensive charcoal suite- he quite reminded him of Mycroft, actually. His mother was seated on the far edge of the sofa, still wearing her robe and clutching a tissue in her hands. She didn’t even glance toward him.

Harry took a seat in the middle of the sofa, John beside her, and Sherlock simply stood, clearly feeling too out of place to invite himself to sit on their furniture. He looked up apologetically but his fiancé shook his head, warning him it wasn’t worth making a fuss over.

“Right then,” the lawyer announced, obviously wanting to speed things along. “Mrs Watson, to you your husband leaves his home, which he states is paid off, his car-“

His mother actually snorted and even Harry let a smile slip.

“That thing hasn’t run in years,” his mother explained. “He was too stubborn to sell it. Kept thinking he’d be able to fix it up one day.”

John didn’t have the heart to smile along with them; he was too anxious. Why were he and Sherlock called here? What had his father been up to?

There was a laundry list of things his father had left his mother, all of which were pretty ordinary things a husband would leave there life but needed to be legally sorted out. Harry received a good sum of money and had specifically been left a set of old historical texts his father had cherished. John didn’t even know Harry had been into history books, but she looked rather pleased and relieved to be receiving them. He knew some of the books his father owned were quite old; he used to enjoy exploring used and rare book shops back when he was more capable of getting out.

“To Mr Sherlock Holmes, Mr Watson leaves this book,” the lawyer said, handing Sherlock a tattered book. John couldn’t understand the language on the front, but Sherlock’s eyes lit up as he accepted the gift.

“It’s Italian,” Sherlock explained, “it’s a 17th century book on violin making. This is very rare.”

John had to bite back a grin; it pleased him to see Sherlock so impressed.

Well done Dad, he thought.

His fiancé held the book safely in his lap. The pages were probably so fragile he didn’t want to just start turning them open with his bare hands right then and there.

Suddenly all eyes were on him, and he realised it was his turned. His stomach knotted.

“To you, John Hamish Watson-“ he had to nudge Sherlock to keep him from saying anything about his horrendous middle name. “Your father leaves this. You don’t have to open it right now.”

John frowned as he was handed a small, handsome, brown chest. He was anxious to open it but he thought the lawyer’s advice was probably wise. There was some more paperwork that was mainly done by John’s mother, so in the meantime John decided to drag Sherlock away.

“I really don’t think your mother wants me snooping around her house,” Sherlock murmured, though his eyes were wide and wandering, observing everything he could.

“I want to show you my old room,” John replied, eyes twinkling.

His partner’s eyes twinkled as he clutched the book with one hand and took John’s hand in another.
Ascending the stairs of his childhood home felt strange. It was like he didn’t belong here anymore; in fact he wasn’t even sure what was left of his room. He hadn’t been back here since his father gave him the ring, and that was the first time he had been home in ages. He was hit with memories of he and Harry running through the halls and daring each other to jump the whole staircase.

He had missed once and banged his head very hard against the wall.

“Here we are,” John said when they reached his old bedroom, “second door to the right. First door is a half bath…toilet hasn’t worked in there for ages as far as I know.”

Slowly he pushed open the door, and for a long moment he and Sherlock stared at his childhood bedroom.

Well, what was his childhood bedroom.

It was empty.

He really should have known.

“You had an, erm, interesting taste in decorating,” Sherlock offered, unable to hide his smirk this time.

“Christ, why am I not surprised?” John sighed as he stepped into the empty room. “She hasn’t even done anything with the space! That’s how much she hates me.”

“I’m sure it was a lovely room,” Sherlock tried, pulling him closer so they could share a kiss right in the middle of the room.

When they broke apart John hesitated, not wanting to start a make out session when his mother could walk by any moment. His eyes fell to the small chest in the hand not holding Sherlock’s, and he could feel the consulting detective’s eyes bearing into it, curious.

“Want to open it?” He asked.

Drawing in a deep breath, John pulled the top open and stopped when he saw inside was simply a letter, a key, and a stethoscope.

But not just any stethoscope.

“Oh my god,” he breathed, unable to hide his smile. “This was the stethoscope he gave me when he found out I was going to medical school. I used it all through uni.”

He held it in his hands, admiring the weight of it. It was so light. He remembered it used to feel so heavy around his neck in school, though he knew that was from the emotional stress and anxiety of knowing that actual lives were in his hands now. Once in the army he hardly even noticed the stethoscope around his neck all day.

“What does the letter say?” Sherlock demanded.

His heart pounded as he picked it up; it dawned on him this was the last thing he would ever possess with his father’s handwriting. When he opened the letter his eyes felt wet they landed on his father’s familiar scrawl:

*Consider it, John. You are ready.*

“What?” John asked, shaking his head and smiling in awe at the same time.
There was a key an address underneath the message. His partner grinned at him, and John felt a familiar sense of both anxiety and adrenaline that he often felt when they went off on a case.

Unsurprisingly when they went back downstairs his mother had fallen asleep on the sofas soon as the lawyer left. Harry assured him they would be fine, and they both agreed to check up on each other later on. He and Sherlock took a cab to the address, his leg bouncing the whole way as his eyes scanned the streets looking for any clues as to where they were going. As far as he knew his father owned no properties to pass onto his kids. Perhaps it was a safety deposit box key?

“No,” Sherlock pointed out almost as soon as the idea popped into his head. “It’s too big to be a safety deposit key. You know your father doesn’t own any kind of second home. It could be a storage unit…”

The cab stopped when they were twenty minutes away.

“That’s weird, we’re back toward Baker Street,” John commented as he looked around.

There was a flat building on one side of the street, a strip mall of restaurants and shops on the other and then right in front of them, and small square building.

“Obviously,” Sherlock said, rolling his eyes as he scooted out of the cab. “Didn’t you notice on the drive here? We’re only three blocks away.”

He glanced back down at the note and back up to the commercial property. It was definitely the same address. There was a ‘sold’ sign out front but no other signs identifying what the property was for.

“My father bought me a commercial property?” He announced, shaking his head. “What…”

Sherlock’s grinned widened even more, and John knew he already had a theory but didn’t want to spoil the surprise.

“Why don’t we introduce ourselves?” Sherlock suggested.

There was actually a skip in his step as his fiancé step as he led them to the front door and pushed it open.

“We don’t know if we can just walk in!” John hissed, grabbing his arm.

Sherlock shrugged him off.

“It’s a commercial property, of course we can just walk in! Plus they accept them.”

“What?”

“Walk-ins.”

John blinked.

“What?” He repeated.

Okay, sometimes he was a bit slow on cases but he didn’t see how he could possibly be missing what Sherlock knew.
“I thought you’d be able to tell,” Sherlock said gleefully. “Can’t you smell it?”

Shaking his head, John replied, frustrated:

“Smell what?!!”

They stepped into the building and John froze when he realised where they were: a waiting room. A skinny blonde woman behind a reception desk looked up at them and smiled. There was one patient in the room, an elderly woman who looked at the two of them with bemusement. Sherlock grinned back at her, and she offered a little wave.

“You must be Dr Watson,” the receptionist said as she stood up. She was wearing scrubs and had a stethoscope around her neck, so he realised she must do assistant work. “I’ll go fetch Dr Morrison and let him know you’re in.”

John found himself with a stupid, lopsided, smile on his face as he turned to Sherlock, who couldn’t look any happier that he had caught on.

“Oh my god…my dad bought me a clinic.”

Chapter End Notes

Nothing like a good new twist, right? :D Hope you enjoyed the new chapter! New things are happening for our boys!

As always, thanks so much for your kind words and kudos!
Sherlock found himself grinning ear to ear as his partner’s jaw dropped at the realisation that the medical practice they stood in was his. The consulting detective had sincerely not known anything about this, but he had to tip his hat to the late Mr Watson for coming up with the best parting gift for his son he could have ever offered. He had secretly thought John wouldn’t actually jump back into the medical world unless someone pushed him- and this was just the kind of push he needed.

“I…” John stammered, spinning around to take in the place. The patient waiting raised an eyebrow but didn’t interrupt. “I don’t believe it. A bloody clinic! I only mentioned I might want to get back into medicine once! He went and bought me a clinic.”

A tall, elderly, gentleman popped out of one of the back exam rooms with a bemused smile on his face.

“Ah, the young Dr Watson,” Dr Morrison greeted. “I’ve heard so many good things about you. It’s nice to meet you in the flesh.”

He stuck out his hand to shake John’s; his partner still had the same stupid grin on his face and Sherlock adored it.

“And you must be Mr Holmes!” Dr Morrison added, beaming as he shook his hand was well. “George told me so much about you both, it’s an honour to meet you. I hated that I didn’t get to make it to his funeral.”

Sherlock blinked.

“George?”

“Yes,” John said, rolling his eyes, “my father did have a name, you know.”

“So he wasn’t just Mr Watson?” Sherlock teased.

His fiancé playfully slapped him on the shoulder before turning back to the doctor.

“It’s nice to meet you too it’s just… I have no idea who you are.”

Dr Morrison turned to his receptionist and asked:

“Ms Morstan, would you mind taking Mrs Westin into exam room B and getting her started? I’ll be in in a moment.”

“Of course!” The young blonde jumped up from her seat to help the patient into the room.

But before she could turn away Mrs Westin turned to the three men and asked:

“Will the younger doctor be joining you?” She actually winked, and John let out a bark of laughter.

The elder doctor laughed along with her, and as the two women walked away he teased:

“She’s feistier than she seems. Mrs Westin has been a patient with me here for thirty years. That’s
one of the great benefits about taking over a little practice like this—decades worth of patients who are willing to stay with the same facility. They trust me. They know I wouldn’t just pass my practice along to just anyone.”

“But…but I have no idea who you are,” John insisted. “You don’t even know me.”

Dr Morrison cleared his throat, and Sherlock prepared himself to hear the familiar recitation of his fiancé’s life story:

“You are Dr John Hamish Watson. Born in London, attended grammar school in Chelmsford. Top of your class and star rugby player. You attended medical school at King’s College before joining the army, rising to the rank of Captain of the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers. Three years into your army career you were shot in the shoulder. It was a clean exit wound but enough to discharge you back to London where you met Mr Holmes here, who you are now engaged to, am I right?”

These were all pretty elementary facts about John, but nonetheless his fiancé stood, dumbfounded. Of course Sherlock supposed he was still in shock about the whole owning a clinic thing.

“Yeah,” John admitted. Then he grinned. “You looked me up, didn’t you?”

The doctor smirked.

“Most of that I learned from your dad,” he confessed, “but of course I looked you up. Like I said, I wouldn’t just hand my practice over to anyone. And I checked in with some of your previous employers—all gave glowing references.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to chime in:

“You didn’t phone me!”

John glared at him.

“I work with you, and you don’t pay me,” he pointed out.

“I let you mooch off my brother with me.”

His fiancé looked like he wanted to literally push him out of the way, and Sherlock decided it was time for him to grin and shut up. Shaking his head, John seemed to be trying to wrap his mind around what was happening.

“This is all…great, really,” John offered. “The practice looks plenty big, it’s in a great location—”

“You’ll have decades of loyal patients handed over to you, an established filing system, and you can even keep Ms Morstan, if you’d like. She’s an excellent nurse.”

_Not to put you on the spot or anything_, Sherlock thought. His partner glanced to him, desperate for guidance, and Sherlock tried to silently tell him this is all you. You’ve got to make this decision. But you should do it. You can do it.

“I guess I need some time to think about it,” John said.

Dr Morrison offered him a sympathetic smile.

“Son, the place is yours. Of course you have your freedom, and if you’re really having cold feet that is your right. Why don’t you spend the day with me? Shadow some patients with me, taking a look at our bookkeeping and office set up.”
Once again John turned to him, with a lost look that quite reminded Sherlock of a child who was being dropped off at school for the first time.

“You really think I should do this?” John asked him quietly.

Sherlock placed his hands on John’s shoulders, squeezed them, and met his eyes.

“I really do,” he promised. “I think you’d be brilliant at it- being a family GP. I think it’s time for you to lay down some roots of your own, John Watson.”

His partner’s lips finally spread into a sincere grin and a laugh escaped him.

“Getting married and becoming a clinic owner all in the same month…yeah, I’d call that laying down some roots.”

They shared a kiss. Part of him wish he could stick around and tag along with the job shadow, but he knew he would probably be bored twenty minutes in. And the last thing John needed right now was the added stress of him whining about being bored. So he left his fiancé alone to chat with the doctor, and just like that he found himself standing in the middle of London with nothing to do for the rest of the day.

So he rang his sister.

“Laura!” He greeted. “I’m bored.”

He could practically see his sister biting back a sigh and it made him smile.

“Well I’m just at Tesco’s. I needed to pick some things up before I get Dan at school.”

His eyes lit up; he felt like it had been forever since he had seen his nephew. Considering they lived in the same city now he felt like they hadn’t seen each other nearly as much as they should.

“I can pick him up!” He offered, perhaps sounding a bit too enthusiastic.

There was a long pause, and he imagined his sister was debating rather or not she could trust him to go through with it or if he would forget ten minutes later and run off on a case instead.

Of course to a mother nothing would sound better than for someone to pitch in and be able to pick the child up from school every now and then so she could actually get some things done.

“Well…it would be nice to do a full shopping trip and run some errands,” she confessed. “I dunno if you’re authorised to pick him up at the school-“

He waved away her concern.

“Mycroft’s already taken care of it, along with the other security measures he placed at the school.”

“What-?!?”

He realised she might not know as much about this as he did, so he quickly interrupted:

“It’s fine,” he promised. “I can pick up Dan. We can take a taxi back to your place- he loves taking taxis.”

“I don’t know…”
“It’s perfectly safe!” He knew that was a lie, but he had every bit of confidence that he could successfully and safely pick up his nephew from school and take him home. He wasn’t incompetent. “I have your key so I can take him home. You deserve the afternoon off.”

He knew how stressful it had been for Laura to move her family to London, and he imagined she had barely had a true moment to herself that hadn’t involved unpacking boxes, arranging documents and insurance or running errands.

“You’ve hardly had any time to yourself in the city,” he pointed out.

“Well…” Laura hesitated, as though she didn’t have the confidence to admit she could use a break. Then finally she gave in: “Okay, fine. But you have to text me the moment you pick him up and the moment you get him home. I want pictures as proof he’s alright! And no matter how much he begs he cannot have any of the chocolate chip cookies we baked last night.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes. He had personally brought down some of London’s most disgusting, powerful, and difficult criminals. Like he couldn’t handle a five year old begging for a cookie!

“We’ll be fine,” he promised. “Stay out as long as you need.”

Laura let out a sigh of defeat.

“Okay,” she finally offered. “Okay, go ahead. I’m sure Dan would love to see you.”

To say Dan was excited to see him was an understatement. When he walked up to the sea of parents waiting to pick up their children his nephew ran up to him screaming:

“Uncle Sherlock! Uncle Sherlock!”

He practically jumped up into his arms, wearing a bright contagious smile on his face that made Sherlock grin ear to ear.

“Your mum needed to run some errands so I’m here to take you home,” he announced.

“Yes!” Dan jumped up, pumping his fist in the air and practically losing his bag in the process. “I drew some pictures for you!”

Sherlock found himself genuinely flattered and excited- he was still getting used to having the love a child, a child who looked up to him and wanted to impress him with things like drawings and reading books.

He couldn’t help but to wonder if Dan had ever drawn Mycroft any pictures.

“Do we get to ride the taxi?” Dan asked, pronouncing his words very carefully to make sure he got them right.

“Yup!” Sherlock replied, holding Dan’s hand out to lead him to the taxi that was waiting for them.

It was so fascinating to see a child get so excited about something that was a part of Sherlock’s everyday life. He couldn’t wait for summer break, when he’d have loads of time to show Dan all around London. Even with the Carters’ holidays and the time they’d lived in London already Sherlock had barely scratched the surface when it came to showing them the city.

He found it a bit strange to walk Dan up to his home and enter the empty house. It wasn’t until he
was greeted with a foyer full of coats hanging on racks and toys that were thrown about the living room that he really was alone with a five year old. As soon as they were in the house Dan let go of his hand and dashed toward the hallway.

“I have to use the bathroom!” He called as he ran.

Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk at the bluntness of the statement. He took the few minutes of quiet to look around the house, contemplating what to do. Laura hadn’t said how long she would take, and he had told her to take her time. Was he looking at a couple of hours? An evening? What exactly did he do with a five year-old for all that time? Why didn’t he think this through?

Before he knew it Dan was racing back into the room, grinning ear to ear. Sherlock studied him up and down, skeptical.

“Did you wash your hands?” Sherlock demanded.

Dan groaned and trudged over to the kitchen to wash up; he made a mental reminder to have John lecture him on the importance of hand washing.

John.

It had been about an hour since he had left him at the clinic- his clinic- and Sherlock figured it was appropriate time to check in with him.

*How is it going?*- SH

It only took a few seconds for John to reply:

*Pretty cool!*

He smiled. It brought him so much happiness to think of John being able to fulfill his dreams, to live up to his potential because even Sherlock knew he could do so much more in this world than just tag along on cases with him and be his blogger. Pocketing his mobile, he looked down to find his nephew staring up to him, waiting for directions.

“You were going to show me drawings,” he pointed out.

Another grin sparkled across Dan’s face.

“Come on!” Dan exclaimed, grabbing Sherlock’s hand and dragging him toward his bedroom.

When his nephew flipped on the light he was slightly surprised the once neat and proper picture-perfect room Sherlock saw after his family moved in was now, well, a disaster area. Clothes were thrown about everywhere, toys were out of place. He felt bad for noticing, but he couldn’t help it.

Nevertheless, Dan rushed over to a small child’s art table that was in the corner of his room and opened the drawer. Sherlock smiled, thinking of Dan sneaking over there in the middle of the night to draw his pictures when he was supposed to be sleeping. He could remember many a night when he as a child would sneak a torch to bed with him so he could read pirate stories and science books at night.

“This one is my new school!” Dan announced proudly, handing him a pink piece of paper with a Crayon drawing of a square buildings with windows and stick figures out front. “This one is of soccer.”
He shoved the next paper into Sherlock’s hand, which had what he assumed were supposed to be footballs but were circles with black and white squares coloured in. It was adorable.

“These are great!” Sherlock chimed in.

“This is your house!” Dan said, showing him the next picture.

Sherlock felt his heart twist as he was handed a yellow piece of paper with red Crayon drawings of what was supposed to be Baker Street. There was what was supposed to be the telly, a table, a fireplace with a face on it- which he was assumed with supposed to be his skull- and what looked like what was maybe a violin. Then there were stick figures of him and John, holding hands.

“I love it,” Sherlock breathed, his throat closing up a bit.

He scooped his nephew into a hug, and Dan looked a bit embarrassed.

“You can keep it if you want,” Dan offered sheepishly.

He hugged the five year old even tighter.

“I’d love that. We’ll hang it on the fridge!”

His nephew was positively beaming, and Sherlock felt a bit more relaxed. This was family. This is what family did. They showed up spur of the moment, when the house was a mess and when they had no idea what was going on. They just...hung out.

“So what do you usually do after school?” Sherlock asked.

“Ummm….eat a snack!” Dan said.

And just like that, he took off toward the kitchen.

Sherlock blinked, wondering if this is what Mycroft must have felt like, constantly running after his little brother when they were kids.

He smirked; he probably still felt that way now.

He had a prickly feeling as he admired the Carters’ fridge that he should consult his sister before feeding Dan, but how badly could he screw this up?

“Can I have a grilled cheese?” Dan asked innocently, with a big grin, as though he knew he shouldn’t be asking for a sandwich as a snack.

Glancing at the clock, Sherlock knew it would only be a couple hours before Laura would be back to cook dinner. He picked up an apple instead.

“How about this?” He offered.

Dan scrunched his nose up at the fruit.

Of course.

Then the child’s eyes brightened.

“Daddy used to make me apples and peanut butter!” Dan grabbed the apple from his hands and ran over to the pantry to grab peanut butter.
This time it was Sherlock who turned his nose up; he had never understood the appeal of peanut butter. Creamy, processed, tasteless, sticks to your mouth and teeth. Nevertheless, when Dan held the apple and jar up to him with puppy dog eyes, Sherlock couldn’t say no. So he cut up the apple, dished out some peanut butter, and they sat down at the counter. Dan dug right in while Sherlock examined his apple, trying to determine the point. Wasn’t the point of apples to eat something nutritious?

“Just try it,” Dan demanded, his eyes twinkling, like he thought he finally had one over an adult.

So Sherlock took a bite.

And…it wasn’t the worst thing he had ever tried.

He forced himself to swallow.

“Yum,” he announced, trying to not sound too miserable.

He’d still take Mrs Hudson’s biscuits in the afternoon any day.

After their snack Dan seemed to settle down, which was strange because he assumed his nephew would be more energetic after eating. He was surprised when Dan wanted to hear about some of his cases; instead of reading from John’s blog he wanted him to reenact them. He was in the middle of showing off what it was like to work for one of his favourite composers when he got a call from John; his heart leapt.

“So?” He demanded as soon as he answered.

His partner sucked in a deep breath; he was clearly grinning like an idiot on the other line.

“I think I’m going to do it!” John blurted out. “No, I know I am. I mean, GP work isn’t the most exciting, but I’ll have a stable career again. I can set my own hours. I already have a staff and history of patients…my dad is brilliant. This is brilliant! I always thought about having my own clinic one day, but I just never thought it’d be possible.”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to smirk.

“After surviving Afghanistan, nearly getting eaten by a fake dog, being kidnapped- how many times now- and oh, falling in love with another man whose brother happens to be the British government, you believed running a clinic was impossible?”

He was pleased to hear his fiancé laugh on the other line.

“I suppose you’re right,” John sighed. He drew in a deep breath, and Sherlock imagined he was wondering what he was supposed to do now. “Dr Morrison retires at the end of May so that gives me some time to get some things together. He’s letting me work part-time, just to get a feel for the place. It’s going to be nuts, you know.”

“We’ve been through a lot of nutty stuff,” Sherlock pointed out. “This one is for you.”

“Well I owe you. And I love you. And I’m happy to hear you’re still alive after babysitting.”

Rolling his eyes, he shot:

“I have watched Dan on my own before. Why does everyone doubt me?!”
“Because I have come home more than once to a sink full of eyeballs!”

“I wouldn’t experiment with eyeballs around children! Though Dan is starting to learn about science…”

“Oh god,” John groaned. “When is your sister going to be back?”

Checking the time on his mobile, he was surprised to find he only had about 45 minutes until Laura was due to return. He also had a new text from her:

*I told Jason we had a babysitter and he wants to take me out to eat. Is that ok?*

He grinned; he knew his sister was the type to feel badly for taking favours, and he knew how desperately she and her husband probably needed some time out alone. He and John got spoiled getting to spend all of their time together.

*Of course,* he texted back.

Sherlock got back on the phone:

“Funny you should ask. She just asked if I could watch Dan while her and Jason go out to dinner. Want to come over?”

“Shouldn’t you ask her if it’s okay first?”

He rolled his eyes again.

“You know she doesn’t care. Plus we’re free babysitters.”

Suddenly Dan was beside him, jumping up and down and impatiently tugged on his clothes.


He knew John could hear the child over the phone, and his fiancé wouldn’t be able to say know.

“Of course I’ll be over.”

“Yay!” Dan exclaimed as Sherlock hung up the phone.

It would take John at least a half hour in traffic to get to the Carters’, and in that time Sherlock decided he could at least scrape up some spaghetti. Dan was excited to get to watch him boil the water (from a safe distance away) and pour the sauce in once the pasta was cooked. He explained to his nephew some of the science of cooking and water temperature, but by the hungry look in Dan’s eyes the talk went right over him.

There was a knock at the door, and before Sherlock could stop him Dan ran over to open it.

“Uncle John!” Dan exclaimed.

“You’re letting him open the door by himself?” John shot immediately even as Dan wrapped his arms around him. “I could have been anyone!”

“Oh please, there was a knock at the exact moment you were estimated to be over. Unless someone kidnapped you on the way and forced you to tell you where I was...which now that I think about it
is a very real possibility.”

He looked up, suddenly stone-faced.

“Dan, never open the door without an adult. In fact, let the adults do the door opening,” he announced.

His nephew rolled his eyes, but the two of them let it slide.

“Uncle Sherlock’s been telling me about cases!” Dan said, filling John in. John’s eyes twinkled as he looked up to Sherlock, who bashfully looked away. Clearly his fiancé was impressed at his good babysitting work. “Now he’s cooking sketti!”


Dan ignored him as he began to follow John around.

“Sherlock says you’re going to be a doctor again!” Dan exclaimed.

John leaned in to steal a kiss to Sherlock’s cheek and steal the ladle to stir the pasta for him.

“I still am a doctor,” John explained. “Now I’m just going to run my own clinic!”

“You’ll be the boss?” Dan grinned.

“I’ll be the boss!” John stopped, as though he was just realising that for the first time. His eyes met Sherlock’s. “I’m going to be the bloody boss! I mean, it’s been great enough working cases and writing books, but to get to run my own business? I’ll be my own boss. Somehow that’s just sinking in!”

“You do realise being your own boss means doing all of the work?” Sherlock pointed out.

“Yeah, but I was in Afghanistan so, you know, I think I can manage a family clinic.”

They exchanged smiles, and Sherlock really couldn’t have been prouder of him at that moment.

“Someone’s getting confident,” Sherlock teased.

“Yeah, well I suppose hanging out there reminded me that I know this world. I just had to convince myself I could run it.”

“We’ve been learning about the body!” Dan announced out of the blue.

Grinning from ear to ear, his fiancé spun around to Dan to challenge him:

“Really? What have you got?”

Very proudly- and very loudly- Dan began singing the “Dem Bones” verse about the human body, while acting out how the parts of the body were connected to each other. John clapped when he was done, while Sherlock teased:

“I could name all the bones in the hand at his age.”

John slapped him in the shoulder.

“They also taught us about nutr-on.”
He and John glanced at each other, trying to figure it out.

“You know!” Dan said, stomping his foot. “Food!”

“Oh,” John laughed. “Of course, the food groups!”

“Yes!” Dan cheered. He pointed at the stove. “Sketti is grains!”

“Spa-“ Sherlock began, but he was cut off quickly by his fiancé:

“I suppose Uncle Sherlock didn’t bother making any vegetables, which is one of the most important food groups.”

This earned him a glare from both his nephew and partner, and Sherlock sighed.

“There’s some broccoli in the fridge. I suppose Laura won’t mind,” he offered.

“Yay!” His nephew cheered.

“You might possibly be the only five year old who gets excited about broccoli,” he muttered.

They actually had a pretty relaxing evening of watching a Disney movie Dan liked and playing games. Of course Sherlock wasn’t particularly interested in the movie and he didn’t see how even a five year old could think the games were fun, but he was fascinated with how much his nephew enjoyed being around them. Dan didn’t know about his past, about the drugs, about the way he treated people or the things to him. To his nephew he was just Uncle Sherlock; it was like his life had only started when they met. And that was…nice. It was refreshing.

Around eight it was time to put Dan to bed, and they were both surprised when he pulled out a copy of *Hounds of Baskerville* for John to read to him. His fiancé had the most adorable stupid grin on his face, and Sherlock realised it was probably the first time he had read the story from his own book out loud to someone. They only got a chapter in before Dan fell asleep so John marked the spot where they stopped, and both men were still all smiles when they quietly closed the door and crept back to the living room.

“We’re pretty good at this kid thing,” John laughed. “I’m sorry I teased you, you’re a great babysitter.”

The two shared a kiss, leaving John to melt against Sherlock’s chest and he let him. He imagined it was good for his lover, to be able to distract himself grief. But distractions only lasted so long.

“You okay?” Sherlock whispered, knowing it was a stupid thing to say.

“I enjoyed today,” his fiancé confessed as he broke away.

Their hands still held in the air between them, swinging slightly as his partner drew in a few deep breaths.

“Today reminded me that things will be okay. My dad…he prepared me so well. He prepared me for life when I was kid and he still prepared before his death. And tonight was great…it’s always great to remember that your family is like my family too.”

“Of course they are,” Sherlock interrupted.
Shaking his head, John explained:  
“I’m just a bit knackered.”

Sherlock stole another kiss to his lips.  
“It’ll be another hour before they’re back. Why don’t we have a lie down?”

He led his partner over to the sofa, where John didn’t hesitate to fall into the cushions and turn his body toward the back. Sherlock lay on the outside, spooning John as they warmed up to each other. Gently he ran his fingers through his fiancé’s blonde strands, which were getting longer by the day. It didn’t take long before his partner’s eyes fluttered to a close and he drifted away into a nap.

Once he was asleep Sherlock slipped away from the sofa and took a look around the house. There were games on the floor that they played, dishes needed to be put up, and overall it looked like Laura could use a hand with tidying up.

Who AM I? Sherlock thought to himself.

But he knew if he were four months pregnant and already had a five year old running around the last thing he would want to do was clean during his spare time.

Plus, cleaning let him be nosy.

He liked seeing these tiny glimpses into his sister’s life- what was in her fridge, the types of detergent she used, the way she organised (or tried to keep organised) Dan’s toys and clothes. It was such a different lifestyle than his…

…and he couldn’t ever imagine living it full time.

Glancing over at John, he wondered…was John still indifferent about kids? He was so good with Dan, and for Sherlock it felt pretty natural to take care of him…

He shook his head. *This is insane, I don’t want kids.* He was sure once Laura gave birth and her new little one was crying most hours of the day the thought would never cross his mind again.

It seemed like no time until the door pushed open and Laura and Jason tumbled in, their faces glowing as their laughter filled the living room. They looked quite the image of two teenagers coming back from a date, even as his sister’s hand rested on her baby bump. When she entered her house and looked around, she stopped; Sherlock smirked. Her eyes finally found him lingering by the kitchen and they lit up when she realised all he had done.

“You…you cleaned!” She accused. “Sherlock Holmes you cleaned!”

“You didn’t have to do that,” Jason offered, though his face showed relief that they didn’t have to work cleaning into their schedule. “But thanks for giving us the night off, really. We needed that. Did Dan get to bed okay?”

“Oh yes,” he nodded. He tilted his head over to John. “So did John.”

“Poor thing,” Laura sighed, shaking her head. “Why don’t we have a cup of tea and let him sleep a little longer.”

Sherlock raised his eyebrows.

“I’m getting used to the customs!” She explained. “I love tea anyway, it’s just *better* over here
somehow.”

Jason left to check on Dan and wash up himself, and Laura let out another long sigh of relief as they sat at the barstools by the counter with their tea.

“So how is John?” She asked, being mindful of keeping her voice down while he was asleep.

Shrugging, Sherlock replied:

“He’s holding up as well as one could expect. He seemed to really enjoy being at the practice today.”

“So he’s going through with it?” Laura said. Sherlock nodded with a mischievous grin.

“Yes, and he’ll be brilliant at it,” Sherlock grinned. “He lacked a bit of confidence at first, but he can manage. I think it’s been driving him a bit bonkers, not having the stability of a full time job like he’s always been used to having. He needs to keep busy. Cases are good, writing is good, but I think this way he really feels like he’s accomplished.”

“Because he doesn’t do enough already,” Laura said, rolling her eyes. “Did Dan ask him to read him the Hounds of Baskerville? He’s been begging me to have you guys over so the real author can read him the book.”

Sherlock beamed; no wonder Dan was excited to see them!

“Yes, he read him some at bedtime. Maybe we can start coming over more.”

“Yeah, that’d be great!” Laura said, placing her hand over his and squeezing it. “Dan really loves having you closer to home.”

Nodding, Sherlock confessed:

“Being here tonight made me realise how great it is having you here. I enjoyed it.”

“Well, if you loved babysitting so much maybe I’ll let you give Jason and I a break every now and then,” she winked. “You can stay the night if you want.”

He shrugged his shoulders and stood to place the tea cup with the other dishes.

“We’ll be fine,” he promised. “Besides, Mrs Hudson gets antsy if we stay out past eleven without telling her where we are.”

This earned him a good laugh, and the two siblings exchanged a warm hug.

“How are you?” He asked. “How’s the baby?”

With another heavy sigh (clearly sleep deprived- she’s been eyeing the fridge this whole time like she’s still hungry so she didn’t eat much at the restaurant. Perhaps she still has bouts of nausea, and that combined with not eating well and the usual stress is keeping her up at night) she turned to her kitchen, as though trying to find something to busy herself with even though the kitchen was perfectly spotless.

“I’m doing okay,” she was obviously forcing herself to lie, but he chose to listen instead of interject. “I guess I’m just getting to that point in pregnancy where I’m like...I still have four months of this?! At the same time four months is so soon. Jason is just working like crazy, and he doesn’t show any signs of slowing down. To be totally honest I’m a bit worried how this will all
work out once we have two kids. And he wasn’t around when Dan was a baby so this will be like a first baby for him. I just don’t think he has any idea what he’s in for.”

Sherlock remembered Jason showing him his office full of baby books and admitting to him that he wasn’t exactly totally calm and collect about having a baby. Maybe it was time Laura knew the truth- or rather, that he pushed her to talk to her husband so she could discover the truth.

“You know, you should really be talking to him,” he pointed out. “He’s probably worried too.”

His sister let her head fall into her arms on the counter, and he reached over to place a hand on her neck to massage the tense muscles there.

“I keep telling myself I did this before, of course I can do it again. Of course Jason is freaking out too. Sorry, I just…I don’t know what to do with myself other than take care of Dan and stress about the baby.”

Now he just felt guilty. He should really be over more, helping out and making sure his sister had someone to talk to.

Or maybe he should be giving her a distraction from all the stress.

“You should hang out with us more,” he offered. “John always needs someone to read his stuff and he’ll need help with the new office. Maybe we can even work on a case together. An easy, non-murdery case, of course.”

She offered him a sympathetic smile, as though she appreciated his efforts but knew in reality she couldn’t be running around on cases while pregnant.

“I guess I’m still just adjusting to living over here,” Laura admitted. “I feel like this should be easier or that I should be able to handle it all.”

“You’re only human,” he whispered. “You’re putting too much pressure on yourself.”

“I know,” Laura closed her eyes. For a moment she almost looked in pain, like everything was really coming down on her hard at once, but then her face relaxed and that bright smile of hers peered out again. “Thank you for tonight. We really needed that. It was so great just to talk as adults. I know I’m hard on Jason sometimes for working so much, but it’s a part of his job and he loves it. He really loves London. Dan loves it here! I feel like I’m the only one who’s not 100% on board. Don’t get me wrong, I wouldn’t trade being in the same city as you and Mycroft for the world. I just…I miss home. I miss the comforts of my home. I miss knowing people and knowing what stores to buy produce in and what stores to avoid and I miss not having to not think about the currency. I miss not getting eyebrows raised at me because of my accent whenever I speak. I guess I sound pretty selfish.”

Speaking as someone who had never lived out of London in his life…he couldn’t exactly relate. And he felt badly for not being there to tell off these natives…or throw them out the nearest window.

“Who has been bullying you for being American?” He demanded. “I want names!”

Laura rolled her eyes.

“Don’t be so dramatic, it really hasn’t been a big deal. It’s just an adjustment period…made much harder by being five months pregnant. Speaking of which, I have an appointment I had to make during the afternoon next Thursday and Jason can’t make it. Want to tag along?”
His eyes lit up; he never thought he’d be so excited to get to go to the doctor.

“Yes,” he replied, a bit more bashfully than he meant to. “I’d love to go.”

A relieved smile crossed his sister’s face, and he could tell how much of a load it was off her shoulders that someone would be able to go with her. He noticed her glancing at the clock, and when he saw it was nine he knew she was probably ready to try to get some sleep.

“I should wake this one,” Sherlock said, nodding toward John.

“Yeah,” she sighed, rubbing her hands over her face. “Thanks again for helping with Dan. Even just having someone feed him and get him into bed…you have no idea how much it helps.”

He grinned.

“That’s what big brothers and godfathers are for.”

Chapter End Notes

Whew! This chapter turned into more of a beast to tackle than I meant! To be honest I did run into a bit of writers’ block, which for me tends to happen while transitioning from one big story arch to the next. So I thought some family fluff might be a good cure! Sorry the weight was so long but at least I got a good chunk of writing done for this chapter! I hope you enjoyed it!! More family fluff and comfort coming up as Sherlock helps John grieve...and don't forget there's a wedding coming up! And we're approaching the 200th chapter! Can you believe it?! Thanks SO much to all you guys for tagging along on this crazy ride! Thanks for all your lovely words and kudos!

PS: and yes, she is Ms Morstan as in...Mary Morstan ;) (and NO, I'm not breaking up Johnlock! don't even think like that!)
Boy or Girl?

Chapter Notes

YOU GUYS!!!! 200 chapters????? How did that even happen! Remember back when this was supposed to be a 30 day challenge? OH WELL! I wanted the 200th chapter to be the wedding chapter, but it didn't turn out that way because, well frankly I didn't realise the 200th chapter was coming up so fast LOL! I hope you enjoy it! (more fluff and happy times!)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sunlight greeted Sherlock as his eyes batted open. He found his arms wrapped around his pillow; a smile draped across his face when he felt the warm, naked, body of his fiancé pressed against his own. The clock on his bedside table told him it was half nine in the morning. Just a couple of years ago it would have been unheard of for him to be able to sleep this late- unless he was crashing after the high of an adrenaline-filled case. But now sleeping was becoming a thing for him: six, seven hours some nights! Dare he say it, he was even hungry, and breakfast wasn’t such a stranger to him anymore either.

He felt John stir behind him, and his smile brightened as he remembered last night. He could still feel the mattress dip underneath him as his lover took him…

“God we both smell,” John snorted, abruptly interrupting his romantic fantasizing.

His partner’s lips formed into a smile against his back before sending fluttering kisses down his spine.

“That’s a nice way to wake up,” Sherlock teased. He sniffed the air and grimaced; John wasn’t wrong.

“We’re overdue for a bath,” his fiancé announced.

But instead of moving from the bed he licked a long stripe up his spine. Sherlock shivered, but he didn’t dare protest or move. Images of tumbling in the night before, kissing each other madly until they fell in bed, crossed his mind. They had worked a laughably simple love-affair murder case from Greg (it was barely a three) and had decided their day needed some kind of excitement. It had been awhile since they had a night of passion, and John seemed keen to make up for it.

“But we might as well take advantage of already being filthy,” John murmured into his ear. He cupped one of Sherlock’s arse cheeks and the consulting detective let out a moan. “Up for round two?”

He knew what John had in mind- and not that he’d ever argue- but after last night he felt obligated to give back a bit. Without warning he flipped over, towering over his fiancé with a wild grin.

“Always,” he breathed before crashing his lips against his lover’s.

As his tongue dipped into John’s throat he reached down, palming his partner’s cock- his grin widened when he found it already hard. His tongue scraped across teeth, exploring as his hand
worked and his body began to move. By this time of morning Mrs Hudson would be doing the 
wash so he knew they had to be quieter…which only made this all the more fun and challenging. 
Taking a breath of air, his tongue next aimed for John’s neck, licking a stripe up like a cat before 
placing kisses up his cheek, his ear…

“Christ Sherlock,” John whispered, squirming beneath him. “I had plans for you, you know.”

Sherlock felt a chill go up his spine at the thought of a replay of last night, but still he shot 
playfully:

“You had your turn…and you still have the lube.”

He held out his hand, and his partner rolled his eyes as he reached over to the nightstand on his 
side of the bed and handed Sherlock the lube.

“Thank you,” he annunciated. “Now where was I?”

Kisses were planted down John’s chest, his tongue danced around one nipple, the other…John 
squirmed again, and Sherlock held him down stronger. He knew that was his partner’s sign that he 
was getting impatient. But after last night’s torture, being held on the edge, it was time for 
payback.

Ever so slowly he made his way down his lover’s body until he could gently bite and kiss at his 
thighs, caressing his knees as he did. Then he took him down in one go, making him arch up off the 
bed for a moment.

“God,” John hissed as he sucked at the head, licked down the shaft and took him back down his 
throat. “Sherlock, fuck, I won’t last long.”

Thrusting his hips up, John forced himself further down his throat. He took him easily, enjoying 
the feeling of his lover’s hardness against his throat and the soft moans John was failing to mute 
with his arm. His hand crept up, his fingers dancing over his lover’s sensitive skin; John grabbed 
his hand, kissing it before letting Sherlock sneak two fingers into his mouth. He sucked on them 
hard before Sherlock pulled out, quickly moving his fingers instead lower. John lifted his hips, 
giving him more access.

But he didn’t have long to play around before John came with a loud “Sherlock!” that would surely 
give away to Mrs Hudson what they were doing. Luckily they had established an unspoken “don’t 
ask” rule in the flat. Their lips met in another fierce kiss for a long moment before they both 
collapsed on the bed.

John grinned as he looked over to him.

“Thanks for that,” he teased.

Sherlock laughed as he snuggled up against John’s warm body.

“You were overdue,” he teased back.

Arms wrapped around each other, they both sighed as they relished in the comfort of their warm, 
safe, bed.

“Do we really have to get up?” John sighed.

“I have to meet Laura for her appointment,” Sherlock pointed out.
As he remembered that a bundle of nerves settled in his stomach. He really wasn’t sure what to expect from the ultrasound appointment: he had done research and it didn’t seem like there was too much to it, but he kept thinking...what if something went wrong? What if the ultrasound showed something bad and he had to be the one to comfort his sister? He shook himself out of it, telling himself he was being silly.

“You okay?” His fiancé asked, caressing his cheek with the palm of his hand.

“You okay?” he lied quickly.

Of course his partner was a doctor and would understand his nerves- or he might think he was ridiculous for being nervous. Either way, he had to put it out of mind. So he jumped up, grinned, and held his hand out.

“I believe you said something about a bath?”

After a nice soaking bath they fought for mirror space as they tried to shave and get ready for the day. John was spending the day shadowing the nurse at his new clinic, and the way he went on and on about getting to learn the billing system in the same way a child went on about discovering a new favourite movie.

“What?” John finally stopped and demanded when he noticed Sherlock still had his stupid grin on. “You’ve been grinning like that all morning- it’s kind of freaking me out.”

With a sigh, Sherlock spun his fiancé around toward him, shaving cream still on his face and all. Hands on John’s shoulders, he smiled down at him, unable to contain his...total content. It was the only way to describe how he had been feeling.

“Lately I’ve just been...well...happy,” he confessed, “and that’s still a bit...weird for me.”

His partner actually rolled his eyes.

“Sherlock, love, you’ve got to get over this doubt. You deserve to be happy. You deserve me. And I’m going to keep saying it until you believe it.”

Leaning up on his tiptoes, John stole a soft kiss to his lips.

“Now, I’m going to go to the clinic, you’re going to go to your sister’s appointment, and then we’ll both be home and cook dinner...like a normal, happy, couple. Imagine that.”

What Sherlock imagined was his twenty-something year old self, lying wasted in a freezing cold drugs den. How was this his life now? How was he this lucky? There wasn’t a day that went by that the question didn’t cross his mind; there wasn’t a day that went by that he didn’t feel incredibly lucky and grateful.

“In two weeks we’ll be official life partners,” John murmured before kissing him. “I can’t wait.”

Sherlock kissed him back; warmth flowed through him, and he was certain he could be captured in this moment forever and he would be okay with it.

God what’s happening to me? I’ve become...a romantic!

Which is probably what John wants out of a life partner, he thought.
“It’s okay, you know,” John reassured him. “It’s okay to be normal. You can be this arse-kicking consulting detective and a husband.”

And it was like as soon as John said it, he believed it. It was that simple- he had to believe it. This is what John expected him to be so this was who he had to be.

“Of course I can,” he replied. They kissed again. “After all, you fell for me because of the danger.”

His partner blushed a bit as he backed away, but suddenly John straightened up and turned casually back to the mirror.

“Partially true,” John admitted. He reached for his toothbrush but paused, momentarily, before blurt out: “Which is why you’re doing a will.”

Sherlock froze. Of course, he should have noticed all the signs. The dinner last night, the sex, the pillow talk, the lazy morning and bath…

“Were you trying to…seduce me into doing a will?!” He demanded. John quickly stuffed the toothbrush into his mouth to use brushing as a distraction. “Isn’t that a bit…morbid?”

John spat into the sink, as though releasing frustration.

“Everything about doing a will is morbid!” He protested. “But it’s just something you have to do as an adult who has assets and money and a family.”

He opened his mouth, but he found he was quickly running out of excuses. Deep down, he knew John was right, but doing a will just felt so…final. So many criminals he had put away were probably planning his demise as they stood there; he didn’t want to plan it too.

“You know you’re getting everything,” Sherlock pouted.

His fiancé turned to him, mouth agape.

“Really?” He asked, his voice a bit of a tease, and Sherlock knew a rant was coming. “So you weren’t going to set up anything for Dan?”

The consulting detective’s mouth fell agape, and he tried to force himself to get his thoughts together and not get flustered. If he was going to get out of doing this he had to prove he was already prepared.

“Well, yes, obviously,” he shot. “Bloody Mycroft’s already set him with education funds…he can pretty much get into any school he wants. But I want to make sure he’s set- he and the new little one, of course.”

“Of course?” John said, crossing his arms over his chest. “I thought I was getting everything.”

Sherlock had to refrain from stomping his foot.

“Are you really demanding inheritance over a child getting it?” He pointed out.

John grinned, and Sherlock knew he felt he was making his point.

“What about your violin?” John asked. “I could possibly listen to you play that thing every day for decades. I say I’ll be entitled to keep it to have it to stare at, you know, when I’m missing you.”

Now his heart was melting; he didn’t want to think for even one moment of John mourning him.
“Of course you can have the violin,” he stated softly.

“But it’s a family heirloom, isn’t it? What if Mycroft wants it?” John pointed out. Sherlock glared. “What if you die in ten years and Dan decides he wants to keep it?”

His heart did a little flutter at the thought of his nephew wanting to keep and cherish his violin—maybe even learn to play it.

Then he thought of a teenager trying to play his incredibly expensive, handmade, family heirloom violin and he cringed.

“I supposed that can be worked out between you all,” he offered, “but I would think they would understand if you wanted to hold onto it.”

He was pleased when a soft smile fell across John’s face; the doctor reached his arms out to him.

“See?” He said. “These things can get messy. Even with the closest families, death and sorting out assets get messy. Wills just help ease the stress of everything that will need to be done.”

Letting out a heavy sigh of defeat, Sherlock knew he had no room left to argue.

“Fine,” he muttered. He thought suddenly of how Laura had been insistent on picking him up for the appointment, even though he was out of her way. “You were planning on kidnapping me to do this, weren’t you? You were going to wait until the appointment was over and then Laura was going to drive me somewhere to meet you and a lawyer.”

John grinned.

“I told her you’d figure it out,” he confessed. He patted Sherlock’s shoulder. “It won’t be that bad. You just have to get it over with, like ripping off a band aid. And it’s better to do this now, before we get married and life gets in the way.”

In the end, he knew if it would make John happy— and if it would make him stop nagging him— it would be worth it.

“You get your way,” he announced, grabbing his own toothbrush from the sink and wielding it at John like a weapon. “This time. But if I get hit by a bus and die tomorrow, remember that you egged on death.”

His fiancé rolled his eyes again and smacked him on the arse.

“How many rooftops have you jumped across?” John teased, and then seriously he pointed out: “And how many times have you almost died in the past year?”

Sherlock’s mouth fell open; he couldn’t decide if John was being serious or rhetorical. He decided it was best to just not say anything.

“I can think of at least seven on the top of my head,” his fiancé shot, “and that doesn’t count your HIV scare. You have an incredibly dangerous lifestyle, love, and yes...that adrenaline rush is one reason why I became attracted to you. But when you live like that you have to take the possibility of your death just as serious as your life.”

“I know I could die,” Sherlock protested; though secretly, he knew most of the time a case was on he was more preoccupied with solving the case and his partner’s safety than his own well-being.
Taking his hands, John offered him a sad smile as he confessed quietly:

“I don’t like to think about losing you. But I’m ready to spend the rest of our life together…and that always means preparing for the worst. It’s just the responsible thing to do.”

“Till death do us part, isn’t that what they say?” Sherlock asked. His lips hovered just above John’s; he could feel his lover’s staggered breathing against his face. “I don’t want you worrying about me. I don’t want to think about you losing me, or I losing you. And I suppose, should that day come, I’d want as much settled for you as possible. So yes, you win this round.”

A smile crept across John’s face, but instead of gloating he simply kissed Sherlock’s lips before murmuring:

“Till death do us part.”

An hour later Laura was there to pick him up, and as they were on their way to the hospital his will became the last thing on his mind. His nerves continued to rattle him as he led Laura through the hospital walls. He daren’t say anything, as he knew she had to be twice as nervous as he was.

“Dan wants a picture of the ultrasound,” she announced as they stepped into the lift. “Isn’t that sweet? He’s so excited to be a big brother. He helped me start to unpack the nursery yesterday. I’m thinking of repainting that room but not the traditional pink…maybe a light green.”

Sherlock simply nodded, pretending he was listening.

He had hoped once they got into the room he could settle down, tell himself he was being ridiculous. He had be to supportive, not nervous. In the back of his mind though, he couldn’t help but to think of Mycroft’s darkest secret, the secret of his miscarriage. He knew how unlikely it was five months alone…but what if? What if something went wrong?

“Sherlock?” Laura asked softly, holding his hand. “You’re not the one who’s pregnant, you know. You shouldn’t be nervous.”

An uneasy laugh escaped him.

“How could you tell?”

“Oh please. You’re the spitting image of Jason at our first sonogram. And I know you’re thinking about Mycroft- don’t. The baby is perfectly healthy. Of course anything can happen, but I decided early on that it doesn’t do me or the baby any good to worry myself crazy.”

Frowning, he thought back, thinking of how Mycroft had never told anyone up until him and John, how deeply secretive he was about it. He honestly hadn’t considered that he might tell Laura, but once he thought about it he was glad Laura knew.

“So…you know?” He announced stupidly.

“Yeah,” he said softly, nodding. “And I’m glad he told me, because I know it’ll be hard for him to be around a newborn. And yes, he has been worried about the baby’s health too.”

Sherlock realised then how long it had been since he had a sincere heart to heart with his brother, and it was strange to imagine Mycroft opening up about such a sensitive topic. They hadn’t even discussed it himself since his brother’s confession, which already felt like it was so long ago.
“You know I thought you were supposed to be here for moral support,” Laura teased with a smile.

He let out a laugh and shook his head. Of course! He was supposed to be making her feel stronger and less nervous.

Soon enough they were in the exam room, waiting on the technician to come in to do the ultrasound. Now that she was on the table and only moments from seeing a new image of her child, Laura definitely seemed to have more nervous energy. She grasped his hand, almost painfully so, and he hated to imagine how hard she’d hold on while giving birth. When the door open and the technician walked in (approximately thirty-two years old, brown hair, single mum, had just come off her lunch break) they both jumped, but when the woman smiled Laura relaxed and let out a long sigh.

“Are we ready?” The technician (her nametag read Meg) asked. No useless small talk: Sherlock liked her already. “Now we might be able to tell the sex of the baby with this ultrasound. If we can would you want to know?”

“Yes!” Sherlock blurted out without thinking.

*Why wouldn’t you want to know?* He thought.

Laura rolled his eyes, but luckily agreed:

“Yes,” she said to the technician before turning to Sherlock. “But don’t tell anyone yet.”

He wasn’t sure how he could make it through the day without even telling John, but he had so much nervous, exciting, energy running through him that he nodded in agreement anyway. If there was something he could know then he had to know now.

“Okay,” the technician said with a kind smile. “Let’s do this.”

The ultrasound took longer than he thought, with lots of the technician staring at the monitor and Laura’s wide eyes watching with concern. Right away Sherlock recognised the shape of a tiny baby on the monitor, and a rush of adrenaline went through him. He had always looked at his body as transport, but human life truly was amazing, wasn’t it? It could hurt, it could love, it could save lives, it breaks down…it starts from nothing.

“What do you think?” Laura asked softly, squeezing his shoulder.

He blushed a bit, realising she was watching him. His face was lit with awe; he couldn’t hide it as he shook his head and admitted:

“She’s beautiful.”

Laura frowned, and he grinned, waiting for her to see it.

“She?” Laura demanded to the technician to see if he was right.

The technician’s smile brightened to match Sherlock, and she nodded.

“You have a very healthy baby girl that will be joining your family in a few months,” she announced.

His sister’s eyes immediately became overwhelmed with tears, and she let out a laugh and a choked
sob at the same time. He let her grab him, hugging him tightly.

“I’m going to have a baby girl,” she whispered. “Oh my god…finally another girl in this family!”

She beamed as the technician laughed, and Laura explained:

“I’m surrounded by men.”

“She has four brothers,” Sherlock confessed on the technician’s behalf, “she understands.”

The technician’s mouth fell open; another laugh escaped his sister and she rolled her eyes.

“Yeah, he does that,” she said, shaking her head. “He sees and observes everything.”

“I’ll take your word for it,” the technician replied, eyeing Sherlock warily.

Sherlock decided it was best to not freak out the person with the ultrasound machine and stayed quiet the rest of the appointment, which went on for longer than he thought. The rest of the time was just the technician studying the images, but he didn’t detect any sign of worry on her face. In fact she looked rather at ease, and he reminded himself she did this possibly dozens of times a day. She knew what to look for, and clearly she wasn’t seeing anything worrying.

Everything was fine.

He finally let himself relax.

He and his sister found themselves both bursting energy as they bounced out to the carport and climbed into Laura’s car.

“A baby girl,” she sighed happily as he started up the engine. “I don’t even know how to tell Jason, he’s going to flip. I think he secretly was hoping for a daughter.”

“Really?” Sherlock asked.

He didn’t know anything about becoming parents besides the stereotypical mothers want daughters, fathers want sons- which he never understood.

“Both of our families are mostly men,” she explained, “it’s about time there’s another Carter woman.”

Somehow Sherlock kept forgetting that Laura wasn’t technically a Holmes anymore, and there wouldn’t technically be a Holmes baby girl…but it would probably be the closest they would come to having another Holmes child. He couldn’t see Greg and Mycroft wanting children, what with their careers, and he and John…well…they were getting old, weren’t they?

“You okay?” Laura asked, noticing his eyes were glued to the window. He shrugged, unwilling to admit he was thinking of what was ultimately the elephant in the room. “You’re thinking about rather or not you guys will ever have children, aren’t you?”

He let out a loud, annoyed, sigh.

“We’re a bit old for that, don’t you think?” He pointed out, though part of him felt like he was trying to convince himself of that so that he had a good excuse to not thinking about children. He needed to stop getting into these moods. He did not want kids. Of course not! He could just
imagine being out on a case, kidnapped (per usual) and John fretting at home with a child. Or John being stuck at the clinic for twelve hours and having to deal with a crying baby. He smirked. “Can you imagine?”

Laura grinned.

“Yes,” she blurted out. “I actually kind of can! You’re so good with Dan, and John has this… parental nature about him.”

“Parental?” Sherlock snorted. “He had four girlfriends in one year and used to only eat takeaway before we were together. I’m good with Dan because I just…borrow him. When he has a meltdown I can leave the room.”

His sister rolled his eyes.

“For the record you two still eat a lot of takeaway,” she pointed out. “I’m just saying you know it’s not out of the picture because you are, well, old. And men.”

“I know that.”

They drove in silence for a bit, but he could tell his sister’s mind was racing. Her fingertips tapped madly against the will; she was still smiling.

“You can call Jason, if you want,” he offered.

“He made me promise to tell him in person,” she explained. “He wanted to be there when Dan found out, which is super sweet. I do need to tell Mycroft, though.”

Looking around, Sherlock realised they weren’t too far from his brother’s office; he grinned again.

“Have you ever seen Mycroft’s office before?”

His sister’s jaw dropped as soon as she saw the government building, and it stayed fallen as they took the lift up to their brother’s office.

“Mycroft works here?” Laura finally sputtered as they exited the lift to the minor government official’s floor. She looked around at the paintings of London and English landscapes. “Oh my god, this is a private wing, isn’t it?”

Sherlock only kept grinning. He had walked these floors dozens of times, but he could remember the first time he ever saw where his brother worked. It had been at that moment, upon seeing the paintings and furniture that cost more than he would ever earn in a lifetime, that he realised what truly different worlds they lived in. At that moment he worried maybe it wasn’t good for Laura to be there: perhaps Mycroft would be afraid of her being confused or envious.

“Christ,” she whispered instead.

“This is it,” he announced as they reached the plain oak door.

He didn’t bother knocking, instead waltzing in as he always did. And as always, Mycroft was on the phone. When he glanced up and saw them enter- or rather, saw Laura enter- a small smile crossed his face.

“Right. Well, I will get back to you on that later,” Mycroft said, brushing whoever he was talking
to off the phone. “Laura! Do what to I owe this pleasure?”

He was positively grinning as he stepped away from his desk, buttoned his waistcoat, and shared a hug with his youngest sibling.

“I’m here too, you know,” Sherlock muttered, feigning jealousy.

“Yes, hi,” Mycroft waved off. “How was the appointment?”

Both he and Laura were positively beaming; clearly Mycroft knew exactly what the appointment was about and exactly what information she knew.

“You have to promise not to tell Jason or Dan,” Laura said.

Mycroft placed his hands on her shoulder.

“Promise,” he echoed.

Eyes lit up with joy, she blurted out:

“I’m having a girl!”

Without saying anything Mycroft scooped her up in a hug, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to stand there, admiring their relationship. He could still remember a time when he had convinced himself that he couldn’t trust Mycroft- but Laura, Laura never knew a time like that. To her Mycroft was just Big Brother, eldest brother, someone to look up to for advice, for security. Sherlock still felt like he really didn’t know how to be a big brother, but of course that came naturally for Mycroft. He finally had a normal younger sibling- someone who didn’t have a drug problem, lived on the streets, or dealt with dangerous criminals for a living.

“I’m very happy for you,” Mycroft announced. “It’s about time we had another girl around here.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes; he knew that truthfully, their brother wouldn’t have the first clue what to do with a newborn of any gender.

“Yes, exactly,” Laura teased. She wiped tears from her eyes as she pulled away and subconsciously rubbed at her stomach. “The sonogram went so well. The baby is healthy- she’s healthy. It’s just so surreal knowing the gender…it feels like it’s going to be no time before she gets here.”

“Well you know-“

“We’ve got it covered,” their sister announced, playfully pushing him away. “But thank you. It’s so amazing to have so much support this time around. It’s so different from when I had Dan. Back then I was just…alone. I was lost, I was confused. I was broke.”

“But you did it,” Sherlock reminded her. “You’re a brilliant mum.”

“And I have a brilliant family,” she said, beaming at both of them.

Mycroft glanced at the grandfather clock that was in his office (seriously, who actually had a grandfather clock in their office?) and commented:

“I say it’s time for a lunch break. There’s a nice café down the street…shall we?”
Dare he say it, Sherlock actually had a pleasant afternoon with his siblings.

*This is life now,* he thought as he stuck the key in the doorknob of 221B and entered his flat.

He felt…*safe.* He felt…*loved.*

He smiled, for the umpteenth time that day.

It felt too good to be true.

Of course, as he entered the flat, he realised he had totally forgotten John’s insistence on him doing a will. Sure enough, his fiancé had made dinner- a nice steak, potatoes, and wine- and there was a Suit waiting for him.

A lawyer.

Of course, the will.

He had forgotten all about it.

He sighed.

*Time to get back to reality.*

To his surprise, doing the will went surprisingly smoothly. His savings and inheritance money went to John (he decided Mycroft had enough money and Jason made quite a bit as a lawyer), his violin went to John…his brother could have his skull. He figured Mycroft would get a kick out of that.

Smirking, he pulled back the covers as he and John prepared to end another day.

That was doubtful, he thought.

“See, that wasn’t so bad, was it?” John teased.

Sherlock pouted, not willing to admit he had been wrong.

“It wasn’t that bad,” he confessed. “I’m sure you’re happy…you legally get everything I get, if I should perish.”

His fiancé grinned.

“Right, so I can finally kill you in your sleep.”

Sherlock stared at him, frowning.

“I’m kidding,” John laughed.

“I know that,” he shot back, pouting. He sighed. “If it helps you sleep at night, I’m glad.”

“Yes, it does,” his fiancé confessed.

Together they climbed into bed, and Sherlock felt a shiver down his spine as he faced his lover. It didn’t matter how many times he got into bed with his partner: each time he felt the same burning passion he felt the first time they kissed…on that dock…all those days ago.
“I do love you,” Sherlock whispered. “Whatever it takes to make you ready to spend our lives together…I’m willing.”

“So if I said I wanted to adopt twins, you’d agree?”

Sherlock’s eyes widened in shock, but he decided not to answer. He couldn’t even begin to imagine that scenario. Twins. How would they manage even one child, what with their lifestyle?

“I’m kidding,” John assured him. A weight lifted in his chest, though he had known deep down his partner wasn’t serious. Finally, he confessed: “Laura told me she was having a girl. She also told me you were having some doubts…wondering rather or not I’d want kids.”

He didn’t know how to answer.

“Sherlock…I love you, you know that. I love our life. If it makes you feel any better, I never really knew if I wanted kids or not. I always thought if I met the right person and they wanted them than maybe…but it was never in the books. I know what kind of life we live. I’m satisfied with the kind of life we live. I don’t need a child to make me feel complete- kudos to those who do, but this life, this life I’ve had with you…it’s more amazing than anything I could have ever imagined.”

Feeling his cheeks blush, Sherlock leaned forward to kiss his partner. That was exactly like what he wanted to hear. His life was perfect! Of course he wanted to give John whatever he wanted, but as far as what he wanted…well, he couldn’t complain, could he?

“Our ceremony is in two weeks,” Sherlock murmured, he kissed John deeply.

“I never could have imagined my life turned out so brilliantly,” John whispered. Sherlock felt a lump in his throat. He always found himself doubting that this relationship was really what was right- that it was really what John truly wanted.

“Stop that,” John demanded, as though he could read his thoughts. “I am so ready for this, Sherlock, and so are you. I’m ready for the rest of our lives.”

He let out a satisfied smile, running hand down Sherlock’s chest, and the consulting detective shivered.

The rest of my life…

His twenty year old self would have never imagined life would work out this well.

John’s hand wandered lower, and his body stirred with heat.

“You’re perfect,” John whispered before kissing him.

He realised at that moment that he had never asked how John’s day at the clinic went, but it didn’t seem to matter. They kissed deeper, tongues gliding across teeth once again. Together the settled into bed, settled into one another’s arms, and again the world felt perfect.

Too perfect…

Chapter End Notes
There you have it! The 200th chapter. I didn't really intend to do another filler/fluff chapter, but I knew I wouldn't ever be able to write all of this and the wedding any time soon. I can't remember if I told you guys I got a new job last fall (YAY! I got out of retail!), which has been AWESOME, but I work a few hours later than I used to so I don't have much writing time during the week. Hence why it's been taking me so long to update because honestly I usually don't even think about writing until the weekend...which is bad :(

Coming up...it's finally bachelor party/wedding time! No, it won't be traditional or anything...but it'll be right for them! Thanks so much for reading! As always, thank you for all your lovely comments and kudos. I love that you guys still love this after all these years!
Sherlock Holmes was bored.

It wasn’t until his fiancé went out to his stag night that he realised just how much he had taken having his partner around for granted. They were rarely separate these days so if he had ideas to bounce off of someone’s head, John was there. If he forgot to eat, John was there. If he wanted to just sit and contemplate in silence, John was right there beside him, working on his novel so he wouldn’t be alone.

Not two years ago he wanted nothing more than to be alone- even after John moved in. He would have given anything to have a quiet flat of his own, with no noise or anyone to nag him to eat or clean up or shower. But now John hadn’t been gone but a couple of hours and…he missed him.

God, how was he ever going to manage with John working doctor’s hours?

He couldn’t even bare to think about it.

He lay on the sofa, staring at the ceiling as he plucked his violin’s strings. His tux was hanging on the closet door, ready for the ceremony tomorrow. He already had planned out everything he would say at the ceremony, the music was all sorted, the alcohol and food was already at Mycroft’s waiting to be cracked open for the reception (being honest, Baker Street was too small for a wedding party). All they had to do was show up. Even his and John’s bags were packed and ready to go for their honeymoon.

Greg had offered to somehow arrange for him to have a stag night too but what would be the point? Aside from Victor Trevor, who was off in witness protection (in Canada, Sherlock had long-since deduced) he had no true uni mates. Aside from Mycroft he didn’t have any male family members to invite along. It would really just be a typical outing between he, Greg, and his brother…which frankly sounded too depressing to be called a stag night. Plus, he knew he would spend the whole night wishing John were there.

He let out a loud sigh of frustration that no one was around to hear; even Mrs Hudson was out with her sister.

He was about to finally grab his laptop and search for a case (though John had made him swear to not take a case that week) when the door opened downstairs. Sherlock sat up immediately at the first thump of Mycroft’s umbrella against the hardwoods. As his brother ascended the staircase he couldn’t help but to allow a rush of relief flood through him.

Yes, Mycroft was always a good source of entertainment.

Judging by the way his Mycroft’s shoulders shrank slightly as he entered his younger brother’s home Sherlock deduced that he was coming here from an evening at the office. He was inside now, with family- he could finally relax a bit- and he had no problem inviting himself to sit in John’s chair.

“So,” Mycroft announced, his eyes twitching oddly as he searched for his words. Sherlock imagined he had at one point had a plan about what would happen once he got there, but now he seemed to have regrets. “Did John get off alright?”
Sherlock shrugged.

“He’s with your husband,” he pointed out. He glanced at his watch. “I suppose they’re on their third round by now.”

His brother anxiously tapped his umbrella against the floor. Sherlock looked around, realising the flat was a little too calm and quiet.

“You aren’t…planning me a surprise sort of thing, are you?” He demanded.

The idea horrified him, and a similar look of terror flashed across Mycroft’s face.

“No. God no. But it is the night before your…”

“Ceremony of the signing of government papers that officially, legally, bind my life to another man?”

“You know it’s more than that,” Mycroft stated, rolling his eyes.

“What is this, then?” Sherlock asked, jumping up from the sofa to indulge in some frantic pacing. “You checking in on me, making sure that I’m what, not in a panic-driven relapse?”

His brother’s eyes suddenly grew very serious, and Sherlock’s heart dropped. Surely he didn’t really think?

“I’m fine Mycroft,” he promised. “I’m fine.”

But even as he said the words, doubt still nagged him. He kept jumping from everything really is going to be okay, this is the rest of my life to is this really what John wants- or needs? What if this is all some mistake?

As his brother stared him down his body stiffened; it was like Mycroft was seeing right through him.

“Do you know what John’s doing right at this moment?”

Sherlock wrinkled his nose.

“Getting himself so bloody pissed on cheap beer that he’ll be too sick to get up for the actual ceremony tomorrow?” He snorted.

“Well that,” Mycroft confessed, “but he’s also enjoying himself. He’s preparing for the next chapter in his life. He’s over the moon.”

Sherlock imagined his lover getting sloshed at some bar with a goofy grin permanently plastered on his face and his mates constantly slapping him on the back, congratulating him.

He smiled.

“Why is this so much harder for me than him?” He sighed.

A smirk appeared from the corners of his brother’s lips.

“John has prepared for this moment his whole life,” Mycroft pointed out. “He has always known that he would get married if he found the right person…even if that person happened be a man. You, however, there have been many nights of your life when you weren’t even sure if you would
live to see the next day. It was enough for you just to be able to have your own flat to live in, to have a flatmate who would stick around and put up with you. You never expected that you would have more than that so you don’t know how to accept that you’re allowed to have more than that. Trust me…I felt the same. Well, perhaps not exactly the same, but it took quite some time for me to convince myself that I deserve Greg.”

“And you do,” Sherlock murmured.

His brother had raised him, his brother had kept him alive, his brother was the reason he was here to marry John. He wanted nothing more for his brother to be happy…

That’s when he finally realised-

Everybody wanted this for him, didn’t they?

Not one of them was trying to talk him out of this.

“We’re all very happy for you, Sherlock,” his brother announced mysteriously, once again reading him perfectly. “What you need is to relax…and I can’t believe I’m actually doing this, but Greg and I both thought maybe what you need tonight is actually a case.”

His eyes lit up; Sherlock decided to hide both the fact that John had forbade him to work a case and that he had just thought about searching for one.

“This one is a bit of a favour to me,” Mycroft confessed. “Well, really a favour to an old friend. The assistant of a former history professor of mine was found dead in his dormitory. She was a graduate teaching assistant, only twenty-four years old.”

Mycroft stopped for a brief, uncomfortable, moment. Sherlock knew it wasn’t out of sentiment toward the victim, but he was remembering a time when his own baby brother was that young and facing death.

He drew in a deep breath, aching for Mycroft to continue the story.

“The victim died of a knife wound, however the scene was relatively clean when the police arrived. There was no evidence of forced entry to the dorm, no other students saw or heard anything out of the norm. But the police did find this—”

His brother loaded a photo up to his phone and showed it to Sherlock to reveal a pair of men’s wire-framed glasses.

“Men’s glasses,” he muttered.

Mycroft nodded.

“The victim hadn’t been known to have any kind of partner, in fact outside of her work she kept to herself. Her family has hardly heard from her all semester—”

Sherlock couldn’t help but to snort.

“What?” Mycroft demanded.

“The police hear ‘quiet, keeps to herself’ as a reason to think she hasn’t been involved in anything suspicious. How many professors do you think would have thought I was quiet and ordinary?”

His brother raised his eyebrows but his face hardened, deep in thought as he mentally sorted
through the case.

“How long ago did this happen?” Sherlock asked, wondering how much the local police had botched so far.

“The victim was just found this evening. A colleague went to look for her after she didn’t show up for her afternoon class.”

“And why did he feel the need to come to you?”

With an uncertain shrug, his brother replied:

“I’m the one with the brother who works closely with the Met and the job in the British government.”

Shaking his head, he refused to believe his brother was truly this clueless.

“But why is he this invested?” He shot. “Yes, his colleague died, but why would he not leave it to the police?”

Mycroft just blinked, and Sherlock kicked at the side of the sofa.

“It’s all so bloody obvious! Your professor friend was having an affair with his assistant. She became distant from her family because she was ashamed. He killed her, left his glasses behind-yes, his glasses, most likely he just wears contacts during the day. He reached out to you to make himself look concerned and innocent…he also probably thinks I’m just some average private eye who wouldn’t be clever enough to catch on.”

His brother looked positively perturbed- not only at the revelation but also probably because he was considering this wasn’t the first time his beloved professor had these kinds of inappropriate relationships.

“What about the evidence?” Mycroft demanded. “There was no DNA-“

“Found at the crime scene, no, but when they search his office they will find hers. Boring! Next?!”

“Good god,” Mycroft muttered, his eyes flickering in disgust.

Throwing himself on the sofa, Sherlock could already feel the brief high from the thought of having a case fade away.

“Was there even a teacher-student murder?” He asked. “Seems like that would have made the news, being a high-profile uni and all.”

He could just imagine his brother glaring and frowning at him.

“You made that story up, didn’t you?” Sherlock snapped. He grinned to himself when Mycroft didn’t answer. “That’s morbid, you know?”

“Oh do shut up!” Mycroft sighed.

The room fell silent, and Sherlock grew more anxious by the moment. What was going to distract him now?

*This time tomorrow you will be married,* his brain teased him. *You’ll be a boring, married man. Your life will completely change.*
“Shut up!” Sherlock snapped to no one.

This certainly got his brother’s attention.

“I didn’t say anything,” Mycroft pointed out casually. Instead of replying, Sherlock stared at the sofa cushions.

How could he admit to his brother that he, the great Sherlock Holmes— the man who for so long didn’t do relationships— was now going through pre-wedding jitters.

Scratch that.

He was quite frankly going through a pre-wedding panic attack.

As quietly as he could he tried to draw in a deep breath.

You’re pathetic, a voice in the back of his mind teased him. Sherlock Holmes isn’t capable of marriage. You’ll fail him.

His breaths seemed to come quicker and he became less capable of controlling them.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft called quietly.

Sherlock shivered. Suddenly he was hit with a shocking feeling of de-ja-vu. He knew physically he was safe, in his flat in Baker Street with Mycroft, but for some reason he felt like he was back in his old flat with Luke, riddled with anxiety as he waited for his mysterious lover to return home. Only he would fall asleep, and when he woke up…

“Sherlock.”

Mycroft’s voice was softer, kinder; his hand was on the small of Sherlock’s back.

He gasped for breath as he rolled onto his back. His face was ridden with sweat and pale, his hands shook slightly. His brother’s concerned face gazed down at him.

“Come with me,” his brother stated simply, holding out his hand.

Reluctantly, Sherlock figured what’s the worst that can happen and allowed his brother to help him stand. Without asking where they were going, he followed Mycroft downstairs and out the door…where Greg’s car waited for him.

“You nicked his car?” Sherlock sorted. Mycroft only smirked as he proudly withdrew the keys and swirled them around his finger.

“I thought you might appreciate the privacy.”

Sherlock frowned, confused for a moment. But then his eyes wandered down the street, where he could distinctively point out a few paparazzi hanging out at the corner.

Hoping to get one of us stumbling home drunk after a stag night…or hoping to do a nice piece on us arguing the night before the wedding.

He kept a straight face as he stepped into the passenger side of the car. As he gazed out the tinted windows he did find himself grateful to not have to rely on the safe-keeping of a cabbie and he definitely enjoyed not having to be stuck in the back of one of Mycroft’s service cars. He didn’t question his brother as he was driven on a familiar route; it only took a few turns down nearby
blocks to recognise he was headed to the cemetery. Swallowing nervously, he convinced himself it was silly to be nervous about visiting a grave. In fact, he hadn’t been in quite some time so Sherlock supposed he owed it to him to visit.

“Tomorrow starts a brand new chapter of your life,” Mycroft announced, uncharacteristically quietly. “I know it’s cliché, I know you’ve heard it a dozen times already…but honestly, Sherlock, when you wake up the morning after tomorrow everything will feel different. But at the same time you’ll still be you. You’ll still have your lovely flaws and your checkered past…and some of that will still be what John loves so much about you. No, you’re not perfect…he’s not perfect either.”

“Yes he is,” Sherlock interrupted, muttering under his breath without realising he spoke out loud. When he saw Mycroft’s eyebrows shot up and realised his brother had heard him, he let out an annoyed sigh. “He’s a medical doctor. He saves lives for a living. He was a soldier, he served his country and was shot in the line of duty. He was brave enough to come out after being known as a bit of a lifelong bachelor. He’s managed to mend his relationship with his sister and help her with her alcoholism. He saved me in more ways than I can count. He’s seen past my drug abuse, my homelessness, the countless situations I’ve gotten us in on cases. He’s absolutely perfect in every way and I won’t let anyone say otherwise.”

Having realised how much he was rambling on he immediately shut his mouth and stared out the tinted windows. Mycroft seemed to be stunned into silence- or perhaps he was trying to focus on the road more than processing all he was just told. There was this odd aching in his heart as he thought of his fiancé sitting in his chair, sipping tea and flipping through the day’s paper, wearing one of his ugly jumpers…

He couldn’t help but to smirk.

“Okay, there is one thing I might change about him,” he teased: “those hideous jumpers.”

He and his brother both let out a chuckle, but to his surprise Mycroft shot:

“Would you really change that though?”

Sherlock laughed even harder.

“No,” he admitted, “even his terrible jumpers are perfect.”

Ten minutes later they were parked inside the cemetery- which suddenly felt eerily familiar again even though he hadn’t been in quite awhile. He shivered as he stepped out into the cool night air and wrapped his scarf around his neck tighter. Neither brother said a word as they shuffled through the grounds; Sherlock immediately stopped as soon as he saw his name written in stone:


“Heero old friend,” he whispered.

Subconsciously he twisted the ring on his finger; somehow he felt eyes staring down on him, judging him. Closing his eyes, he breathed in deeply and thought back.

He could still remember what it felt like, being held in Luke’s arms as he woke up in the morning. Luke’s arms weren’t strong and secure like John’s; they were loose and far too skinny. They were filled with bruises and track marks. Yet they made him feel safe. No matter what shitty flat, abandoned building, cramped hostel they were in, he felt safe in those arms. Mycroft had warned
him all those years ago that he had gotten comfortable, had convinced himself that the relationship was good for him.

“It was a complicated and fucked up relationship,” he remembered telling John, all that time ago when he first took his fiance to this same grave.

He had convinced John that he understood the relationship was a mistake, that he had gotten past it and was ashamed of that part of his life. And he had gotten past it, and he was ashamed. But at the same time…he just couldn’t imagine John being very pleased that he was standing here, at his ex-lover’s grave, thinking of their relationship the night before their wedding.

The aching feeling in his stomach grew.

He couldn’t marry his fiancé while thinking of how he felt with another man.

“Don’t you think John still thinks about his past lovers?” Mycroft asked.

Sherlock frowned.

If he were being totally honest with himself he had never once thought of John thinking of his past girlfriends.

Of course, as far as he knew none of John’s previous lovers were dead.

“That’s…different,” Sherlock said. Drawing in a deep breath, Sherlock’s shoulders tensed up as he confessed: “I’m not really sure why I’m feeling like this. It just happens at random times.”

His brother shrugged sympathetically.

“Perhaps you still haven’t fully accepted what happened to you,” Mycroft offered, “and you still haven’t accepted that his death wasn’t your fault. These things, they haunt us from time to time…but you’ll find it much easier to manage if you can learn to forgive yourself.”

Sherlock closed his eyes; he felt more frustrated than ever.

He wished he had John.

He wished he could be happy for himself.

“Well,” Mycroft spoke up suddenly, seeming to be speaking to no one in particular. “I think you would be very proud of my baby brother. He’s turned his life around…he’s healthy, he’s happy, he’s found someone who cares for him. Yes…you would be very proud of him.”

This new, sentimental, Mycroft still took getting used to. Stealing a glance sideways toward his brother, he could see that he felt a bit out of place making such a soliloquy, but at the same time he was sincere.

“I would like to think that if the people we were with in the past truly loved us then they would be happy to know we’re happy,” Mycroft confessed. “And I would like to think that if the people we’re with now truly love us that they would understand that even though we’ve moved on for previous relationships that they come back to haunt us from time to time.”

Oh how he wished that would be true.

He wondered…had Luke ever pictured a world where Sherlock outlived him? Where Sherlock survived?
He found himself truly hoping that Mycroft was right.

A shiver went down his spine, and he drew in a deep breath of fresh night air. His eyes gazed down at that too familiar name- and yet somehow a name that felt like it lived in another universe a lifetime away.

_Luke Sheppard._

Drugs, running from dealers they owed to, living on the streets, freezing to death, starving, hurt…

How had that been his life?

_You’re safe with John…safe in a way you could never be with Luke. You’re safe because you know you will always be loved, always be happy, always be wanted and always be okay with John._

Suddenly he didn’t feel very comfortable at all being in the presence of that name, even though he knew there was no reason to fear a grave.

It was time to run, time to push all this to the very darkest corners of his mind palace.

“Mycroft?” He asked quietly.

“Yes?” His older brother echoed.

“I’d like to go now.”

Instead of going out for drinks they stopped by a café and ate a small meal in silence. His brother seemed to understand that he really just needed someone to be with him that night so that he didn’t drive himself crazy with his own thoughts. After they ate Mycroft drove him back to Baker Street, where he was surprised to see John’s coat he had worn that night already hanging up in the foyer. He bid his brother a goodnight, assuring him that he would be alright.

John wasn’t to be found in the living room or kitchen; a smirk crossed his face as he realised his lover must have come straight home and passed out. Sherlock thought to grab a bottle of water from the fridge, knowing his partner would be dehydrated and too out of it to move from the bed until morning.

Carefully and quietly he propped their bedroom door open and peered inside. A full-on smile crossed his face when he spotted his fiancé sprawled horizontally across the bed, clothes and shoes still on from his outing. His hair was disheveled; he was drooling onto the duvet. He fought the urge to get out his mobile and shoot a video and instead began to take off his lover’s clothes and shoes. He somehow managed to move him vertically so his head could rest on the pillows and tucked the duvet around him. Once he changed he lay down as well, but he didn’t feel tired.

He stayed up throughout the night, simply gazing at his fiancé, running his hand through those blonde strands, and wondering, for the thousandth time… _how did I ever get this lucky?_

The anxiety never left him, and though memories of his past still dared to creep to the surface he made himself instead think of his happiest times with John.

_Kissing him on the banks of the Thames…their first kiss…_

_John convincing him to watch Star Wars…and sleeping through it…_

_The many dinners they had cooked together, the many nights they shared, intimately in bed…_
Seeing John after waking in the hospital, with some amnesia, after the Rucastle case…the relief washing over his lover’s face and flowing through his own body as they laid eyes on each other.

Standing on the love-lock bridge in Paris…

New York…Rockefeller Center…

Before he knew it it was morning. The sunlight cast a gorgeous morning glove on his lover’s face as John’s eyes battered open in confusion. Then his face contorted into pain and regret as the previous night came back to him; a bemused smile crossed Sherlock’s face.

John simply looked down at his body, naked except for his pants.

“I don’t even remember how I got home,” he muttered, his voice raw from drinking and sleep. “What time is it?”

Sherlock brushed his through John’s hair, trying to flatten it out. They had plenty of time to shower, get dressed, and make their way to Mycroft’s. For now he just wanted to enjoy this, enjoy them.

The aching feeling in his stomach was now replaced with burning adrenaline. All it took was John’s eyes meeting his, seeing those blue orbs glimmering with excitement even amongst the pain of his hangover, for his sickening anxiety to turn to butterflies in his stomach.

“Time to get married,” Sherlock replied quietly.

A grin crossed John’s face; he could practically hear both of their hearts pounding away.

“You ready?” John breathed.

Letting out a shallow breath, Sherlock nodded. He leaned forward, placing a soft kiss to his partner’s lips before rolling over on top of him. John grinned as he settled in beneath him, wrapping his arms around Sherlock’s back.


Chapter End Notes

omg I'm just THE WORST! There's not enough apologies for that wait :-( I dunno how many of my readers are in school or are younger or are working adults but yeah...ADULTING SUCKS! I mean, it's awesome. But it's exhausting! And it keeps trying to get in the way of writing. Honestly I've had so much going on that I hit a bit of a writer's block with this chapter...I never want to post something until I know I'm happy with it, and I ended up changing what I initially wanted this chapter to be. I thought "Interlude" suited this chapter well...it turned into a lot of Sherlock introspection. We've had a lot of that already but this is a HUGE day for him!

With that said...wedding next! YAY! I really hope that chapter is not going to take as long to get up as this one did!

I'm sure you're wondering when this story is ever going to reach its end...believe it or not I almost left you guys hanging after they decided to get married, buttttt I was kinda
afraid you all would hunt me down and kill me LOL! So we'll definitely get through
the wedding and honeymoon. I hate planning endings (hence this story going on and
on and on lol) and I like to search for natural endings instead. So we'll just have to see!

Anyway! Thank you so much for your patience! I hope you're still enjoying the
story...and I do hope the next chapter (the wedding, ahhhhh!) lives up to its
expectations! Thank you, as always, for your kind words and kudos!
Finally Part 1

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

John Watson must have tied ties hundreds of times in his life.

But somehow, he couldn’t get this one right.

“Need help?”

His eyes lit up at the sound of his sister’s voice. When he sent Harry the invitation he didn’t think she’d even receive it…let alone look at it…let alone consider coming…let alone come. Everything was still left so uncertain between them after their father’s death. Things had been a bit better- yet there was still this unspoken tension, like they still weren’t sure how to act around each other.

He was surprised to find himself overwhelmed with relief.

He hadn’t thought it would matter this much to him if his sister was there or not today but…

“Oh my god I’m so happy you’re here!” John exclaimed, sighing in relief as he threw his arms around his sister.

She threw a lopsided smile over his shoulder as they exchanged a brief hug.

“Pre-ceremony jitters?” Harry teased as she stood behind him to help him with his tie.

“Just a bit,” he admitted, “and I don’t even know why. I’ve been nauseous all morning…though part of that’s the drinking from last night. Okay…it was mostly from that. But the nerves haven’t helped.”

It dawned on him that jokes about alcohol weren’t appropriate in front of his alcoholic sister, but luckily she let out a chuckle.

“Oh Johnny,” she sighed, patting his chest after she finished with the tie. “I so wished someone had told me fifteen years ago that one day you would be scared out of your mind before your wedding to another man.”

Rolling his eyes, John reminded himself that he really should have seen the jokes coming.

“I’m just teasing you,” she blurted out unnecessarily, “I’m very proud of you.”

He forced out a nervous grin, but on the inside his heart was pounding out of control. He nearly jumped out of his skin when there was a sudden crack toward the direction of the window. There was another crack and John drew back the curtains to find Sherlock standing below, fully dressed in his tux (and god he looked gorgeous in that tux) with rocks in his hand. John carefully pushed open the antique windows and Harry leaned out next to him- a big grin plastered across her face.

“Oh!” Harry called. “Isn’t it bad luck to see him right now?”

John frowned, glaring at her.

“So I’m the bride here?” He protested. “I was the one who proposed!”
“So brides can’t be the ones who proposed?”

Rolling his eyes, he turned back to his lover.

“Your brother will kill you for throwing rocks at the window.”

“Even Mycroft wouldn’t kill me on my wedding day!” Sherlock called up, a stupid smile on his face. “Get down here!”

What struck him was how calm Sherlock appeared. It didn’t take a genius to see his fiancé had been anxious in the days following up to the ceremony; of course he was too, but he tried to put on a brave face to not freak out his partner. But now Sherlock just seemed so…normal. Like they were just over here for a casual dinner.

“Looks like there’s a gentleman caller here for you,” she said; she winked and said in a sing-song voice: “I’ll be downstairs!”

Shaking his head, he threw another doubtful glance to Sherlock, who waved for him to come down. With a sigh, he grabbed his jacket, glanced over himself in the mirror, and decided he looked suitable enough.

There was a slight chill to the air and the sky was typical London-grey, but to John it felt perfect. He rounded the back of the house, breathing in the smells of the garden and landscaping. He could tell Mycroft had someone touch up the blooming flowers and bushes. Spring was alive and well at the Holmes mansion and it was all just so perfect.

And Sherlock.

God Sherlock.

John was, quite frankly, gob-smacked.

That bright smile, the twinkle in his eyes, the slight sway of his locks in the wind.

“You’re bloody gorgeous,” John announced.

If he were being honest, Sherlock seemed just as taken by seeing him as well.

“Yeah…” Sherlock replied, searching for the ability to speak. “Yeah…come here.”

His hands shook slightly as he let Sherlock take them; he was already a complete mess.

“Right,” Sherlock said, letting out a long breath. “I just wanted to say…I’m sorry for being a bit of a drama queen these past few days.”

John laughed.

If only Sherlock had any idea of the anxiety bouncing around his head that week. He found himself waking up in the middle of the night, just staring at Sherlock, wondering…Am I really good enough for this brilliant, gorgeous man?

In his head he had run back the past decade of his life, thinking of all the roads that led him to Sherlock. Becoming a doctor. Joining the army. Months of sleepless nights, running on adrenaline and desperation to stay alive. Getting shot. Going broke.

Nowhere was entering a civil partnership with a posh male ex-drug addict consulting detective in
his life plan.

Yet somehow, all roads leading to Sherlock just made sense.

“Shut up,” John said with a nervous laugh. “Shut up, you…believe me you aren’t the only one who has been freaked out. It’s like…it’s like my whole life has somehow been preparing me for this moment.”

Sherlock threw him an understanding smile.

They had both secretly doubted themselves for the same reasons, he realised.

And how ridiculous was that?

Because it was that randomness of life, the pain and loss they both experienced, the hard times and reaching rock bottom that brought them together- that made them such a perfect match.

“We really have seen each other at our worst and best,” John commented quietly.

His partner didn’t look so sure so John squeezed his hands tighter to comfort him.

“We’ve been through all that we have and found each other right when we needed someone the most,” John went on. He was speaking so softly he could hear the cool whisper of the trees shifting in the breeze over his voice. “I need you in my life, Sherlock- always. Don’t you dare second guess yourself or try to say you’re not good enough- or that this isn’t good enough because it is.”

At last a beautiful smile grew from the corners of his lover’s lips and Sherlock’s face brightened a bit just as rays of sunlight washed over the garden.

“Really?” Sherlock teased. “Because this is your last chance, Dr John Watson, to ditch me for some gorgeous blonde woman and have an expensive church wedding.”

Shaking his head, John let out another laugh.

“No way, you’re stuck with me.”

Their lips clashed together, his arms wrapped around his soon-to-be-husband, and John felt like he could stay in that moment forever and be perfectly happy.

Perfect perfect perfect he thought as Sherlock’s tongue scraped across his teeth and dipped into his mouth.

His body was just warming up when his mobile buzzed in his pocket and they both jumped. Not surprisingly, it was Greg telling them to hurry the hell up.

“Guess we shouldn’t be late to our own wedding,” Sherlock teased.

“Yeah,” John nodded as he brushed a finger down Sherlock’s sharp cheekbones. He could practically hear his partner shutter. “We do have the whole honeymoon.”

There was a twinkle in his eye and Sherlock visibly gulped, clearly thinking of all the possibilities of the next few days.

And god did John have ideas of what do with that man.

But now…now was time to be mature.
Now was time to get married.

They didn’t actual rehearse a proper ceremony- which made John all the more nervous. All the two had to do was let everyone know they were ready and then gather in the garden. Hand in hand he and Sherlock sat beneath the garden arch as their families filed outside. Dan was in the lead, all smiles as he practically ran toward his uncles.

“Careful!” His father called after him as he almost tripped.

“Is it time to get married yet?” Dan cried in response.

Sherlock laughed as he stood, bringing John with him, and wrapped his arm around his nephew. He smiled up to his older brother, who simply held a packet of papers and clipboard. Both Mycroft and Greg wore matching dark charcoal suits with maroon ties, like Sherlock. John’s sister wore a blue skirt and blouse combo to match his baby blue tie. Mrs Hudson stood out in her bright yellow dress- tears already in her eyes.

“Oh Mrs Hudson, do get yourself together!” Sherlock teased. Yet a bright smile was on his face as he pulled her into a hug.

“I’m just so proud!” Mrs Hudson choked out. Now she was outright sobbing happy tears into the consulting detective’s shoulder. “Oh Sherlock…I always knew you were capable of this.”

“Capable?” Sherlock echoed, face suddenly confused.

Mrs Hudson playfully hit his shoulder, like she thought he was playing. But John could see Sherlock was serious, and he knew why. He wasn’t sure how much Sherlock could truly comprehend how scared his family and friends used to be for him, how desperate they were for him to find a way- some way- to see the light and try to help move himself toward a better life. In the end, John had only known Sherlock a few years now, but already he could imagine the utter pain, the heartbreak, the fear that would consume him if Sherlock once again went down his old path of self-destruction.

He could see it in Mycroft’s face, in Greg’s that they understood.

“I always knew you were capable of more,” she explained, her hand over his heart as she beamed up at him through the tears.

If he didn’t know any better, he could have sworn he saw a single tear trying to escape Sherlock’s eye, and John found himself beaming too.

“Oh Mrs Hudson,” Sherlock sighed, kissing the top of her head. “Where would I be without you?”

“I daren’t imagine.”

It was quite like watching a mother and son at a wedding, and he knew Sherlock would never have done this without Mrs Hudson there to witness it. He could only imagine how grateful Sherlock’s mother would have been to know that her son would one day have such a wonderfully mother-figure to be there for him.

As soon as Sherlock let go of Mrs Hudson Greg practically attacked him with a huge bear hug; he let go just long enough to pull John in too.
“You’re going to make me bloody cry,” Greg muttered. “I’m so happy for you. You two deserve this, you really do.”

When they were finally let go their friend’s eyes were indeed a bit wet; the DCI casually swiped at his face to dry his eyes.

Laura was next, positively glowing in the sun with one hand rested on her belly. If Sherlock had never imagined a scenario where he would have any kind of wedding, he definitely wouldn’t have imagined one where he would have any family other than Mycroft there.

“I’m so excited for you,” she finally said after gazing at her brother for a few long moments. Her eyes twinkled, and John realised what she meant. Everyone had been telling them how happy they were for them, how proud they were, how they deserved this, deserved to be together for ever. But at the word excited the butterflies in John’s stomach turned from a feeling of nerves to anticipation.

They should be excited! They had been through so many feelings of nervousness, fear, doubt, and anxiety that John had almost forgotten to be excited.

He was about to spend his whole life with Sherlock Holmes, the mad, eccentric, clever, frustrating, brilliant, gorgeous man he loved. They were about to go on the trip of a lifetime to a country he had never been to. There would probably be many more holidays to come, many more adventures, many more journeys across rooftops and through alleyways. There would be more danger, more late nights with Sherlock pacing the flat, angrily plucking away at his violin as he dove into his mind palace trying to figure out a case.

He wasn’t just settling into the safe married life with a new, steady, daytime job and a writing career on the side.

There was so much life ahead of them, so much unknown…and that was exciting.

“Thank you,” Sherlock offered, a bit more quietly than he had been. John knew Sherlock had the same realisations he had.

Laura hugged John next, and of course Dan had to practically jump in each of their arms and give them both big kisses on the cheek.

“He’s been bragging to all of his friends about you two,” Laura told them. She beamed at John. “He keeps talking about his uncle ‘the writer and doctor’.”

Sherlock put on a fake frown to tease Dan:

“I thought I was the cool uncle!”

John just grinned at him and shot:

“And now you have even more competition!”

At this point John was practically shaking with nerves and excitement, and he knew there wasn’t much longer he could contain himself. He needed to do this.

“So…” he said, turning to his love. “Shall we?”

Sherlock nodded to his brother, who whipped out the civil partnership document.

“As agreed, Gregory and I will sign as witnesses-“ Mycroft announced; Gregory was signing as
John’s friend and Mycroft for his brother.

Just like that Mycroft scribbled his signature, as he had done hundreds of time in his life. He then handed the paper to Greg, who signed as well with his eyes swelled with tears he’d never admit he was holding back and a bright smile.

With that, he handed the paper to John, whose insides suddenly seized up.

This is it.

A whole new life is about to begin for me.

And it just feels so right.

“Right,” John began, clearing his throat. Suddenly everything he had prepared to say turned into random words floating around in his head. He couldn’t pick out the right ones, couldn’t hardly find the voice to speak at all. “I know we said we’d prepare things to say but…I think you know everything I have to say. Just…I love you. I’m so ready for this.”

Before he could make himself look even more ridiculous he quickly signed his name and handed the document to Sherlock, who was just nodding absent-mindedly in agreement. At least it looked like Sherlock too was equally as frozen.

“I think everyone knows how I feel about you,” Sherlock said, a smile peering from his lips as he let out a nervous laugh. “And I think everyone’s more than ready for us to finally do this.”

And so Sherlock signed his name on the last line.

And it was done.

John was vaguely aware that clapping began, but all he could think was Need. Sherlock. Now. Their lips crashed together, their hands grabbed madly at each other’s arms, and John felt no shame in completely letting himself go. There were tears, uncontrollable smiles, shaking…and Sherlock’s soft lips, gracing his, his strong arms holding him, his warmth comforting him.

Mine.

Chapter End Notes

Finally indeed! But this wasn't a chapter I wanted to rush. I can only hope I did it some sort of justice...at first I wanted the wedding to be very "big", a la series 3...but this felt like it fit them better! Simple, with family. I felt like the heart to heart was important so they could see they were both on the same page, and once they did they both just ready to get on with it! The fancy part will be the party ;) which is coming up next! I wanted a good mix of both perspectives so expect more from Sherlock's POV coming up! Including some backtracking.

I do hope you enjoyed part 1! There's much more of the "wedding" to come...I just knew I'd never be able to finish it all in time to put everything together anytime soon so I decided to split it up. As always, thank you SO much for all your kind words! You guys have been cheering on this story for so long- and cheering these two on for so long! And that means so much to me :)}
I'm so sorry for my neglect of my story lately. Words can't describe how my life has changed while writing this story. In the past few months I've been promoted to a pretty major "big girl job" with an evenings schedule and I feel like I have so much going on that I don't even think about writing. For real. It's not that I don't want to- a week just passes by and I'm like shit, I never updated. Again.

I still care about this story and I still intend to finish it. Honestly that's probably part of what's going on in the back of my mind- I know this will be ending pretty soon and part of me still doesn't want to end it! But this story deserves the proper ending I've been wanting to give it for so long!

Thank you so much for being patient and still checking up on this story when I update :) I feel terrible about the long waits, but the last thing I want to do is rush the ending of it and then regret it!
He sat across from a small church with Luke, smoking cigarettes Sherlock had nicked from someone’s back pocket and watching as a large family of wealthy (and clearly of northern decent) poured out in celebration of a wedding. The bride was in tears, overjoyed, and even the groom couldn’t control his happiness as his brothers clasped him on his shoulders.

“They’re probably off to some bloody cruise,” Luke snorted, “seven nights and hundreds of pounds to stare at the ocean and bake your skin by the pool.”

Sherlock forced himself to smirk but deep down, something didn’t feel right. It had been months now living on the streets- he kept track of time passing by newspaper stands. It was summer now and too hot out to be lounging on the hot pavement, smoking, but they had grown tired of loitering in libraries and tube stations. His clothes swallowed his body, his face looked unhealthy and hollow- even his eyes didn’t look his own anymore. He knew he’d have more energy once they scored their next hit but he was just so bloody bored.

At least the happy couple have a home to go home to, a future, something to look forward to every day...


No, he thought, I’m underweight, I smell like a bloody dumpster, my skin is writhing away and my ribs stick out. I constantly have a headache. I either never want to eat or I’m hungry enough to eat a feast but it doesn’t matter because I can’t get food. It’s too bloody hot. I need a hit. I need cocaine.

He shook himself out of it, forcing himself to put on a brave face. They were both miserable; dwelling in their misery helped neither of them.

“Fine,” he muttered, barely audible. The wedding party was filing into limos; he felt sick to his stomach. “Can we get out of here?”

“And go where?”

“I don’t care.”

He was answered with a long, silent pause. Then:

“Can you even imagine?” Luke shot. “Having all that money to blow on going to church and telling someone you love them. It’s just all a big party. It’s all to show off.”

Sherlock didn’t answer. He had to leave; he didn’t want to watch others being happy. He never felt happy. What was there to be happy about? Jumping to his feet, he shot:

“Come on, we’re leaving.”

It wasn’t a suggestion.

Instead of following him Luke reached up. His filthy fingers- his hand, tanned like the rest of his
skin from the sun, wrapped around Sherlock’s bony wrist.


His heart stopped. His eyes stared down, widening in panic. He had barely heard the confession over the traffic noise and celebrations from the wedding party. Maybe he had misheard.

But Luke stood up and repeated, softly:

“I love you, Sherlock. And I’m sorry that things suck right now. I mean they really suck. But I love you… I just… I want you to know that.”

Leaning forward, his lips graced Sherlock’s knuckles in a kiss. Sherlock shuddered. He was too stunned to say anything… he was too uncertain of what his response should be.

Did he love Luke? Sure he hated his life, felt miserable, was unwell… but he had never felt so close to someone. He had never felt such a big part of someone’s life before. Would admitting he loved Luke mean admitting that he was okay with tying himself down to this life on the streets? Could things ever get better for him?

Luckily Luke seemed to understand his shock; he just laughed.

“Come on,” Luke offered. “It’s after lunch hours, we’re bound to find some food being thrown out somewhere.”

And that was his life: hoping food got thrown out, hoping he’d be able to find somewhere to sleep where he wouldn’t get robbed, hoping they could find drugs, not questioning how Luke got the money or power to find them.

His whole life revolved around surviving, and he was just barely doing so.

I’m never happy, he thought to himself again.

Yet somehow, he couldn’t imagine a life beyond this. So he went with Luke, who through it all made him feel safe. Made him feel wanted. He through one last look back at the wedding party as they left the church and wondered if there was another universe out there somewhere where he could be that happy.

Where he could have a family.

While their ceremony was small, Sherlock and John had invited more friends over for the reception. Sherlock actually felt intimidated at the amount of John’s old uni and work mates that showed up. The consulting detective just had… his family.

And Molly and Mrs Hudson, of course.

“I suppose Victor would have come,” Sherlock mused as he and Mycroft sipped champagne and watched John and his match catch up over beers in the grand ballroom of the Holmes estate. “You know, if not for the witness protection. How is he liking Vancouver?”

Mycroft glared; he still resented Sherlock for figuring out what happened to Victor so easily.

“You’re married now, baby brother,” Mycroft announced in his usual teasing, big-brother, voice. “John’s friends will become your friends, rather you like it or not.”

Sherlock frowned.
“I’ve never known you to hang out with Greg’s mates,” he accused.

His brother rolled his eyes.

“I daren’t speak of it,” he replied coolly, “but I do go to the occasional pub… and then stage an escape call from Anthea phoning me back to work. Greggory is fully supportive though; it’s not like I’m very good company amongst a dozen football fans.”

Chuckling, Sherlock took another sip of wine. He was shamefully using having a drink in his hand as an excuse to hide and get out of conversations. He knew he should be out there, getting to know John’s friends and celebrating, but he still felt like the day was a bit more intimate than that. Of course he was grateful to have his family around, but frankly he was anxious to start their holiday and have John all to himself again.

There was a clinging of glass, which he found to be coming from Laura.

“I know we’re all eager to celebrate,” Laura announced, her face glowing brightly and her stomach sticking out beautifully in her lavender dress. She grinned mischievously toward Sherlock, whose stomach dropped when he realised what time it was. He had prepared for this, but somehow nerves were still eating at him. “But before we get to the party there is a very special dance that a certain Mr Holmes has been planning.”

His husband turned to him, a sort of half grin, half confused smirk on his face- but his eyes were twinkling. Swallowing nervously, Sherlock stepped forward, handing his drink off to Mycroft.

“I told you I would take care of the music,” Sherlock pointed out. He nodded to Jason, who was ready by the projector that had been set up in the room.

Jason turned on the projector, which was ready to roll with a video Sherlock had pre-filmed. Film Sherlock popped up on screen, beaming as he leaned toward the camera.

“Hello there, John Watson,” Sherlock said on film. “I promised music, and it should be of no real surprised that I have composed something special for us to share our first dance to. Now, it would be a bit awkward for us to dance along with me playing on screen so now we’ll cue the music and on this slide I’ll instead put in my place this horrendous photo of you passed out after your birthday last year.”

The video changed to a picture of last-year John passed out on the sofa, in his dressing gown with his leg thrown over the side of the sofa. Everyone chuckled, and even John led out an awkwardly loud laugh.

Sherlock nodded again toward Jason, who turned on the sound system. A familiar tune he had been working on since they had decided to go ahead with the ceremony filled the room. His body filled with a tingling warmth; he knew all eyes were on him as he stepped forward toward John, hand stretched.

“May I have this dance?” He managed to ask relatively calmly.

John stepped forward as well and accepted his hand.

“Of course,” his husband breathed.

The crowd let out collective squeals, and Sherlock couldn’t help but to let a smile poke out of the corners of his lips as he pulled John close. Within a few steps into their slow-dance (which frankly was more awkward swaying), his husband let his head fall against his chest, and Sherlock had no
problem holding him there. He noticed John’s eyes falling longingly on where his sister stood, and Sherlock knew he was desperately wishing his father could have been there.

He’d be so proud, Sherlock wanted to tell him, but he’d leave it for a later conversation.

When at last the song ended and everyone clapped the two broke into grins. The music picked up the pace but the two shied off the dance floor, opting instead for the glasses of champagne set up on a nearby table.

“I’m starving,” John admitted under his breath. “When are we serving the food?”

Sherlock shrugged as he sipped his champagne, momentarily forgetting it was alcohol and not water. He grimaced at the taste; he really was fonder of red wine.

“It’s our party,” he pointed out, “so whenever we please.”

As it turned out, wedding receptions were exhausting.

There was photo after photo, hours of smiling, too many glasses of champagne, and he had barely gotten to touch his steak dinner.

“My face hurts from smiling,” Sherlock muttered to Mycroft as he and his brother posed for at least the dozens photo Mrs Hudson had forced them to take together.

“You’re practically her son,” Mycroft shot, faking smiling himself. “Just smile.”

When at last Mrs Hudson was satisfied Sherlock let out a sigh of relief.

“It will all be over soon, baby brother,” Mycroft teased.

He took shelter at a table with Laura and Dan, who was colouring. Sherlock joined in, grateful for the escape from dealing with adults. His eyes quickly dashed around in search of his husband, who he found stuck chatting with some old uni mates. John had admitted to him earlier that it had become pretty obvious the group didn’t have much in common anymore—either they had kids or still were obsessed with football and drinking. Needless to say, John looked very out of place and glared at him for not rescuing him.

Sherlock’s eyes dashed back to Dan.

And out of the blue, the child asked:

“How did you know you were gay?”

The consulting detective’s mouth fell open, then closed, and he desperately looked to his sister for help. Laura looked horrified.

“Dan!” She scolded. “That’s not a polite question to ask people!”

Dan suddenly looked guilty. His eyes fell to the table and he looked like he wanted to melt to the floor. Sherlock felt bad for his nephew— it’s not like he knew that was a very personal question, and it was probably one he had wondered for a while.

“It’s okay,” Sherlock offered. He decided to continue colouring, hoping it would make Dan feel more comfortable. “People have different feelings about that, but for me I’ve just always
been...attracted to men. And in my past I’ve always felt like men understand me better.”

“But how do you know you love a boy and they’re not just friends?”

Sherlock grimaced; across from him, his sister’s face was bright red.

*This is really a conversation they should be having together,* he thought.

Then again, Laura probably wouldn’t feel any more comfortable talking about it than he did- and it wasn’t like she had personal experience understanding having a relationship with the same sex.

“Well it’s just like with girls,” Sherlock offered. “When you’re older, you will meet people who you care very deeply for, in a way you don’t with *just friends.* It’s hard describe…it’s like, you know you want to spend the rest of your life with them. You don’t want anything to happen to them. You feel...connected to them.”

He studied Dan’s face, but the child simply kept colouring. His shoulders shrugged a bit, but from his lack of reaction they might as well have been talking about telly.

“Sometimes it’s easy to figure out and sometimes it’s not,” Laura chimed in, daring to meet his eyes. It was obvious she felt bad and wanted to help him. “Sometimes you can feel that way about men and women and that’s okay. All that matters is you’ve found someone you love, and you treat them well.”

Suddenly Dan stopped colouring, like he had a major life realisation.

“Is that why Daddy left you?”

All of the colour drained from Laura’s face and Sherlock regretted ever getting into the conversation. From the looks of his sister’s face, he couldn’t tell if they had even ever had a proper conversation about Jason not being Dan’s “real” father.

“It’s a very difficult thing to understand, sweetie,” Laura whispered, running her hand through her son’s hair. “But I’m glad things worked out how they did because we have Jason, and he loves you very much. And soon you’re going to have a new baby sister.”

At last Dan grinned and jumped up from his seat.

“Can I feel the baby kick again?!” He exclaimed.

Sherlock and Laura both let out uneasy laughs, but they were just relieved Dan got distracted so easily. He took that as his cue to escape while he could, and he decided to rescue John and whisk him away so they could get some fresh air.

“Thank *god,*” John sighed once they stepped into the quiet garden. “You know I love football, but it’s like it’s literally their whole lives.”

“They should fit in quite nicely with Greg’s mates,” Sherlock said, grinning mischievously. “We should have them all over for a match sometime. I’m sure Mycroft would *love* that.”

They both laughed because they knew it would be worth it to suffer through a night like that for the sake of seeing Mycroft so miserable and out of place.

“What was going on with Dan?” John asked. “From the looks of it you’d think he asked you guys where babies come from.”
“Worse,” Sherlock grimaced. “He asked me how you know if you’re gay.”

“Oh wow.”

They left it at that for a few moments until John carefully asked:

“How did you answer?”

Sherlock shrugged but confessed the story anyway.

“Christ,” John sighed. “I can’t imagine having kids and having them randomly asking that kind of stuff. You handled it well though, love.”

He didn’t feel like he did, but he appreciated the boost of confidence.

“Hey,” John said, suddenly coming to a stop. His face glowed in the sunlight that was peering through the clouds. His hands reached out for Sherlock’s, and he allowed himself to be pulled into a gentle kiss. The world seemed to fall quiet around him, and he breathed in deeply and just took it all in.

*I’m married*, he thought to himself.

They broke apart, and John whispered:

“I love you.”

Sherlock kissed him again and let his lips trail to John’s chin and down his neck before he broke away to echo:

“I love you too.”

*I’m married now*, he thought again to himself, *and the world has never felt so right.*

Chapter End Notes

"finally" is right, right?! I feel SO terrible for the wait, seriously! But thank you all SO much for waiting, for your kind words and for your support! I honestly don't know how many more chapters I'll write- for now I think when an ending feels right, that will be the end. I'll definitely do the honeymoon and the new baby. Probably an epilogue. We'll see. But seriously, thank you SO much!! Also thanks for all the kind wishes about my job and real life! Things have been nuts this year! But that's growing up! Life has changed so much since I started this fic it's nuts...but that's also the fun of writing, to see yourself grow in your own work.

Anyway, I hope you all enjoyed it! I admit I did have a little bit of writer's block with this chapter, just because I didn't want the reception to be *too* pretentious. The wedding in the TV series was fun and all but I wanted to keep mine for them more low-key. This story has always been a pretty intimate story between Sherlock, John, and their small little family and that's how I wanted to keep the wedding. I do hope you enjoyed it! Hopefully life will slow down for a bit and it won't take me as long to write the next chapter...but until then, THANK YOU, from the bottom of my heart! :D
Also- I hope no one was offended by Sherlock's conversation with Dan. I always felt this was something that should pop up and in true 5 year old fashion, it would be at the most random moment!
Okay...I've FINALLY gotten a chance to sit down and do this. I wanted to give you guys an explanation of why I disappeared. Some of you have been following this story for so long, and it's really unfair of me to abandon it like I have right before finishing it.

But I promise my abandonment wasn't intentional.

And I promise I'm not making excuses or exaggerating but...

This summer has been really and truly awful.

At the beginning of August, my mother went in for surgery and ended up with massive complications that left her in the hospital through September. She basically almost died from infections :( She's back home now (finally!) and doing fairly well considering, and I've been helping my dad take care of her. My mom is so strong and I'll do anything for her so I don't mind at all. I just haven't had the time to live my "normal" life (I don't even know what that is anymore, tbh) or write or anything like that.

I'm not sure when things will slow down, to be honest. It's been chaos, it's been hard, and I'm not gonna lie it's been a downright traumatic emotional experience :/

I thought you guys deserved to know that because I know I've been really disappointed in the past when fanfic writers I love suddenly disappear and never finish their stories. I really, really do still intend- and want!- to finish this. I'm just honestly not sure when that will be.

Thank you all for all your support for this fic. I WILL finish this story for you guys :)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!