### The Curious Case of Lexi Stuart

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### The Curious Case of Lexi Stuart

by **FuryInYourHead**

**Summary**

"When their lips collided it felt like the sweet release of cocaine, snaking its way from the needle and into the vein. There was an explosive moment where neither could be anatomically separated. His tongue danced across the bottom of her lip as her tears pressed against his cheek, it felt like neither could live outside of this moment. Even when the door burst open and they were being dragged apart and handcuffed, for a small moment her emerald green eyes found his icy blue ones - Lexi knew that there was no turning back now."

When Lexi Stuart falls into the life of Holmes and Watson it suddenly becomes very clear how addictive Lexi and Holmes are for each other. A few years his junior but a genius to match and exceed his own, Lexi is the explosive potential that could very well solve the unbreakable case for Dr John Watson; the future of Sherlock Holmes. But for it to be even remotely successful both have dark demons to face and let's face it, all luck aside, the world sucks and there are those that would see it burn before Holmes achieved a sense of happiness."
Welcome to the Fold

She found herself staring at the computer looking for something to distract her mind with, but it wasn’t working. Everything had been in a monochromatic sequence - wake up, eat, sleep, eat, sleep. No more, no less was done in a day, except maybe assignments that had to be completed on time lest she risked the wrath of just about everyone she knew worrying about her mental health. Again. In her mind the monochromic sequences broke down into a thousands tiny pieces and those tiny pieces shattered in her mind. Always racing, always forming new sequences - always, always, always. The drugs only helped slightly, and she could still feel herself doubting their benefit, did they work? Were they something the doctors had told her to take in order to trick her into a false sense of cure? Was there even a cure to a racing mind that flipped and turned and mixed emotions together in an angry explosion of emotions? Her paranoia was the worst - the doubt of the medication was a irony in itself, was she just thinking that the medication was a ploy and that, in fact, it only highlighted the stress of requiring more medication? The thousands of questions rattled through her brain like a freight train slamming into a wall. Always, always, always.

She clicked her way through the accepted pastimes; Facebook, Google, the Guardian. But it couldn’t stop the whirring in her mind. She processed the information given to her from her computer screen that lit her small university apartment like an illumination (dark was what dark was, it didn’t stop the Always) but it didn’t stay in her mind very long - it wasn’t conducive to her mind nor did it actually make a difference to anyone else’s life. Her unbrushed curly hair was swept back by a lazy hand, used to having to push the same part of her fringe back into the cotton candy coloured frizz. Clicking through the links, processing information quicker still, her emerald green eyes came to a halt on a blog. And so too did the Always.

‘Holmes Detective Agency; For the Bizarre, Complex and Worthy.’

The pinkette’s mouth twitched in dismissal, a glimmer of a smirk that died as quick as it had appeared. Her fingers had gone to click away from the screen when a link to a blog post had caught her eye;

‘Murder Solved: The Case of the Wounded Soldier’

In her trawling of the internet she had briefly read something to do with the series of murders that had led to the assassination attempt of an army Colonel. It had been foiled by the police in the knick of time but she had noticed in the background a man of a similar age to herself, perhaps his mid-twenties but no more. He had dark tousled hair and his chiselled cheek bones had caught her eye for longer than the usual second she spent skimming the web. It was then that she’d noticed him in nearly all of the police photographs, but never at the forefront of any of the images. All news reports had indicated that it had been a ‘special detective’ that had done most of the leg work; but the met had a habit of hiding their shortcomings behind the success of the actual case regardless of who had done the actual solving. Even the Always had stopped momentarily as she looked at the man in the background of the image, his eyes avoided the camera but one couldn’t mistake the emerald green that had been caught by the flash itself. Was he this ‘special detective’? She assumed it was probable given the earlier blog posts with similar images and the man in question hidden like a jewel at the back of the furore.

Her thin, pale finger went to click the mousepad to move away from the site, the Always had been momentarily sated but it still demanded sustenance for its breakdown in her mind. A pop-up stopped her from leaving the tab. ‘Are you sure you’d like to leave this site?’ Her mouse automatically clicked onto the ‘yes’ button and with no expectations of being stopped again she began to bite at the corner
of her nail.

‘Are you really sure? You’ve been to this site 17 times in the past 48 hours. What are you looking for?’

This time the box didn’t have a reply function - her hand fell slowly from her mouth to rest on the keyboard as if ready to write a response. Her brow furrowed in concentration as she looked at the screen. What was she looking for? Did she even know herself? Had she really been to the same site 17 times? She could feel the Always building up like a monster waiting to burst out of the closet, it was desperate to erupt out of her mind, to send her into an absolute state where she felt so uncontrollable no one would be able to bring her down. She had been there twice before in her life, once she had ended up on a drug and drink binge before being picked up by the police. The second time had been substantially more... dire. The strait jacket and nurses and drugs only helped in enraging the Always. It was not something that would or could disappear regardless of the medication. Her best solution, though not a cure, was to keep the Always satisfied. More information, more knowledge, no emotions, no conflicting thoughts - pure, unequivocal facts derived from the rest of the world. This had been her solution long enough to abandon her hometown like some girl out of a chick flick and distance herself from all she had ever known, all the Always had ever known. It helped - there were no emotions in fact finding. But it only helped for so long.

She had just begun to resign herself to more paranoia, that the site had just been fucking with her, before an answer box popped up with a message beside it. ‘Well?’ The cursor blinked at her expectantly awaiting an answer. She bit her lip thoughtfully, debating whether the Always was dripping its way slowly into her own reality. It didn’t really matter, she thought to herself, the Always did what it wanted sometimes - even if she tried her best to keep herself, and it, distracted.

Flexing her fingers, she began to write;

‘A cure for the Always.’

The message box didn’t even blink, nor did it have a send button. The cursor sat there blinking at her. Internally she tutted, resigning herself to the fact it had been the Always seeping into her skewed reality. Perhaps she needed to sleep. To shut herself off entirely from everything. She rolled herself away from the computer on her desk chair, her small frame lifting easily off of the chair and collapsing into her bed not two foot away from her. The cushion swallowed her head with surprising comfort and her eyes closed to the darkness behind her eyelids. She tried her best not to think, but as always that was a futile attempt, her mind pulsed with questions and irritation. Why did that man in the images seem so striking? Why did she answer the silly spam bot? Surely she would be receiving hundreds of emails now for various cures, at least she supposed she’d have something to laugh at, the cure for male flaccidity, the cure for arthritis. She’d have something to read for a small while.

A ping from her computer sounded, and her eyes could barely focus on the flickering light on the screen before she sat up and looked across the room in a daze. The Always had stopped pounding at the recesses of her brain because it too had been shocked at what she saw on the screen.

‘112B Baker Street, London. 11am tomorrow. Welcome to the Always, Lexi.

~ SH ~
It was 11:03AM, according to her phone. Lexi stuffed the old Nokia back into the oversized grey hoodie that protected her from the harsh wind rattling down Baker Street. Her spare hand fidgeted as she debated whether or not she should go in or whether she should turn back around and find Fin, her resident weed dealer, and see how glazed she could get from the spare money in her jean pockets. No - that would not do. Even if she desperately wished she could climb into her bed and chain smoke her way into a hazy existence for the rest of the day, her mind outright refused to follow the high anymore. The last thing Lexi wanted, or needed, was to find another substance to preoccupy the Always, there was no love in finding yourself in the gutter covered in suspicious liquids after a three day crack binge. Shush, this is not the time to start thinking about that. Lexi was always internally filing her thoughts for later, it was the best way to keep the Always at bay. If she didn't It had a tendency to rip apart her mind like a burglar rooting through another's personal possessions. It probably had been because she was spending too long debating walking away that Lexi hadn't heard, nor seen, the slender man stop next to her. He spent the next few moments staring up at the black door too, as if the scene before him was the first time he'd laid eyes on it.

"The knocker has always been skewed, I do tell John to fix it but he tends to make those funny faces of his - he calls it his 'stern' face and tells me I should instead." Lexi's eyes snapped to the new distraction, her brain processing the new plethora of information in front of her. The man did not turn to face her curious eyes, he instead continued to admire, no analyse, the door. (These things were easy to pick apart when one looked properly; his facial tick symbolised his impatience, perhaps because he was desperate to get moving and his eyes too seemed to be blank - he had looked at the door far too many times to admire it.) Lexi turned her head back towards the door.

"You wouldn't let him change the door knocker even if he tried. You move it back whenever he changes it, either because it winds him up or because you prefer it that way."

A half turned up smirk was her response, and Lexi made a mental note that whenever this man wanted to argue but knew it would be better to hold his tongue he smirked. For the first time, his eyes moved away from the door and she twisted her head to the side too so that they were both looking at each other. The look they shared was fleeting and he looked away before she did, it was her own mouth which was raised into half a smirk now. The slender man in his slim fit suit moved forwards and opened the door making a pointed adjustment to the door knocker, he motioned towards her and beckoned into the dark hallway. Lexi could see a figure moving in the background a little farther down the hallway and she could hear the chinking sounds of china being rattled about. The rhythm and number of chinks gave away that there were three cups of tea (the brewing time until the spoon was sounded gave away the beverage) and her fleeting, paranoid thoughts danced around the fact that he had obviously known she would say yes to his invitation - was he spying on her? Basic computing malware didn't seem too far of a stretch for the man beckoning her into the unknown. Letting out a small exhalation of breath, Lexi supposed she didn't have anywhere else better to be.

In a short few minutes the two found themselves upstairs in a small, but modestly decorated, flat sat opposite to whom she supposed was John Watson. John was older than both she and Sherlock, but not by much - if she was to give a measured guess she would place him in his early to mid-30s and he definitely exuded the most seriousness of the two. Lexi wasn't a massive talker, but by her standards the silence between the three of them was bad. The pinkette sat with unguarded curiosity on her face looking around the room, processing information, the darker haired man who had led her into the apartment - whom she had definitively placed with the name Sherlock - was sat measuring the right amount of sugar granules to mix proportionately into his tea and John was staring at her, his
thumbnail grasped between his front teeth as he chewed it in thought. Lexi returned her attention to John, she met his stare with an equally analysing stare, her emerald green eyes consuming the facts she saw in front of her like a child consuming sweets. The clock on the fireplace made the most noise in the room whirring its way past the half of the hour mark - twenty minutes had passed and no one, aside for the sweet lady from downstairs had made generic chit chat, though she had quickly been ushered from the room with a sideways glance from Sherlock and a short but polite "Thank you, Mrs Hudson."

It was John who broke the silence first looking back towards Sherlock, who had finished measuring his sugar granules to the precise measurement, somewhere in the back of her mind the Always brought up thoughts of how he looked just like an addict measuring out his fix but she shushed it away as she watched the unfolding conversation.

"Why her?" John asked, his head motioning towards the woman still watching him carefully.

"Why, indeed, John," replied Sherlock who had finished sprinkling his sugar into his, presumably now lukewarm, tea. "Ms Stuart makes substantially less noise as you and she doesn't make the room more abhorrently stupid."

John's mouth fluttered open going to challenge the tousled-locked man sat next to him but seemed to, at the last moment, decided it was better for everyone involved if he didn't say anything. "Well done, John. It's only taken you four years." Sherlock continued while the older man threw daggers across the table in reprimand - it clearly had been four years, no one was that browbeaten in a few short months. Knowing when not to say anything Lexi's carefully guarded gaze travelled to the man she had met on the doorstep to the Baker Street Flat.

"Petty jibes aside, Ms Stuart has an astute level of perception that is marginally better than yours. If I am to find myself a replacement so you and Mary can..." he paused, deciding on a suitably safe word, "elope into the blissful years of marriage before you divorce and move back here, I need to find someone worthy of filling your position."

Lexi raised an eyebrow at Sherlock's seemingly already decided discussion. As of yet she had said precisely one sentence to the man and that had been roughly 27 minutes ago. John was still looking over her like some sort of prostitute, weighing up whether or not she was worth their time. Lexi supposed this was what it was like being a client of the enigmatic duo. Her response was muted, however, as it dawned over the Doctor that Sherlock had already called time on his to-be marriage, "Wait -- we aren't getting a divorce, we haven't even married yet. Mary and I aren't going to get divorced, Sherlock, that's not how we work... we aren't getting divorced."

"Spoken like a man getting a divorce, wouldn't you say Ms Stuart?" Sherlock had eventually diverted the attention back to the real reason the three of them had gathered, herself. A topic Lexi wasn't all too keen on dwelling on for too long. Suddenly the pinkette felt rigid, like she needed to move in case she was turning to stone and her eyes met Sherlocks gaze for a steady moment before she realised he was trying his best to work her out before she opened her mouth. Lexi steadied her gaze as Sherlock looked her over once, frowned slightly and then turned his eyes back to John who had still been trying to work out how to respond with dignity.

"I'd say John wouldn't be the one making the move for the divorce, he'd be given the papers," eventually she had spoken and she was surprised at how clear the lilt in her voice sounded (this was good, she didn't want to seem strung out and stressed before she had even opened her mouth), "You can tell by his reaction it would be Mary, was it, who would hand out the divorce."

Sherlock smiled in her direction and John sat back in his chair, taking a long drink of his tea, "Jesus Christ I thought it was just the Holmes brothers." he muttered, placing the cup back onto the saucer
and rubbing his face like a man who had been given grievous news. Lexi inclined her head and frowned, debating whether to take offence or to take it as a compliment. Her eyes drifted back towards Sherlock and she decided almost instantly she should be insulted.

"You haven't got to worry, Dr Watson, I have no intent of sticking about," she responded, pushing her chair back as she stood up, "do thank Mrs Hudson for the tea however, and good luck with the marriage."

Lexi turned on her heel and tried to beeline towards the door, oh how Fin would be called upon when she got home - there were few things that unnerved her in the world but herself, the last thing she needed was to be surrounded by not just her own inner demons but potentially two other people who were like herself, that was just a recipe for madness. Before she could pull at the door handle though, a voice called out to her.

"I thought you came here to find out about the Always?" asked Sherlock, who had not yet moved from his chair. John had stood up on the spot ready to call out to her but had been cut off by the shrewd man sitting analysing the contents of his tea. It was in this moment Lexi started to look at the way the grains of wood in the door aligned themselves, almost like a natural intrinsic pattern.

"And you started discussing replacements for Dr Watson." responded Lexi, careful about her choice of words. Sherlock was an analyst of the individual, the environment and apparently, it seemed, just about everything else, the last thing she needed was her life story laid bare on the table. "I am not here to replace Dr Watson, I don't need his job," she paused and looked strikingly at Sherlock who was watching her with intrigued eyes, "and I am not your client."

Before either man had a chance to say anything, Lexi descended the stairs and was out the door. Suffice it to say Lexi had been well and truly ruffled, she had come to Baker Street with a certain degree of uncertainty but that half an hour was not what she had intended. Outside the black door Lexi turned and frowned her thoughts a jumble of theorems and paranoia, she raised her hand and turned the door knocker precisely 90 degrees so that it sat in the opposite direction than to the one she and Sherlock had pondered less than an hour before. It was a small, childish thing to do but for her it was a small victory and, boy, did it feel good.

"Sorry, Dr Watson -- he only finds it amusing when you straighten it, I can only imagine how perturbed that bloody detective will feel looking at that."

Feeling victorious Lexi made her way down Baker Street fishing a cigarette out of her coat, she lit the cigarette and took a deep drag, closing her eyes as she inhaled. The smoke danced down her throat like fingers reaching towards her stomach quenching the emptiness of a morning with no food. It would do for now until she managed to get herself home and hunt down Fin to get her next batch of calm. When she opened her eyes, a black cab crawled the kerb just next to her. How truly distracted she could get when her mind was focussed on one thing. The window wound down and out popped a curly brown mop followed by a toothy grin and vivid eyes. There was something about Sherlock's eyes that immersed Lexi but she couldn't, for all of her intelligence, figure out what.

"Ms Stuart, do jump in!" Sherlock's excitement was woven seamlessly into his near-shout, it had been so loud that the people manoeuvring around her had stopped to look. "We've had a most fascinating phone call," he continued as the cab came to a halt in front of her. For a moment Lexi looked about debating whether to get in the car or turn and walk away as fast as she could, then again, those eyes did speak of an inexplicable danger that seemed too fascinating, too intriguing... too satisfying.

(But then the Always was there and it was trying its best to convince her that she was the client, she was Sherlock Holmes' next big case, another notch on his belt of investigations. She should just go
"Vampires, Ms Stuart! Someone’s been killed by a vampire! Seven witnesses who all swear by their own eyes someone drinking the victims blood and then *poof, bam, dead!*" Sherlock’s voice cut through the Always like a surgeon cutting away the cancer, her green eyes focussed on the detective as his black cab door opened. Lexi could see John sitting just inside the cab door, looking suitably horrified with the detective as he struggled in his excitement to fit back through the window. Now then, vampires? In 2016? That was truly an intriguing murder, even for a girl in her 5th year of medical school. Lexi did not believe in ghosts and ghouls but the very prospect of a murderer who was a vampire? That was too much to walk away from.

She took one more drag of the cigarette while Sherlock removed himself from the cab windows grasp and then let it die on the pavement. The woman climbed into the cab with substantially more grace than the detective, who was still righting his scarf, as the cab began to scuttle its way into central London. Lexi smirked at Sherlock as he righted himself, John flicking on his phone. She stuck a hand out to Sherlock and then moved on to John once the former had shaken her hand.

"If we're going to see a dead body, you may as well call me Lexi. Ms Stuart is my mother."
The Crucified Man

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A crucifix was laid gently on top of the bloody corpse, a man, Lexi's noted it as soon as they entered the crime scene. It wasn't as difficult to access the scene as Lexi thought, Sherlock had glided onto the scene like he owned the palatial manor and the police had only tutted and turned away. A silver haired man in a trench coat stalked over to the trio he looked impassively at John and Sherlock but paused when he saw Lexi, one eyebrow arching up in curiosity.

"Sherlock what have we said about bringing civilians into active crime scenes?" chastised the man, sticking his lip out in disapproval. Seemingly Sherlock did not care about the officer in front of him, he was fixated on the dead body in the centre of the room a glib smile on his lips. "Sherlock!" repeated the man, raising his voice slightly in an attempt to break the detectives concentration. In response Sherlock produced a small, pocket sized magnifying glass from his pocket and dipped himself underneath the police tape. Just when Lexi thought the curly haired man had forgotten about her, his excited tones called out to them.

"Relax, Gary. Lexi is the new John."

"I'm not the new John." Lexi countered almost immediately.

"She's not the new me." John added at the same time, clearly he had accepted the need for someone to replace him (a babysitter?) but his affirmation that he wasn't leaving seemed to be sincere, at least to Lexi it did.

"OK, she's Johns mini-me, a new associate, Gary - now please let us get on. There seems to be a vampire running around London and you're more concerned with an accomplished medical student." Sherlock was now leaning over the body, uncomfortably close to the dead man's lips but he seemed adamant that Lexi was to join him. John motioned to the tape and she looked, almost sheepishly, at Gary.

"Fine... But it's Greg. Not Gary," said Greg, apparently giving up on the situation at hand. He lifted the tape so Lexi could duck under, her eyes drifting around the room. For a moment she stood perfectly still and looked around the room, before slowly turning and looking in a full circle.

"Greg. Lestrade. Whatever, it doesn't really matter does it? The man on the floor won't be fussed whether you're Greg or Gary." Sherlock's words were almost incomprehensible because he was talking so fast. He pulled on the corpses lips a little to part them, looking at his gums. "What have you got, Lestrade?"

Lexi wasn't focussed on the conversation but she heard the briefing the senior policeman was giving to the detective.

"Unknown man, dead for approximately 12 hours at the scene of the murder, no known connection to the owner of the manor."

"No," muttered Lexi, whose attention had turned towards the corpse. All eyes in the room went towards her but Lexi pressed on, she pulled the magnifying glass out of Sherlock's hand who only raised an eyebrow, keeping quiet. "He wasn't killed here." She finished, looking at the puncture marks on his neck, leaning over the body just like the detective had done moments before. Her
fingers lightly traced over the wounds, both roughly 5mm in circumference, and she sat pushed herself back so that she was squatted next to the body.

Lestrade had his arms crossed now, looking at her rather skeptically. "And why would you say that?"

Lexi could see the dismissal on Lestrade's face, she met his skepticism with a fierce look. "There are no signs of a struggle in this room, and I imagine if the NSY have done their jobs they'll discover that there is no where in this manor that has the signs of a struggle that resulted in a man having two puncture wounds on the jugular. There is no blood here, nor any around the body. There is no sign of forced entry and the puncture wounds on his neck are far too clean for it to have been someone biting into the man's neck," she paused, pulling up the corpse's hand into her own, looking at his nails before placing them back down, "your victim wasn't killed here but he knows the killer. It's very likely the killer has a relation to the manor."

No one spoke and Lexi realised that that statement had probably been the longest she'd spoken to anyone since getting out of bed that morning. The pink haired woman glanced around the room. John had moved to squat next to her, seemingly going over her deductions, Sherlock was smiling at her with unmasked happiness and Lestrade stood with his mouth slightly agape. The NSY detective had moved to stand next to Sherlock while she had been speaking, Lexi wondered if it was because he was checking whether or not she had fed him the lines to wind him up, and as he stood with his mouth agape Sherlock's gloved hand raised slightly and pushed Lestrade's mouth shut. Lestrade looked at John and John, who must have sensed his stare, looked up and nodded apologetically.

"I thought there were only two of them," remarked Lestrade, eventually breaking the silence. John to his credit remained substantially more composed than he had been in the flat, obviously the veteran had come to accept that the world wasn't happy with just one sociopath genius.

"Yep. That's what I thought too about an hour and a half ago," responded John, "and unfortunately she's as accurate as he is," he pointed towards Sherlock who still had a glib smile on his face, his eyes boring a hole into Lexi's face, "this man was not killed here. The wounds are consistent with something akin to a meat skewer."

Lexi cleared her throat a little, "It's, uh, not a meat skewer. The wound isn't nearly as deep or as precise enough for it to be a blade. If you look in the puncture marks, you'll see that there's wood in it, I propose that it was probably a sharpened chopstick likely bamboo given the wood variation. Some of it broke off as the killer removed the object, but the object we're looking for isn't a proper chopstick. The killer has altered it slightly, given the ease of penetration to the jugular vein the stick has probably been sharpened and shortened, likely attached to a device so there are two shorter sticks together - it's the only way you could get two identical marks with identical ligature marks. If they had done it separately, the wound wouldn't be nearly half as neat as it is."

Still no one said anything. Lexi stood back a bit from the body hoping that someone would step in her place and take another look. After all she was just a medical student, a right medical student, the right part didn't matter where seniority was involved. The could be green and she would still have had to wait for someone with an extra bit of paper to confirm what she was saying. Sherlock looked practically ready to burst, his feet only just remaining planted firmly on the floor as he wiggled with happiness.

"Isn't she perfect? I mean perhaps not as astute as I would have been but still, she's far better than Scotland Yard and, dare I say it, John," sang the detective, his voice exploding different tones of excitement. His eyes had changed in his viewing of Lexi and this time it was something she definitely couldn't place her finger on. "You might want to speak with the gardener of the manor, the
murder weapon is made of bamboo and it has been altered but they didn't come from the kitchen - they came from the greenhouse. Two bamboo pieces of fencing - it was there on the way in, lining the gardens - that have been shaved back and fashioned into what, and this is the fun part, I can only assume is meant to be two mini stakes."

Lexi couldn't help but feel somewhat aggrieved that she had been at least partially out-deduced, she bit on her lip to stop her from saying anything too petulant. She had to admit, the prospect of someone dual-staking this man to death was absolutely fascinating, she needed more. More information, more clues, more puzzles. Lexi was hungry for it. She paused momentarily, suddenly realising why she'd been so attracted to Sherlock's eyes. They were hungry, primal almost - needing the most basic of instincts to sate them, the need to survive. At that moment Lexi understood so much more about the man, the Always (as she called it) wasn't just isolated to her own little brain, it was present in Sherlock Holmes' mind and he seemed to have it all completely under control. The agitation arose again, how dare he have his life so well controlled in comparison to her. He was only three years older than her, at a push, and he seemed to have all his affairs in order. There was no notion of the Always erupting into his life the way it did for her, he didn't seem to panic within himself so that he crumbled on the outside.

Perhaps she should have found Fin instead of getting into the cab with John Watson and Sherlock Holmes. And yet... if she hadn't gotten into the cab, the Always would not have been as quiet as it was, she wouldn't be on the chase for an answer so intriguing that she, too, felt a little excitement at the prospect of apprehending the killer. It was for that reason Lexi didn't turn and leave the building, why she didn't call Fin and beg him for something a little stronger than marijuana.

"Detective Lestrade, have you spoken to any of the staff?" Lexi asked quietly, half preoccupied with the mini rebellion waging war in her head, "the crucifix is staged, the murder weapon was also carefully selected in order to match the whole idea of a 'vampire'. Whoever brought the body in here was interrupted doing so, that's why you have so many witnesses saying they saw someone leaning over the body."

Lexi ducked back under the tape as Lestrade turned to his work force ordering them to sweep the area for any waylaid workers. She left the way they had come in and stopped outside in the crisp air, even though they were on the outskirts of London it seemed a different place to her - far too clean and tidy for the periphery of London. Her hand scraped the inside of her hoody pocket, grabbing her Nokia and the last of her cigarettes. She lit the cigarette first and then proceeded to thumb a text into her mobile. It was an old thing but it was damn near immortal, all things considered.

'Fin I hope you have something stronger in stock this week. I'll be past before the end of the day. You can sort fifty quids worth.  
-Lexi'

"Interesting, don't you think?" said a voice uncomfortably close to her ear, she recognised the velvet tones almost immediately but scolded herself for yet again becoming so singular minded that she didn't hear the approaching footsteps on the gravel floor. "The inner workings of the mind are simply astounding. What drove someone to put a crucifix on the victims' body?" mused Sherlock, apparently more interested in her text message than the conversation he was creating. Lexi felt suddenly agitated again, his eyes pried far too much and she felt, again, like a client. The pinkette frowned, her phone disappearing back into her pocket, while she took a deep drag on her cigarette to steady her anger. To this Sherlock's eyes flashed with another look completely alien to Lexi, but she knew it had something to do with her obvious rise in agitation at the prospect of being read like a book.
"You're the detective, detective," said Lexi, for the first time making direct eye contact with the man and throwing out an undisguised jab at his science of deduction. "I hear people everywhere are distraught you don't know the solution to the crime within thirty seconds." Immediately the woman felt bad for lashing out at Sherlock, he had only voiced his musings to her and she had metaphorically beaten him with a giant stick called paranoia. Such was the way with Lexi Stuart. She couldn't very well apologise, so she took another deep drag on the cigarette this time looking down at her shoes and the floor. The Always was winning the small war in her mind and she was in no mood to have to explain herself to Sherlock.

"Listen, Lexi. I apologise if this isn't what you expected. I profess that I was hoping you'd be interested in pursuing the Game with me, I find myself without a partner now that John is to marry Mary," another drag on the cigarette, "it helps to have someone to bounce theorems off and you have a remarkable knack for being able to compose your thoughts without ... stupefying the room."

"That's what the job papers are for, Mr Holmes," countered Lexi, feeling the buzz of her phone in her pocket her thumb stroked the phone as her mind half crept to the response Fin would have left her but she tried her best to focus on the matter at hand. "I admit that it does seem fun, but I didn't come today to get more responsibility than what I already have."

"I understand that," responded Sherlock, rather gently given how excited he had been not moments before. When Lexi watched him she noticed his eyes drifting back towards her cigarette every now and again his eyes giving away more than his steady voice did. "I would only ask that you come to the flat every now and again, perhaps to a few crime scenes but only the ones that are astounding."

Lexi nodded slowly as she thought about what Sherlock was saying to her. He seemed anxious to ensure that she was only around when she wanted to be and she was interested, for sure. "I have to admit. The crucifix is an interesting little addition to the victims' body. But I don't thi--" she was cut off by a shape flitting past her and she frowned looking in the direction of the runner. A few moments later another shape flitted past, John she presupposed given the clothing it was wearing, in the same direction. Shouts were heard from in the manor and then two uniformed police officers were off after John and the mystery person. Lexi looked once at Sherlock before the both of them looked back towards the scene unfolding before them.

"Should we follow them?" asked Lexi, her eyes following the stream of people running from the building.

Sherlock took the cigarette from Lexi's hand and placed it between his lips, the way he held it in his mouth made his cheek bones look even sharper and the outline of his jaw was even more prominent. Lexi felt suddenly awkward looking at the detective as he inhaled her last cigarette, she felt she was looking into the more intimate side of Sherlock, since it seemed clear he never let his friendly side out to just anyone. More importantly, why was she that someone? Her questions remained unanswered as Sherlock let out a puff of smoke.

"No. I think there's plenty people chasing after whoever it is. The likelihood is they've caught the killer, John's a good runner - he'll be able to do his thing."

Perhaps that was why Sherlock worked with John. Besides from the obvious affection the two shared for each other (she supposed being shot at together did that to people) John seemed more of the physical man than Sherlock, the brawn behind the brains - so to speak. Regardless, there was no need for her to go galavanting off into the countryside after whoever it was.

"I didn't think you smoked, Sherlock," Lexi commented, taking in a man who had far more skill than he let on with a cigarette.
"If you ask anyone else, I don't. But sometimes it helps jog the brain a little."

A small conglomerate of people had come to a stop soon the field across from the manor. It had been the direction in which John had run and she could see the outline of a figure similar to John's squatted over another shape. The other shape wasn't moving. Lexi gently hit Sherlock on the arm and motioned towards the scene, for a man as astute in observations as he was he seemed awfully distracted by her to not notice the scene before them. In the back of her mind something clicked that he seemed practically fascinated with her, enough to lose his thoughts.

They both stalked towards the small group of people, walking at substantial ease in comparison to their counterpart who had taken off across the field like a bat out of hell. When they arrived at the scene they found a man wearing a flat hat, brown corduroy trousers and a green body warmer strewn across the floor with blood trickling out of a bullet shaped hole in his head. No one had heard a bang, but the runner had been shot dead by someone. John was leaning over the body, taking a pulse and double checking the cause of death. Lestrade was shouting to his officers who were beginning to spread out to search and secure the area. Lexi doubted very much that they would find the culprit, whoever it had been had been close enough to watch the investigation unfold and watch the man in the body warmer run away. If it hadn't been an officer who had shot him down (which was improbable giving the poor training the NSY received) then it most definitely was an accomplice, or at the very least someone who didn't want the man in the jacket talking. In the few moments she had thought of this, she saw a similar recognition cross Sherlock's face and then she watched as, a few minutes later, John began to understand that something else was afoot.

"Tea anyone?" asked Sherlock, spinning on his feet and pulling out his phone, "there's very little to be done here, the shooter is obviously miles away by now. Most likely in a vehicle. Best thing to do is go back to Baker Street and piece together the last few moments of this man's life before John unceremoniously rugby tackled him to the ground."

That was something Lexi had missed, she failed to pay attention to the scuff marks on John's arms and legs from where he had taken down the runner, presumably to stop him from getting any further away. It was either unfortunate circumstance on John's behalf or perfect timing by the shooter that the man had been shot in the head just as John managed to tackle him to the ground. Another wave of irritation.

Lexi felt her phone go off again, buzzing in her pocket. She had forgotten about it momentarily at the scene unfolding before them but now that they had gleamed as much information as possible from the crime scene her mind began to whizz again. Lexi stepped a little way back from the conglomerate of people, pulling out her phone and checking the texts.

'Gower Street. George Farham Cafe. 4pm.

- Fin'

Lexi checked the time (14:33PM). They were at Kenwood House, on the periphery of London, and the cafe Fin wanted to meet at was just down the street from Sherlock and John's home. It would, if her memory served her right, be roughly half an hour to get where she needed to be. Momentarily her mind had been taken by the prospect of her high, she licked her lips slightly at the prospect of drifting off for once into oblivion. It dawned on her that she could feel herself being watched, her emerald green eyes looked up from her phone and she noticed Sherlock staring at her again, looking very much like a predator searching for his next clue.

"I have some things to do, Sherlock," Lexi felt suddenly very guilty, her words leaving her mouth without much restraint as to how they were communicated, "in London, I mean. I, uh, I can join you tomorrow. If you want to bounce ideas off of me, I mean." Her instincts had become guttural almost,
thinking about her meeting Fin. Before anyone had the chance to say anything Lexi turned to Lestrade and smiled sweetly at him, playing on his instincts as a policeman.

"If it's no trouble to you, Detective Lestrade, would you ask someone to drop me off in London? I see Mr Watson and Mr Holmes are going to be some time and I find myself, embarrassingly, without the means to get home," the pink haired woman smiled almost embarrassingly at the policeman who had already turned to ask one of his officers to take her home. Of course Lexi had money, she had enough to get back in the taxi in her back pocket. But what good was spending money on a car when there were a plethora around them?

As Lexi began to walk towards the man who Lestrade had motioned to before turning his attention back to the new corpse, she could feel Sherlock's eyes still boring into her like he was burning his way through her stern exterior and into the very core of her being. She felt naked before him and his searching eyes. He looked as if he was about to say something, but Lexi got into the back of the police car before he could say anything. Sherlock was too good at reading people for her own liking, so if she was to spend time with him she wanted to do it when she was harder to read. As the car pulled away, Lexi kept her eyes on her hands as if she was terrified to look out the window at the two men who were watching her leave.

An hour and a half later Lexi was sat in the George Farham Cafe, surrounded by union students from the London University Hospital. It had dawned on her that she had had a lecture today on the neurological mapping of the brain. It was light reading for later, something she could do on her own in about five minutes. The smells of coffee danced across the room, mixing with the tempting smells of sugar and chocolate. Cake. God she could do with a slice of cake.

Lexi picked her phone up off the table - not that she thought anyone would steal it, (it was a Nokia shit brick after all) but for fear of what they might see - and made a move towards the cake stand. Her eyes hungrily gazed over all the cakes, each one looking more tempting than the last. Chocolate marble cake, lemon drizzle cake, strawberry sponge cake. It clearly hadn't been kick out time from the hospital yet for the med students. The stand was usually decimated with one lonely little slice that looked like it had been made out of the left overs of everything else. Lexi settled on a white chocolate tower cake slice, her favourite was the lemon drizzle but she knew that she would later be tasting whatever she had eaten and the last thing she needed was to remind herself of her comedown every time she ate lemon drizzle cake. With a second order of a vanilla latte (the only acceptable flavour of latte, in Lexi's opinion) the pinkette went to return to her seat, to find a heavy set man with a tight fit white shirt wrapped around bulging muscles sitting opposite her grey hoodie. The man didn't seem phased about the colder weather because he was wearing a pair of loose shorts that reminded Lexi of a pair of swimming trunks, physiotherapists and their bodily obsessions.

"Hello, Fin." Lexi said curtly as she sat herself down with her cake and coffee.

"Lex, long time no speak," his eyes undressing her as she leaned forward to put the coffee on the table, "I thought you were off the stuff?"

"Do you have it?" she asked, focusing on her latte and adding the right amount of sweetener to it (three to be precise; not too sweet but sweet enough to take off the bitterness of the coffee the cafe used). It had been obvious to the blonde haired man in front of her that she had skirted the question entirely. That was always Lexi though, straight to business. At least she took her drugs seriously.

Fin produced a small box from his pocket. It was gift wrapped like a little present, had she been anyone else he could very well have been offering a pair of earrings to her. The bow on the top was clearly a jibe at Lexi for her long term absence to her drug dealer. She took the small box and placed it in her hoody pocket before producing the money and leaving it on the table. Their confidence at
holding a drug exchange meant that no one gave them any notice; the shop continued to hustle around them and the music continued like always. Fin took the money from the table and placed it straight in his pocket, he knew her well enough to know that there was enough in there to keep him happy. His eyes looked her over again as she fidgeted within his presence.

"You know Lex, you could always come back to mine. Have some blow. Free, of course, like old times." Fin said suggestively, absolutely no bother in his voice about openly propositioning the woman.

Lexi scowled and looked down at the cake, what had seemed so appealing before no longer did and it didn't help the case when Fin's calloused fingers appeared and began to take pieces off the cake for himself. Given he was the only one in central London who did the really good stuff, and she meant the really good stuff, so she had to put up with his pathetic jibes. He had her totally at his whim. But even Fin knew where to draw the line with Lexi.

"No thank you, Fin, but thanks for the offer. Next time I want to go cold turkey, I'll remember that. You'll have me running away fast enough." she said, abruptly standing up and throwing her hoodie over her head. There had been a time, when she had been completely coked out of her head at a squat that she and Fin had been on a three day trip together. For three days they did blow, fucked each others brains out (when you're high it doesn't matter who else is in the room) and passed out when the high got too much. Those were the days Fin wanted, good money for him and free sex.

But Lexi was not at that low just yet. She still had some dignity, even if she was resorting to the more extreme measures of self control.

Lexi left Fin eating her cake and drinking her coffee, the taste on her tongue was bitter after dealing with the blonde haired man and she realised she had little appetite for anything but getting home and injecting herself into oblivion. Her best form of self-control.

Fifteen minutes later and Lexi held a spoon just above a Bunsen burner. The only bonus she had had so far of being a medical student was that no one seemed to bat an eyelid when she borrowed the medlabs chemistry equipment from time to time. The white substance on the spoon slowly began to bubble and dissolve into a clear liquid, she felt her tongue sweep over her lips in anticipation. Slowly, oh so slowly, Lexi lowered the spoon from the heat and laid it on the table carefully so as not to spill any of its precious load onto the table. Reaching into the medical supplies she had in her flat, Lexi pulled out a sterilised needle and syringe from its wrapper and sucked up the liquid from the spoon into the syringe. Still as gentle as can be, Lexi placed the syringe onto the table while she turned off the Bunsen burner and pulled the hose that connected the gas main to the burner. She tied it tightly around her arm, just above the fold on her elbow until she could feel a pulse in her arm increase.

The Always always had a way of creeping into her daily life, and even on remarkable days like today where it should have been sated it still managed to talk incessantly in the back of her mind. Today. What had today even been? She tried her best to sum it up as she prepared the needle. John Watson drinking his tea, Greg Lestrade letting her under the police tape, the man with the crucifix on his chest (why the crucifix? why the neck like a vampire?), the man getting shot in the head seemingly with an invisible bullet. They all had one nucleus; Sherlock Holmes.

Sherloc-- A gasp, as the liquid love entered her blood stream, she sat back almost instantly, slumping onto her bed. Her head swam dizzily as the cocaine took effect. Somewhere in reality the needle slipped from her arm onto the bed side, but it didn't matter really anymore. Not when the process in her body was being watched. Her thoughts -- what thoughts? -- her mind, it all ebbed away.

She could feel the neurones, she could see the neurones lighting up like fireworks as they processed
the dopamine, backwards and forwards and each thousand one exploding in a spark of happiness and relaxation. There was no Always, there was no worry, there was no anything. Just the flash of the neurones, the explosions of relaxation....

Sherlock Holmes.

Explosions and relaxation and Sherlock Holmes

The crucified man with his head on backwards,
guts splayed out
rippled across a thousand tiny neurones.

Sher

Lock

Holmes

Green eyes opened slowly, the stench of sick mixed with the sweet smell of tea. Wait. Tea? Lexi frowned sitting up slowly, the room spinning, she could barely hold herself still long enough to see where she was. On the wall was a table of elements, the rest of the room remarkably tidy. Where was the smell of sick? Fuzzily she looked down, she was the sick. The sick covered the front of her t-shirt and down her jeans. Lexi was laid out on top of grey linen bed sheets, she'd been carefully placed on her sides as not to choke on her own tongue during the come down. Her head felt fragmented, shattered into tiny pieces and each one scratched against her skull. She was covered in sick, her own, and she ached. But she noted that the curtains were closed and the familiar hue of the street lights meant it was after dark. Where was she?

The room was modestly sized, she stuck her feet on the floor, making sure she could use them before she relied on them for weight. After a few moments her ears began to work and she could hear the clinking of something coming down the hallway. The same kind of noise she had heard this morning. Standing up, Lexi turned to look at the bed, on it was a long blue shirt, easily long enough to cover her frame to the lower thigh. Lexi looked down at herself, debating whether to brave it out and stay in her own sick. A waft came up from the shirt and she decided it was better to change out of her clothes. Off came the top and bra, dropping to the floor with an uncomfortable thud and off came the jeans. She decided it was probably better to leave her knickers on, if only for any dignity she had left. How did she even get here?

She shrugged on the shirt, the fabric soft as it brushed her nipples. It was comfortable and snugly, something that she (in her self-destructive self-pity) pined for incredibly. Her stomach growled as she buttoned up the shirt to her collarbone, she was certainly getting notifications from her stomach that
she had deprived it of any kind of fondly substance in the past 24-hours. Again, the sweet smell of tea wafted its way down the hall.

Like a fish out of water, Lexi stumbled slightly towards the door. Clearly her body wasn't ready to wake up. She forced herself forwards and noticed the door. It was the same kind of pattern she had studied earlier in Sherlock's flat.

Sherlocks. Flat.

What was she doing here? Her slender body slid out of the door silently, only opening enough to squeeze herself through the door. Down the hallway to the sounds of cups moving.

She reached the end of the corridor to the kitchen, her head poked out from behind the overlapping wall terrified that she'd see everyone she ever knew waiting to give her an intervention. Instead she saw Sherlock, his face turned away from her as he made tea. Lexi had a few moments of privilege watching Sherlock, in lounge pants and a t-shirt (the polar opposite of his suit he wore earlier) he seemed a different person... more, human? He was making tea for two, so he had obviously assumed that she was due to wake up.

But that didn't answer her question. Why was she here? Lexi made the bold step forward into the kitchen, standing in nothing but Sherlock's shirt touching her legs and her knickers protecting her modesty.

At the sight of movement, Sherlock looked up at her eyes serious but a glimmer of a smile on his face.

"Cuppa?" he asked, holding out the tea to the baffled pinkette.

Chapter End Notes

I'm super happy that there are people out there who enjoy reading my work! Any comments are much appreciated, any indications on plot direction or silly little things you want mentioning, comment below and I will endeavour to try <3
Sherlock Holmes was not a overly caring man. In fact John had told him so many times that he was a pompous asshole who's heart only ever felt a morsel of warmth when he was on a case. So when he had met Lexi Stuart, standing on the street outside his flat, Sherlock felt an peculiar feeling in his chest. Something he hadn't felt since Irene. But then that had been just a few awkward conversations and foreign firefights under the desert heat. When he had seen Lexi outside his house he had been momentarily flabbergasted, not that she had arrived unexpectedly, but because she was so unreadable. Sherlock could barely focus on one aspect of her before another aspect smashed through the last, the words he could normally see like a small display in front of him were jumbled almost as if he were dyslexic.

The small confab they had had with John in 221B had only revealed one thing to him about Lexi; she did not like talking (or focussing) on herself. But then, he did not like talking about himself; except for the fact that he was a genius and everyone else in the room tended to stupefy everything down to the IQ of a newt. Oh how he loved reminding people of that. Lexi was different, unlike John who had trained himself to be less inexplicably stupid she shone like a book dying to be read, a plethora of information that was held above him like a carrot on a stick. He needed to know more. But it frustrated him that he couldn't see more. Even in the cab on the way to the crime scene, he had sat opposite her and scowled the entire way trying to figure him out. Sherlock sat perfectly still trying to assess her, even as the cab bumped up and down coming off the beaten path. To her credit if Lexi had noticed him staring at her with unveiled irritation she didn't say anything. Instead she had sat in the cab silently, biting her thumb nail, looking out the window.

And how exciting the crime scene was! A crucifix! It was rudimentary, obviously, easy to spot that the body had been staged to look like a vampires victim - Lexi had beaten him to telling everyone though (jealous?) she had been quite correct... asides from the type of murder weapon. His petulant side had to correct her, and he saw the look of disapproval on her face. It seemed neither of them liked being corrected or ousted by the other. Lestrade had sent his minions to work and John was busy running through the medical details with the coroner, he smiled, with his index fingers pressed against his lips as he stared down at the body.

Intriguing, intriguing, intriguing. Vampires, crucifixes AND garden stakes? It was like something out of a Bram Stoker novel. Ohoh, how the underbelly of society liked to play their games. Eyes moved up from the body and he noticed Lexi had disappeared. Sherlock's heart twinged slightly at the prospect of her disappearance, though he couldn't figure out why. Perhaps it was like Molly Hooper, who always seemed so offended at anything he said, he had to be extra careful about his words around Molly Hooper. Pulling his collar up to prepare himself from the cold wind that had gripped London the past few days, he stepped outside to find the odd pink haired woman taking a long drag on a cigarette. What could he say to her? Was it socially appropriate to talk about the coagulation of blood on a dead body and how it links to the area in which a body had been stabbed to death? What about the different types of cigarette ash, that was more socially conventional - right?

Sherlock placed his gloved hands in his pockets before opening his mouth to speak. Before he had a chance to, however, he noticed Lexi typing on her phone. He knew he shouldn't pry, after all, if John had done this to him he'd have put an eyeball in his next tea but he couldn't help his icy blues glancing at her phone.

'Hope you have something stronger in stock this week.'

From his vantage point he could see Lexi arranging to meet someone, who he didn't know, but it
seemed fairly important to her by the way she was typing on her phone. The smell of perfume mixed with her coconut shampoo danced off of her body and for a moment he was utterly distracted by the magnificence of her presence... but that didn't last long, Sherlock became very aware that she would soon notice his own presence so he cleared his throat to speak.

"Interesting, don't you think?"

On the way back to Baker Street, John and he sat opposite each other sharing the cab in near silence, except to confer on the case they had been happily given by Lestrade. It was clear that the New Scotland Yard had been stretched beyond their capabilities when the culprit wasn't just one person who wasn't in their twilight years. That didn't surprise him. Lestrade was acceptable, but even he missed the most obvious of clues, he dreaded to think what the rest of the NSY were like. Anderson (one of Lestrade's "best and brightest" - Anderson's words, not his) was the worst, but the less said about Anderson, the better. He had little to no hope of the other police officers under Lestrade's wing.

Sherlock watched the cars whizzing past as the cab cut the corner off into Baker Street. Lexi had disappeared at the crime scene into the back of a police car, her face written up with anxiety; the text message she had sent to this... Fin had intrigued him. Lexi had wanted to get away as quickly as possible for reasons unknown to him and like any detective worth his salt, he couldn't help but want to know more... more about Lexi and more about this Fin. The cab pulled gently to the side and Sherlock jumped out of the car first, totally and utterly relying on John to pay the driver. That was the great thing about John, he had come to expect very little in the way of practicality from Sherlock and Sherlock made use of that acceptance as much as possible. He was pretty sure he owed John a considerable sum of money. Also the less said about that was better. As he always did Sherlock righted his collar and scarf on his way out of the cab, when his eyes travelled upwards he noticed a black car with blacked out windows sitting behind the cab. A woman stood by an open door with her phone in her hand. She was slim, pretty and smartly dressed. There was only one reason she was here and that reason made his eyes roll. John was getting himself out of the cab and Sherlock called to him getting in the cab;

"Let yourself in John, will you?"

John looked up momentarily baffled until his eyes focused on the car, he nodded in understanding, "You owe me a cup of tea, Sherlock." They had been through this routine so many times before that John didn't need any more information. He'd likely see Sherlock tomorrow when he'd done making it up to Mary for missing the cake tasting appointment they'd had, the appointment card had been sticking out of his pocket on the way back, the kind of card used indicated that there was somewhere 'fancy' they were meant to be that wasn't to do with John or Mary's outfits and certainly nothing to do with the wedding venue. Mary would only ever let John have a say on one thing; cake. He hadn't said anything because he knew that Mary had already warned John about relying on Sherlock to tell him things and Mary had also threatened Sherlock with more public speaking if he helped John in the fiancé department.

Out of one car and into another. The car travelled its usual randomised route through London, Mycroft thought he was protecting his interests if his drivers and PAs were changed on a regular basis so too did the routes change. What Sherlock had never told Mycroft because he didn't want to give his bigger brother the satisfaction of being a know-it-all was that London was his city. He knew all the routes and timings to get there, even when he was blindfolded (something already tried and
tested by Mycroft, spectacularly unsuccessful) but nothing seemed to stop his brother from pretending to trick him. Sherlock acquiesced to the silence of the car, Jaqueline -- or was this one Sarah? -- said nothing, probably as per the instructions of Mycroft and it mattered little to him since he dreaded conversation that was wholly irrelevant to the situation. The last time one of Mycroft's PAs had said anything, Sherlock had been able to deduce his brother had had a top secret conference with Iran over nuclear weapons and when Sherlock outwitted his brother (as he always enjoyed) that had been the last of the talking secretary. Instead the detective spent his brief time in the car Google searching Bram Stoker to jog his memory and join the dots together.

Why a vampire? Why at a Manor House? And what even was it with the gardener being shot down? Something didn't add up. It was obvious that there had been more than just the running gardener to contend with, but who or what was involved was a mystery to him. And he did love mysteries. His thoughts drifted again to Lexi, she had been interested too - so much so he could see the thirst in her eyes for more than just the obvious. Lexi wanted as good a brain teaser as he did. He approved wholeheartedly.

The car pulled to a stop and they had arrived at what seemed to be an abandoned quarry. Time had begun to take back the landscape from its previous owners with roots of trees and overgrowing weeds pushing their way through the many windows of an abandoned shack, probably once maintained to house the overseer of the quarry. Sherlock entered the run down house and continued on to the downstairs, he pushed the door open before being greeted by a tall man in a black suit. His brother had always been the type for theatrics. A brisk pat down and Sherlock was OK’d into the room. The room was superbly maintained in comparison to its sad looking exterior, Mycroft had spent a lot of time and effort refurbishing the old World War Two bunker with everything he needed. Ever the patriot, the decked out bunker had an impressively big portraiture of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth on the wall with golden frame and all. It was the only way he was ever reminded of who was actually living in the big house on the river, useless information tended not to stay in his mind palace for too long, much to everyone else's ire; they were usually the ones filling it with rubbish.

Behind the oversized desk sat Mycroft Holmes, right hand man to the very monarchy itself and a constant pain in Sherlock's ass. The big brother complex really did not fit into the Mycroft repertoire but he still persisted, Sherlock wondered if it had something to do with their mother - she quite often nagged the two of them when they got together for their awkward annual family meals. The detective sat on the over sized leather chair adjacent to Mycroft but he did it in such a way as to indicate his irritation of being dragged away from 221 Baker Street.

"What do you want, Mycroft?" he asked, his tone edging on irritated.

To his credit, Mycroft's exterior remained poker face and he even placed a thin smile on his wry face.

"Is it so hard to think that your big brother might want to see how you are, brother mine?" he asked, smoothly. Smooth tones was always a bad sign. A very bad sign.

"Yes. Yes it is hard to think that, Mycroft. What do you want? And if this is to do with the whole blowing the kitchen up it was an experiment," Sherlock explained, his mind skipping back to the time when John had come in to find Sherlock holding a smashed, smoking flask and wearing a pair of smoke fogged science glasses. It was only later that Sherlock had noticed the human foot he had been experimenting on had caught alight. Who knew soy sauce was so flammable. Or it might have been the hydrogen peroxide that he was also experimenting with. But no one needed to look too much into the details of how he had a severed, well preserved human foot in his fridge. At least that's what he had heard Mrs Hudson saying as she ran out of the apartment in horror.

"Hmph," his brother exclaimed with a humorous tone, he had clearly already heard of the exploding
incident and thought nothing of it, so what was he here for? "Well, my dear little brother, it has come to my attention you have a new partner. Quite the little detective, I hear."

Sherlock frowned in irritation, so that was what this was about. He was surprised that Mycroft hadn't just abducted her off the street like he seemed to with everyone that came into contact with his younger sibling. Well, there was always tomorrow, who knew. "If you've already 'heard' then why drag me here to this sad little bomb shelter?" He paused, looking up at the painting again before suppressing the need to shiver with goosebumps, "You really need to change up the decor in here, Mycroft, it's far too ... patriotic."

Mycroft seemingly ignored the jibe, given the man was very high up her royal highnesses backside it put Sherlock on edge to hear his brother ignore the jab entirely. Usually there was at least some rhetoric between the two before his older brother got onto chastising him for his practices. Mycroft hadn't even moved from his position, leaning back into his office chair with his hands on top of each other, the top clamping down on his knuckles. He didn't look his usual happy self. Sherlock almost snorted at his own thought, Mycroft never had a happy self.

"Little brother, the woman you've decided to pick to be your new little ... protege --"

"It was John's idea."

"Yes, but of all the people you had to pick you had to pick Lexi bloody Stuart." Mycroft's tone was far from jovial.

"I screened everyone who had been on John's blog, she was the only one - asides you, and yes you do read John's blog, no one else has fifty IPs simultaneously jumping around the globe - who has any kind of intelligence when it comes to my line of work," Sherlock paused and inclined his head at Mycroft, "why does she bother you so?"

"Lexi Stuart is a twenty-two year old medical student who is almost a certified doctor. She's a known sociopath with mass intellect and is known for toying with people for her own benefit. The last thing anyone needs is you two being in the same room together." Mycroft's fingers began tapping subconsciously against the flat of his knuckles, he was obviously hiding something.

"And? Lexi Stuart is hardly cause for concern."

"Be mindful, Sherlock. You have a habit for getting yourself caught up in other peoples' problems. Not everything is a game."

Sherlock stood, his coat billowing out behind him as he turned to leave. "Thank you ever so much for the little chinwag, brother. As encouraging as always." The younger man went towards the door, but as it opened for him (obviously the doors had eyes as well as ears) his brother's voice sounded once more, Sherlock paused in the doorway not bothering to turn his head.

"Be careful around her, Sherlock."

Sherlock left without saying a word.

Back in the car with the same PA, obviously more interested in her phone than him, Sherlock began to type a few basic algorithms into his phone based on the last previous IP addresses attached to Lexi's Facebook. It wasn't hard to do once you'd already cracked the coding of Facebook. Gower
Street wasn't far from Baker Street so when the car pulled up to throw him out, he got out and continued gliding down Baker Street - away from the flat. Sherlock had deduced that John had already received an angry phone call from Mary and had left not long after they had arrived, he had no doubt there would be a cold, half drank cup of tea sitting on the side table next to John's arm chair from where John had hastily left the flat in a hope to catch Tesco before it closed to buy Mary flowers. Typical John. He stood for a small while waiting for the lights to change on the busy intersection between Baker Street and North Gower Street, while he waited he observed. A woman walking towards a man sat on a park bench with flowers in his hand, he almost laughed at John giving Mary the flowers in a similar circumstance. A cyclist riding at full speed down the intersection. A man handing out flyers on the other side of the street for the vampire tours of London. Another younger couple having a domestic outside the Tesco John had probably bought his flowers from. Probably also something John would be getting up to tonight. A young woman hurriedly making her way past the young couple having a domestic. She was obviously having a bad day too.

He paused.

That was Lexi hurrying in the opposite direction. As if on cue the walking light turned to green and he crossed, aiming to look casual as he followed her direction. Sherlock supposed this was one sure fire way to be one of the men he was so often asked to investigate for harassment. But then, he reasoned, Lexi seemed in a spot of trouble, albeit he didn't know what that trouble was.

Fifteen minutes from Baker Street, it was already getting dark. Lexi had come to a halt outside another cafe - presumably one of the student union cafes - she crossed the road and entered another building, this time a high rise. Sherlock entered the cafe and ordered a tea. He tried his best not to judge the shoddy craftsmanship of the server before picking out a seat by the window, ready to wait for Lexi to reappear.

Twenty minutes passed.

Thirty-five minutes passed.

Forty minutes.

Sherlock frowned. Where had she gone? Leaving the cafe quietly, he crossed the road. He traced the steps of the woman until he came across the same number that had been on her drivers licence. (Hacking the DVLA was a fine example of the shoddy security of the British government... he was a damn good detective if he did say so himself.) He knocked on the door and waited a few minutes but there was no answer. Sherlock leaned into the small window next to the door but he failed to see anyone inside because the dying daylight was too weak. He hadn't seen her leave, so where could she have gone? Sherlock frowned, a thousand thoughts running through his head. All of Lexi Stuart came at him with question marks. The detective knew she hadn't left but he had definitely seen her enter the building. Was it worth jimmying the lock? Would she be mad? Did it matter?

It wouldn't normally matter to him - he made it quite the hobby scaring his clients when he wanted to. There was nothing more revealing than the reaction his clients had when they saw him sitting in a locked room. But breaking into Lexi Stuart's house was a daunting task, only if it was because it would earn the woman's wrath. Sherlock knocked once more, to no avail, before pacing back and forth for five minutes outside of the flat. It was irritating him. Immensely.
The dark haired man crouched down, producing two bobby pins from his coat pockets (one never knows when they might need to break in to a few places), and got to work on the lock. He stopped every now and again to double check no one happened to walk past while he was casually breaking into a young woman's home. One minute and three seconds, a new record. The inner child was throwing up his 1st trophy in the air, his brother watching on.

The door gave way as soon as the lock gave way, it was obvious she lived in student accommodation - the locks were atrocious. So much for 'a safe student is a happy student'. The apartment was quaint, if one could call it quaint. Books lined almost every wall, medical books, algorithm books, astrophysics books. Scrawled handwriting - a doctors handwriting - marked some of the pages and it took his all not to pick up the books and check through her work, if only to give them something to discuss tomorrow. Though, it was not hard to guess that his breaking into her house would be top of the list.

"Lexi?" he called, feeling suddenly very precarious about being in her apartment. If it had been the other way around he would have been most aggrieved. It was then that the smell hit him. It made his eyes close and his feet stop in their tracks.

He had woken up on a mattress, his head felt like it was wrapped in cotton, he couldn't even focus his eyes.

But he had seen the familiar outline of his brother beside him.

He couldn't move because the comedown was so strong, his body ached, his mind ached.

He'd happily take a bullet if it meant it would stop.

He knew Mycroft would never allow that.

He felt a brush of someones fingers on his forehead as they brushed his sweat-ridden hair out of his eyes.

His brother. His silly Pirate Captain brother.

He drew himself into a ball, as small as he could make himself.

Before he realised he was actually rested on Mycroft's lap.

He pushed himself into his brothers stomach, looking for any comfort possible.

He felt fingers running through his hair slowly.

'I can't stop my thoughts, My. Too fast. Too fast. Make it stop.'

'I know, brother, I know. I am here for you. I'll always be here for you.'

Ice blue eyes snapped open and Sherlock took a long, deep breath in before he exhaled slowly. That smell was so inviting, so tantalising. But he had made a vow to Mycroft. To himself. He steeled himself.
The living room was also the kitchen and, as he discovered, it was also the bedroom. On the bed was a small figure, with a tight tube wrapped around her arm. Sherlock approached Lexi as quick as he dared, his jaw locked to stop himself breathing through his mouth - as if that would protect him from the invisible particles in the air. There were, of course, no particles in the air. But in his head there was. His brother's words from earlier rang through his head ‘be careful, Sherlock’. He had known. But he was allowing Sherlock to make his own judgement.

The needle had fallen from her arm and he picked it up slowly, checking the residue in the syringe. He bit his lip before looking at the small frame of Lexi on the bed. It was then he saw the foam trickling from her mouth. Panic flared in his chest, so unusual for the detective. Moving quick he rolled Lexi onto her side, she hardly stirred except to convulse as the sick made its way up her gullet, it trickled out of her mouth.

"Come on Lexi, I know you can hear me. Let it out," he said, voice raised with barely level irritation. Sherlock had a mixture of emotions; anger (temptation), fear (not just for her), curiosity (how much had she taken?)

Lexi convulsed once more, this time more than foam came from her mouth. She threw up on herself but Sherlock didn't hold it against her.

*His nose was filled with the putrid smell of sick.*

*He could feel something wet dripping from his chin.*

He couldn't leave her here on her own. And the flat was too ... tempting to stay. He couldn't take her back to his in the back of a taxi, no cab driver would let her in the car. Leaving Lexi on her side, Sherlock took out his iPhone and typed into his phone.

'131 King's Cross Road.

ASAP.

Come at once.

*If inconvenient, come all the same.*

- SH.'

Lestrade had only increased Sherlock's estimations that he was moronically stupid. When he carried Lexi down the stairs in his arms, her body limp, Gary (or was it Greg? Gordon, maybe?) had said, "what the fuck is going on here?"

Sherlock deigned not to say what was on his mind. He remained silent aside from telling Lestrade to take them to Baker Street. When the car pulled up and Lestrade turned to the backseat where Sherlock sat, Lexi's head in his lap cradled on her side, he had asked again what was going on.
Sherlock, composed, said one sentence.

"If you value my services, at all, you'll say nothing of this to anyone."

After that he'd gotten out of the car and gently picked up Lexi as if he was terrified she might shatter at any moment. Kicking the door open to 221 Baker Street he'd gone up the stairs as quick as a flash as Mrs Hudson watched him, her hand on her chest as if caught out by the sudden commotion. Sherlock said nothing to her either. He'd gotten up the stairs, into the flat (kicked the door shut behind him) and didn't leave.

Sherlock slid the needle into the same track marks left by the needle Lexi had used a few hours before. It slid in flawlessly, with expert precision, and she only managed to wretch as he withdrew her blood. He'd run rudimentary tests on her blood sample to make sure she hadn't overdosed too much. If she had been under anyone else's care she'd either be dead or in hospital. But Sherlock had faith in his own work. He left her on her side, passed out. She hadn't thrown up anymore nor had she convulsed any more. Removing his coat was his first action.

The second action was Sherlock placing a few drops of Lexi's blood on a glass slide and putting it under his microscope. Leaning in to look at it, his eyebrows raised in surprise. The amount of cocaine in her blood was enough to kill a man twice her size, she was only a tiny 112lbs. Lexi, it seemed, was made of strong stuff. Sherlock sat down on a dining room chair, placing his hands on his head and leaning back like a man who had no clue what to do. Truthfully, Sherlock was a man of science. He had an advanced knowledge of medicine but not half as much expertise as John - though he didn't remind John of that fact. Asides from letting her sleep and making sure she didn't choke on her own vomit or overload her heart and seize to death there was little he could do except wait.

Sherlock stood up and moved into the living room, picking up his violin as he went past. Slumping down in his own armchair he plucked at the strings and waited.

_________________________

Three hours later and Sherlock rose from his vigil of periodically checking on Lexi. She had only seized once but it was nothing a shot of adrenaline couldn't fix (liberated from John's own medical supplies). He placed the kettle on the stove before he made, in his opinion, a perfect cup of tea. It was then he'd noticed the movement at the door. Lexi Stuart looked like a dead woman. Sherlock smiled at her, raising a cup of tea.

"Cuppa?"
They stared at each other from across the kitchen, Lexi in his shirt and Sherlock holding a cup of tea perfectly still. Neither said a thing.

Sherlock's question lingered in the air, Lexi suddenly felt very exposed - and it wasn't because of the improvised pyjamas. She had remembered so little following the car ride back into London from the crime scene, but she did remember those searching eyes of Sherlock's as he looked in her own for some sign of life. It had been strange that he'd seemed so ... human. His eyes had been frantic as he'd looked into hers - even though hers had been rolling into the back of her head. It was all Lexi could do to remember, and it shamed her intensely that someone else had seen her so vulnerable.

There had been something else about his franticness that had caught her own; desire. The temptation that every addict had when they were around that smell. Hell, you didn't even need to be an addict to have those eyes. Lexi supposed there were greater depths to Sherlock Holmes than met the eye. The temptation had all but screamed itself to Lexi's drugged up state and those few moments of humanity they had experienced together had added to the silence they were having now. Neither wanted to speak, to let slip the unspoken thoughts of vulnerability.

So there Sherlock stood, holding out the tea and there Lexi stood, all but naked save for his shirt and her underwear. It had been painfully obvious that he had done his best to attend to the vomit across her face while she'd been in and out of the throws of consciousness. He'd taken off the makeup that had been streaked across her face as well, she'd caught that in the mirror - and she looked remarkably different.

Her green eyes practically glowed without the dark liner across her eyes and there was a sense of innocence about her that was removed when she had her red lipstick on. She was always ID'd when she didn't wear makeup. Lexi twisted her head sideways and took the tea without saying anything, taking a small sip in one fluid movement. She was never the socialite her family had wanted her to be. Holding onto it like a woman with a grenade, she let the steam drift up her nose, destroying the acrid taste of sick.

Her eyes drifted down towards the dining table - or rather, the chemistry table - taking in the array of equipment on the table. A chemistry set, not unlike the one she had lifted from the university labs, a Bunsen burner jury rigged to the gas mains (was that even safe? It was a question best left unasked) and an eyeball sat in what looked like cold saline bobbing up and down in a measured beaker. Her green eyes travelled back up to Sherlock, who was standing quite silently watching her inspect his set up. She looked back down to his notes, his handwriting was quite elegant considering he seldom looked like the one to have any patience to take notes.

Pupil contraction rate avg: +/- 0.000075% variable

*Projectile rate speed ~3300ft/second?*

*Possible victim saw projectile?*

Lexi raised a brow at the last line, it was scribbled out in frustration and she knew that it had been
more than likely his visit to her place that had caused the frustration. The pencil had snapped on the last one, as if he couldn't get something off of his mind and she didn't need to guess what had been on his mind. Lexi placed her tea cup down gently on the side of the table before her eyes caught a glimpse of the violin resting in prize place on the spare armchair. It was dusted regularly by Mrs Hudson (Sherlock was not the type to clean) and was cleaner than the rest of the furniture. She supposed it was John's armchair, Mrs Hudson seemed to care a great deal about John.

Her feet had taken her across the room and she was standing in the middle of the living room going to pick up the violin. It was an elegant piece and the bow wasn't far from it either. Just as her skinny hands went to take the neck of the violin, stronger hands snatched it from her grasp. Her pink hair flipped like a whip as she turned her head angrily towards the snatcher of violins. Sherlock was stood protectively holding his violin to his chest looking mighty shocked with himself.

From his perspective, he had been protecting the one thing in life he held dearest. Not even John got his hands on his violin, his hands were too rough to play a violin and he had more chance of snapping it than holding it properly. So when he had seen the raised-from-the-dead Lexi Stuart leaning to pick it up, hands shaking, his heart had been in his mouth.

But now as he stood here with his violin cuddled like a baby into his chest, he suddenly felt the wrath of Lexi's gaze boring into his soul. His own eyes travelled down to his violin, like a child looking away from the scolding adult.

"I am quite protective of my violin. Ever since John sat on it and snapped the E string, it's not sounded the same," he commented, his eyes still focussing on his violin, "and besides I'm sure you wouldn't find it all that entertaining."

Sherlock saw Lexi looking at the violin with piqued interest, he wondered if she was trying to imagine where exactly John had sat on his sacred instrument, or if she was trying to picture John's yelp of shock or perhaps she was trying to imagine John's indignant grimace as his fellow GP work colleague stitched his left buttocks where the string had essentially turned into cheese wire. That had made him chuckle.

It was obviously not her thought process because she motioned again to the violin, instinctively he placed it behind his back trying his best to act set about his decision to not give away his most prized possession.

"I'm not going to break it, you know," she said lightly, her eyes searching his for some sort of trust.

It wasn't that he didn't trust her....

...

No - he didn't trust anyone with his violin.

In that moment something in Lexi's eyes changed and she gently stepped closer towards him. He could smell her breath from this distance and the smell was anything but repulsive; he said nothing.
"I'm sure on John's blog, it says you find sentiment a waste of energy," she began, her body only a few inches from his. The violin went further behind his back but his eyes flickered slightly.

"It isn't sentiment, it's value."

"I don't think value means a great deal to you, Mr Holmes."

"Think again, Miss Stuart."

Her lips brushed his neck, she could feel his heartbeat under his skin and she was positive she felt the slightest groan stir in his throat.

"A violin as valuable as that and you wouldn't play it," Lexi said, feeling Sherlock's neck involuntarily quiver at her touch.

As quick as a flash and the violin was in her hand, she twisted away from Sherlock and placed it under her chin, finding the groove where the chin rest should have been. Her spare hand picked up the bow and she played. There was no movement from Sherlock as she played, but she could feel his icy blues on her skin. It had been a long time since she had played and a few notes fell flat, but otherwise she was quite impressed at the Irish jig music that filled the flat. Jig music filled her with an old kind of happiness, a melancholic memory of her childhood that had long been buried under years of repressed memory.

Time skipped forwards and she suddenly became hyperaware that she had stopped playing and was staring out the window in silence. The pinkette turned and looked towards Sherlock, who had moved, either in her playing or her silence, to stand behind John's armchair, he held the top of it like a man with vertigo.

"I sometimes wish I thought sentiment was a waste of energy, it would save me a great deal of time." Lexi said quietly, before placing the violin on Sherlock's chair.

Lexi slumped into John's chair, her legs over the arm rest, and looked up at Sherlock. "Did you know you're looking for a trained shooter?" she asked, her lilting voice breaking the silence.

"I'm what?"

It seemed for the first time ever Sherlock Holmes was lost for words. His blue eyes seemed filled with a certain fondness, but Lexi couldn't place her finger on what it was - for all her intelligence, she couldn't read Sherlock, no matter how hard she tried.

"A trained shooter. There's no way in holy hell that old biddy was the one to shoot your man with a crucifix."

Familiarity flared in Sherlock's eyes and it seemed she had drop kicked the ball rolling, he took off again into the kitchen, while Lexi rolled onto her side and hugged her knees, feeling the comedown sickness sticking in with a massive vengeance. He had, so far, said nothing of her behaviour tonight (was it still even the same day?) and she was somewhat pleased. Even her small play on her femininity (was it a play?) - she frowned, shaking the unwanted thoughts from her head - but she let it slide just as she wanted from him regarding her blast into oblivion.

Her mind drifted back towards Sherlock, buzzing about the kitchen like a man on speed. She noted it wasn't speed, but the thrill of piecing together his ideas. He was in the process of explaining to her
about his study into the way a corpse's pupil had constricted and expanded upon death and how he hadn't been too fussed on the results because there'd been a much more entertaining case involving an elephant in his flat.

"And the elephant almost trampled poor Mrs Hudson to death. But more to the point, Lexi, we are indeed looking for a skilled sharpshooter - even if the weapon was quite rudimentary. Whoever shot the poor sod did so from the road and then took off by car. But why the crucifix? That's the only thing I'm not getting. The doddering old gardener was clearly in on it, but they weren't the only conspirators," Sherlock took a breath, taking a drink of Lexi's tea without thinking, he was pacing so quickly it was easy for him to forget which one was his, "what if it was the whole OAP community?"

He chuckled momentarily before pacing again. The crucifix had really irked him since he'd seen it. It was so fake and so utterly disappointing. So why had it been put there? And why was someone trained to shoot required to kill off a worker of a manor? Why was none of it adding up?

"Lexi, feel free to give me a hypothesis to shoot down - it's what John usually does."

There was no reply from the slender woman on the chair. The detective paused in his pacing, waiting for a response.

When there was none, Sherlock walked over and peered over the chair to find Lexi was passed out, snoring gently. The drugs had burned her out entirely and Sherlock knew from experience she'd be gone for at least the next 12 hours or so. Leaning over the chair Sherlock scooped up Lexi and carried her back down the hallway. He noted as he walked towards the door that she was lighter now without her boots and jeans on. His mind drifted back to her stealing the violin from his hands, he had both hated and loved how she had made him feel high. Even though she had done it on purpose, his mind lingered on the thought that she had had her hand on the violin for almost a few seconds before she had actually pulled away from his neck. Her soft lips had sent lightning through his veins but just like lightning, it had gone in a flash and she was playing her own music. At least it was no music he had heard and in his quest to master the violin he had memorised an awful amount of music.

Even the moment when she had stopped playing and looked off out of the window, Sherlock could still feel the touch of her lips on his skin. He hated how dependant it had made him feel, even if it had been for a few fleeting moments.

Sherlock placed Lexi gently on the bed, he tucked her gently into the quilt before stealing a proper look at her unguarded face. In terms of anatomy, for Sherlock knew no other way to gauge looks, she was perfect. From the small dimples in her cheeks to the way her brow furrowed when she dreamed, she was simply captivating.

He pulled himself away with a frown. His mind scolding his heart. Sentiment was a waste of energy. It was a valuable lesson Mycroft had taught him and had proven itself right time and time again.

Sherlock closed the door to his bedroom before finding himself back in his chair, absently plucking at the strings of his violin trying to remember the notes which Lexi had played.

Trying to work out Lexi Stuart.

Trying to work out the man with the crucifix.
Lexi woke with a start, as if someone had jump started her heart. She sat upright on the bed. But it wasn't her bed, was it? Lexi touched the shirt that hugged her chest, shards of memory pierced through the dark clouds in her mind each one slicing and leaving blinding white lights behind her eyes. She could remember last night, fairly. Waking up here, in an oddly tidy room that seemed so out of place in Sherlock Holmes' flat, that's what she remembered.

Another flash that sliced open the cotton suffocating her brain. Hands were around her waist this time, she could remember it like looking at herself through a one way mirror, looking all but limp and lifeless in his arms. Fractions of his gaze filtered through the glass - worry, irritation, pain; but not her pain - his. He felt pain seeing her in such a state, he felt pain being so near the edge of oblivion with its welcoming warmth and certainty.

A white light flashed in her mind, another memory. Sherlock leaning over her, jamming an adrenaline shot into her heart - that's why she felt so tender, she reckoned that a rib or two had broken, but the alternative was far worse. Then through the mirror, she caught a glimpse of the quiet man sitting with his head in his hands while his leg twitched up and down in irritation. (In his own personal agony? Temptation is the biggest of sins.) She shook her head to dispel the thought.

The searing white light blotted out the rest of the memories her mind writhing, demanding to be put back to sleep. Lexi could have slept for an eternity the way she felt, but she knew she had probably spent far too long at Holmes' flat. She didn't even know what time it was, she couldn't hear anything from down the hall. Then she remembered the violin, her heart jolted again and in response Lexi pushed herself to the edge of the bed, not sure if her feet would carry her weight. Her mind wobbled slightly as she moved but she had experienced enough comedown's to understand that it wouldn't last.

Lexi shuffled towards the door, in her sorry state she mused that she probably looked like a zombie straight out of a film. Near to the door was a mirror and Lexi caught her outline in it, the shiny surface reflected back a person she didn't really recognise; her hair fell just past her shoulders in a kind-of-tousled-but-really-needed-attacking-with-a-comb hairdo, her green iris' almost absorbed the black pin pricks that were her pupils, her lips were chapped from the amount of stomach acid that had come off her stomach in the past god knows how ever many hours of OD-state. Sherlock was a slender man in his own right, but standing in his blue shirt that reached the bottom of her thighs, she practically disappeared into it.
Lexi looked away from the mirror, her mind starting to whir back into motion, the Always trying to break down the protective walls the drugs had created. If she hadn't almost nearly died, part of her wanted to self destruct again. Lexi could feel the Always banging angrily at the corners of her consciousness, wanting to kickstart itself into overdrive. The skinny pinkette frowned, rubbing her temple with one hand, the other one reaching for the door. She was just about to pull the door open when she heard voices in the kitchen, raised and angry.

"Can you explain to me why I got a call off of Lestrade last night, Sherlock, ringing to ask what the hell was going on you?"

"Lestrade always did have a way of making things far more dramatic than they were," replied Sherlock, "it was nothing, John, now are you going to help me with this hypothesis or are you going to continue getting angry?"

"You're bloody right I'm going to get angry, I've only been gone less than two weeks and you're already back on drugs. Christ, Sherlock, is it really that hard for you to behave for once?" Watson seemed exasperated, Lexi noted as she held onto the door, as if it might disintegrate then and there and reveal her hidden presence.

"No, I'm not back on the drugs --"

"So why was Lestrade saying you carried that, that, whatshername here last night clearly off her face on drugs?" Lexi heard John pause, Sherlock remained silent, "I'll only ask you once before I text Mycroft, Sherlock."

"I called Lestrade last night for a pick up, Lexi needed a lift too. We shared Lestrade's car. That's it."

"So why did you tell Lestrade not to say anything?"

Another quiet pause. Lexi could hear things being moved around in the kitchen and then she heard Sherlock tut with irritation.

"John, there are no drugs here. Well, except for that adrenaline you left in case Mrs Hudson needed to fight off any more Americans... but I hardly think that will get used."

"This isn't a joke, Sherlock," muttered John, the movement had stopped, "what's in your bedroom?"

Lexi stepped back from the door, biting her lip. She turned slightly to look around the room. There was no telltale sign of a drug overdose in the room, Sherlock had ensured any and all mess had disappeared. Curiously her clothes had too but when she listened for long enough she could hear the sound of a washer vibrating downstairs. Did Mrs Hudson really do Sherlock's washing? Lexi scolded herself for the distraction as she heard footsteps coming towards the door and voices raised. She could hear Sherlock demanding John to leave the door alone, and John telling Sherlock that it was for his own good. Lexi panicked, she looked down at herself, realising she was only wearing a shirt (Sherlocks nonetheless). Lexi turned back towards the door just as John slammed it open, she jumped and stared at John like a rabbit caught in headlights.

John stared back, his eyes travelling down and then back up.
Lexi stared back.

John turned his head slowly to Sherlock.

Sherlock had his body weight leaning on the doorframe, his face to the floor.

John turned back to Lexi and stared, mouth slightly agape.

Lexi bit her lip again and crossed her arms across her chest, looking at the floor too.

"I, uh, well ... that is, uh," John paused again, this time for a few seconds and Lexi looked up to see a half smile dancing on John's stern look, "I'll just nip down and see Mrs Hudson, she uh, she invited us to breakfast."

John turned and walked down the hall, he disappeared right and Lexi could hear his footsteps on the stairs. John was muttering to himself about how he now only understood what Mrs Hudson had been saying to him. Lexi looked up at Sherlock, her face still tilted towards the floor. Sherlock caught her eye.

They both burst out laughing at the same time.

"That never gets old." Sherlock said, moving away from the door frame and into the room to make his bed, like he was on autopilot.

Lexi raised an eyebrow at his comment, "women in your shirts happens often does it?"

Sherlock paused and thought for a moment before smiling back at Lexi. "Only once and it was for a case."

Chapter End Notes

In case some of you were wondering, this in an AU canon where Mary and John have met and are engaged but Sherlock hasn't squared off against Moriarty yet. Many of the cases referenced from S2/S3 don't follow the canon but are in there to add to the little nuggets of tv gold that Moffat and Gatiss threw into the BBC rendition of Sherlock.

This does mean of course Jeanine wasn't met at John's wedding and that her lil' soiree at Sherlock's had nothing to do with Magnussen. Like I said, the AU I'm working on relates to some cases from the TV series but please don't work everything out chronologically or John would've killed Sherlock himself by now IRL.

If you're enjoying my work, please let me know by way of kudos. I've been super touched that so many people are reading this and if there are any questions needing answering just leave a comment and I'll be sure to reply <3
Fried Eggs and Bacon

Mrs Hudson really knew how to make a good fry up. Fried eggs, lincoln sausages, hash browns, bacon rashers and French toast.

By the time Lexi and Sherlock arrived downstairs, Lexi still in Sherlock's shirt and a pair of his rolled up pyjama bottoms and Sherlock dressed as always perfectly smart, John had been given a plate of fried food enough to give someone a heart attack. Not that John seemed to mind as a plate was placed in front of him; Lexi noted the rings around his eyes, bloodshot eyes and slightly dried skin around John's mouth - someone had been drinking 'til the early hours so much so that he hadn't read the text off of Lestrade until this morning. Lexi decided his other half was clearly still angry about the cake tasting debacle.

Sherlock plonked himself down on the adjacent chair to John, who was half way through his first sausage when he noticed the two. He sat with confidence which Lexi took to mean that he quite often invaded his landladies hospitality. Mrs Hudson didn't give Sherlock or herself food, but Lexi - still feeling rough - eyed it up greedily. Mrs Hudson smiled at her sympathetically and handed her a cup of tea. It seemed to be a staple of Baker Street, she didn't dare mention she preferred black coffee to milky tea Lexi felt honoured enough to not be dragged out of the house by the woman for Sherlock's shoe mark on the front door.

"Do sit down dear, it's nice to have another woman in the house," said Mrs Hudson, her voice matching her sweet disposition. Lexi decided she liked Mrs Hudson, she seemed innocent enough but her eyes looked her over with a sense of knowing only a woman who had been around drugs herself could give. The older woman was clearly aware of what had transpired last night, Lexi thanked whatever forces existed for her quietness. The pinkette had expected a thorough dress down from Sherlock when she had awoke this morning but even he had been ominously silent about it.

Lexi sat with an unusual delicateness. She held onto her tea like it was a life jacket and smiled politely at Mrs Hudson, who was busying herself with cleaning the kitchen. Sherlock had grabbed that mornings paper, The Daily Mail, and Lexi almost choked on her tea. In response Sherlock looked over his paper at her,

"I like the stories, they're like books ... only stupider."

His eyes returned to his paper and Lexi's gaze traveled to John. She felt suddenly anxious again as John's gaze pierced through her own. He was still eating his breakfast, but he was considering her with an intense, curious look like she was a puzzle waiting to be solved. Lexi cleared her throat and John looked back down at his breakfast before eying her up again when he thought she wasn't looking.

"Thank you for the tea, Mrs Hudson." Lexi said, trying to break the awkward silence and practical dissection by John.

"Oh dear, it's no bother. But boys, I'm your land lady, not your maid."

"You're my landlady, Mrs Hudson, not John's - do try to keep up," retorted Sherlock, his gaze never leaving the so-called news, "and John, why don't you focus on keeping the tomato sauce off your shirt rather than eying up Lexi like your next meal."

John took a moment to swallow his mouthful of bacon before speaking, his eyes never leaving Lexi.
"Are we going to talk about last night?"

"No," said Lexi

"Nope," replied Sherlock simultaneously. Lexi took a sip of her tea suddenly realising that had the shirt incident not been enough, then the replying in unison looked even worse. Lexi placed her tea on the coaster that was sat on the table, before reaching for her phone. Only she didn't have her phone because she'd not thought to bring it during her unconscious little trip around London. Instead Lexi made do with twiddling her thumbs and watching Mrs Hudson clean in an almost meticulous manner.

"Why a crucifix though?" queried Sherlock, his face still not coming up from his newspaper.

"Maybe it was the gardeners way of putting the police off the trail?" retorted John, placing his knife and fork together on the plate. Like a robot, Mrs Hudson appeared and added it to the pile of dirty crockery on the side of the kitchen bench.

"No..." mused Lexi, her hand unconsciously finding its way to her broken ribs, "the projectiles would have given that away. I'd imagine that it was to do with the falling revenue of the Manor House."

"She's probably right," Sherlock muttered, Lexi's gaze sharply looked at Sherlock and he put down his paper, "okay, she's completely right. The Manor House has been failing on gaining a significant amount of people in the past year, placing a crucifix on the body with wounds that look like a vampire bite gives intrigue that peeling wallpaper could never achieve."

"So who was the third party with the car?" asked John, his brow furrowing slightly.

Sherlock remained silent, instead choosing to take a drink of his tea.

"He doesn't know and neither do I. It makes no sense to have a third party shooting the gardener. Unless the gardener had something to hide."

Sherlock drummed his fingers on the desk, his face concentrating on illusionary figures and words in the air. Sherlock whipped his phone out, typing away on the phone. Lexi and John looked at each other before Sherlock spoke,

"Leave it with me and I'll get back to you. I need to figure out who the man was and his last movements in London before you rugby tackled him to the ground. Though I'm certain he was already dead before you took him down - the real question is why you weren't targeted too, you were practically inches away from the bullet, though I'm still uncertain what was used to kill him. Molly should know soon after her postmortem."

With that Sherlock was back on his phone, typing away. John stood up, dusting off toast crumbs from his shirt.

"Well, I have my morning surgery to get to. Let me know when you work it out."

Lexi finished her tea before finding Mrs Hudson's eyes. Like she could read her mind, Mrs Hudson placed her freshly cleaned and dried clothes on the table in a small Tesco's bag.

"I'm sure you have things to do as well dear?" It was a rhetoric question really, since Mrs Hudson probably didn't care about what Lexi had to do. She was signifying the end of her stay in her home and Lexi stood, nodding politely.
"Yes, thank you Mrs Hudson, I'll see myself out."

She followed John to the front door before turning to Sherlock, who apparently hadn't heard a word past his own final statement.

"He'll do that, he won't notice you've gone before you see him next ... or he asks a random question and realises he's alone," muttered John shrugging on his coat as he held the door open to Lexi. Lexi followed him through nodding as she went, the Tesco bag swinging in her hand.

It was unusually warm given the early morning and cold weather of recent. Lexi figured she could stomach the walk home since she had no money.

"See you, Lexi," John called as he made his way in the opposite direction.

And with that he was off and around the corner. Lexi stood for a small moment taking in the events of the past who knew how many hours. It was then she remembered the date off of the paper Sherlock was reading and Lexi swore to herself; as a fifth year medical student she was expected to rack up so many hours in a plethora of different hospitals around London. Given the business of the street, Lexi figured it was before 9AM which gave her roughly an hour to get ready and appear at St Bartholomew's Hospital. The woman took off running down Baker Street.

"Sir, can you tell me how exactly you managed to slice one of your fingers off?" asked Lexi staring at a man in a cubicle in the A&E department of the hospital. Lexi still felt rough as hell, but she had no reason to tell her superiors why she was so ill so as a result Lexi had scoffed a bagel and necked a coffee before starting her shift. The man in front of her was a builder in his early forties, on the table in front of Lexi was a bag of ice with a thumb in it, the ice was a red hue from the blood and Lexi noted he'd obviously caught the thumb just after the builder had sliced it off.

"Well I was cutting a tile outside the Natural History Museum, my brother is one of the head curators you know - dead proud of him my parents are. He gave me the job of retiling the roof. Would've made good money too if I hadn't gone and cut off me finger," hollered the man, the morphine he had been given was clearly working, he seemed oblivious to the pain of his finger - or the pressure gauze that was stemming the majority of the blood flow from covering the bed he was on with blood.

Lexi scribbled her notes onto her admissions sheet, before snapping on a pair of disposable white gloves.

"Well," Lexi said in her 'doctors voice' "you've cut your thumb clean off, and I'm supposing you used an electric tile cutter?"

"Yeah, one of them new ones, 2016 model it was ~"

"Okay, well, it doesn't really matter what model it is it'll still carry the same germs as an older tile cutter. You'll need an intravenous course of antibiotics to stem off any germs kicking about the wound before we reattach your thumb," Lexi cut off the man from telling her the be all and end all of the tile cutter, he probably didn't even know where he was and she imagined when he came down off the morphine he would be in too much pain to remember her curtness.

"If you'll just sit back sir, one of the nurses will be with you shortly to take you up to one of the wards to schedule your surgery."

With that Lexi turned and walked out of the curtained cubicle, leaving the builder from the Natural History Museum babbling. Lexi returned to the nurses station, throwing his patient file on the
"moderate" pile of the patient admissions. Her attention turned to the next bazillion files waiting on the bench and she grabbed the top one. She read the cubicle number off of the top of the file and turned only looking up to check she wasn't going to go flying over someone's wheelchair. Lexi continued reading the file, her eyes glazing over as she read the notes.

'Patient, male, mid-twenties. Chest pain, admitted with a preliminary ECG scan: results inconclusive.' Lexi sighed, she assumed it was probably just another addict looking to lift a few strong pain killers for an easy ride. Her slender body pushed through the cubicle curtain, her face still looking at the chart.

"Hello sir, my name's Doctor Stuart. I've read that you've been admitted with chest pains."

"Is your bedside manner like that with everyone, Lexi?" a familiar voice made her look up, it was a humorous tone and light hearted.

On the bed, and in a gown was Sherlock. He was leaning back on the bed with his hands behind his head. He looked quite comfortable.

"Sherlock," Lexi started "what on earth are you doing here?"

"Well I've got a lead on the case we're working on and this is the only way they'd let me see you," Sherlock replied, his voice very nonchalant giving the fact he had faked chest pains in order to see her.

"Why are you wearing a gown?" Lexi couldn't help but let her gaze look briefly over Sherlock before her gaze snapped back to his icy blues.

"Well, they seemed to think it was easier for you to examine me if I was in a gown. I tried to tell them I'd be fine with my clothes on but they seemed to insist. Besides I have some fun little ECG clips on my chest and they'd look awfully funny in my usual attire, don't you think?" he quipped, still not moving.

Lexi sighed, she dropped the file on his legs before she opened his gown to his waist. True to his word, Sherlock had clips over his chest. She was sure he could've taken them off himself but Lexi took the few moments to appreciate inflicting minor pain on the detective.

"So, what's this lead?" Lexi asked, slowly peeling off the first few clips.

"Well --" his face twitched with the slow peeling motion, "the shooting had nothing to do with the first murder, it seems. There are no known links with the gardener and this other person. I've gone through the CCTV of the last 24 hours of the second guys life, he met one person in his last hours.

"Who?" Lexi asked, peeling the last few clips off of Sherlock's chest, her hand lingered on his chest - she noted subliminally that he had a six pack, probably because he was so slender, rather than him hitting the gym like a steroid-head.

"The CCTV, unfortunately, was too grainy to make out. But from what I can tell it was a man with dark hair. They met in a pub of all places and the other man left five minutes after he met our gardener friend. He left about two hours afterwards, he tottered over so I'm assuming he had one too many. Most likely in response to something that occurred in that five minutes."

Lexi raised a brow before hearing an alarm ringing through the A&E department. She turned and leaned out of the curtain. A grade-1 emergency call, Lexi was needed elsewhere.

"Well, you're the detective Sherlock. I've got another six hours of this shift left. I can come over and
help you work it out later if you like, if you haven't already gotten this dark haired mystery man," Lexi said turning back towards Sherlock.

"I'll see you at Baker Street tonight then, let yourself in - we never lock the door."

"You never lock your door?"

"Well, who's going to break into the world's smartest detectives home and not expect to get caught? Besides Mrs Hudson took self-defence classes after the American incident."

Lexi wanted to ask more but the alarm was still ringing. Any longer and she'd miss the call and be in a heap of bother.

"Tonight then, Sherlock."

Lexi stole one more glance at Sherlock's chest before she turned and ran off down the hallway towards the ambulance entrance.

It was 10PM by the time Lexi finished her shift. What was meant to be a quick stint to top up her hours had turned into a thirteen hour shift and Lexi was well and truly knackered. The evening air was a welcome refreshment to the stuffy Dettol smelling hallways of St. Barts. Lexi rubbed the back of her neck before scanning the street for a taxi. Instead of a taxi Lexi saw a black car with blacked out windows waiting on the other side of the street. A man in a suit stood with his hands together staring at her. He leaned into his ear piece before walking towards her. She wasn't sure whether she should run or smack the guy in the face.

"Ms Stuart?"

"Uh ... yeah?" she said slowly, her left foot instinctively taking on step back so she could pivot around and run like the wind into the hospital.

"Please get into the car."

"Why?"

"Please get into the car before we put you into the car."

Lexi could see two other men standing by the car and she stifled a unamused sigh. It seemed the woman had little choice in the matter.

Walking across the street with the man in the suit at her side she got into the back of the car, one of the other men opening the door for her. In the car was another woman, typing on her phone.

She said nothing as the car pulled away.
The car pulled up outside a large abandoned warehouse. Lexi frowned at the location and three things went through her head; 1) she was probably going to get murdered, 2) no one knew she was here and 3) the men escorting her had no banter whatsoever. Lexi had tried to chat in the car, her acceptance of her situation and the massive headache attacking her brain made her quite calm. Of course in true cloak-and-dagger fashion no one had spoken, not even the woman with the phone.

Through tarpaulin sheets was a wide space with a chair in the middle of the room. In front of the chair was a man with an umbrella, tailored suit and a stern look on his face. He vaguely reminded her of Sherlock with his analysing gaze. The men in the suits plonked her down into the chair with some force, Lexi turned and watched them leave.

"Ask a girl if she likes it rough next time," called Lexi, getting in the last jibe from the silent shenanigans.

"Doctor Alexandra 'Lexi' Stuart. First in your class, could've graduated earlier but chose not to, more intelligent than any of your peers." The man had a little red note book, he kept peering down at the book as he talked, Lexi tilted her head as he spoke her face not betraying any emotion.

"You're an interesting woman, Doctor Stuart. It's a shame your heavy drug use hold you back, I imagine you'd be quite a renowned doctor by now."

"It's nice you have a little biography of my life there, are you not going to introduce yourself before you get to reading out my med scores?" sarcasm dripped from her mouth as she spoke, she was clearly unamused with the little fiasco unfolding.

"I don't think you appreciate the gravity of the situation you are in, Doctor Stuart. If I want to, I can make you disappear. Stop you advancing in your little career. Lock you up. Now please, lets stop the little charade of sarcasm."

Lexi pursed her lips in thought.

"If your intention is to scare me, you're doing a terrible job."

The man with the umbrella seemed to find this funny because he smiled slightly before leaning against his umbrella.

"What do you know about Sherlock Holmes?" he asked, his voice cutting into her headache like a knife.

What did she know about Sherlock Holmes? Her mind skimmed her memories of the detective; his mind was like hers it never slowed down, he had an intensely strange sense of humour that she found oddly amusing and his tea making skills were beyond unreal (even for a woman who didn't care for the sugary stuff.) She was captivated by him.

"Brown hair, blue eyes ..." she paused as she noticed the man's irritation rising in his face, "amazing six pack - although he probably doesn't have to maintain it like those gym addicts."

The man seemed to find this even more infuriating but his smile was maintained on his face.

"Hmm, quite. I have an interest in keeping an eye on Sherlock and I also keep an eye on the people he interacts with. You are one of those people," his voice became more stern, if that was even possible,
"you are a corrupting influence on Sherlock," Lexi went to defend herself, but she was cut off before she was able, "don't think I don't know about your little overdose yesterday."

Lexi froze, her face betraying her surprise that this man had clearly been watching her for a while. The man smiled further at her surprise.

"It would be in everyone's best interest if you ended your relationship with Sherlock."

"Thanks for your interest in me, it really makes me flattered," Lexi countered, standing up from the chair. The man with the umbrella was the same height as Sherlock. Lexi looked him up and down before breaking into her own smile. She crossed her arms and put her index finger on her chin, as if she was trying to think.

"A strange man abducts me from my place of work, he has an interest in Sherlock Holmes which, by the way, kinda borders on creepy and has the ability to stalk my life and history," she met his gaze with challenging eyes, before she walked slowly around him in a circle, "there's only one reason someone would go that far to protect a consulting detective."

"You will not go near Sherlock Holmes," snapped the man, his eyes following her around as she walked around him.

"Given your age, you're probably ten years older than Sherlock. You have the same analysing gaze, your mouth twitches the same way when you're undermined and your attempts to dissuade me from working with Sherlock border on the insane."

The man with the umbrella sighed, looking down at the floor.

"You're the same height, you stand the same way and you have similar coloured hair to Sherlock," Lexi paused, finally facing towards the man with the umbrella a broad smile on her face.

Realisation struck Lexi, she pointed at the man as her mouth opened as the gossip unfolded itself.

"Family is such a pain, isn't it?" Lexi said watching the man with the umbrella stare at her, "o-hoh I'm right aren't I? You drum your fingers when you're angry ... just like Sherlock does ... you must be worried big brother."

"Sherlock has many names for me, big brother is not something he likes to be reminded of," the man with the umbrella said, "I look out for Sherlock because he has a tendency to associate with ... unusual people."

Lexi snorted, "I have been told I'm unusual."

"Quite. So you can imagine my displeasure when you come into Sherlock's orbit. You've already proven yourself unstable and dependent on Sherlock."

Lexi's brow dropped into a furious scowl.

"Perhaps you should focus on your own life than worrying about your brothers," Lexi turned and walked towards the tarpaulin curtains having had enough of the man's bravado.

"This is your only warning, Doctor Stuart. Please consider your own future."

Lexi passed through the tarpaulin, saying nothing, she walked towards the car which was still waiting for her. Slumping into the back of the car with the assistant still sitting in the same place, Lexi looked at her.
"You can take me to Baker Street."

The woman looked at her from her phone for the first time.

"I'm afraid we can only drop you off at St. Bartholomew's Hospital."

Lexi sighed and clipped in her seatbelt, "Off we go then."

The car pulled away, leaving the man with the umbrella standing in the warehouse. He pulled out his phone, typed in a number and placed the phone to his ear.

"Lestrade. Put me through to him."
WARNING:  
This chapter is a little graphic, scroll to the end for the reveal if you don't like graphic detail!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Well now, I get low and I get high,  
And if I can't get either, I really try,  
Got the wings of heaven on my shoes,  
I'm a dancin' man and I just can't lose,  
You know it's all right, it's okay,  
I'll live to see another day..."

The man leaned forwards with a pout on his slender, pale face.

The man strapped to the chair tried to talk but his mouth was gagged with a BDSM ball gag and it came out garbled. Tears and blood mixing together as they ran down his gored cheeks.

"Mfphh mpfh mmhm!" moaned the man on the verge of rocking like a baby - except he couldn't because he was strapped to the chair wearing a strait jacket.

The man with the pout on his face leaned forwards almost nose to nose with the bound man. He looked at the bound mans features, like he was looking at a dissected frog. The bound man was full of fear, he oozed fear - literally. The pouting man liked it, he smiled as he took a step back, a sledgehammer in his hands.

"Whether you're a brother or whether you're a mother,  
You're stayin' alive, stayin' alive,  
Feel the city breakin' and everybody shakin',  
And we're stayin' alive, stayin' alive,  
Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive, stayin' alive,  
Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' aliveeeeee...

He brought the sledgehammer down on the man's kneecaps. The cartilage and bone sprayed outwards like pieces of ash from a bonfire, dusting the room in a fine coating of white speckles and bloody red muscle. The bound man screamed through the gag, his eyes so very close to popping out of their sockets thanks to the exertion.

The man with the sledgehammer didn't seem to mind as he span in a circle, throwing his index finger in the air and back again, his hips thrusting to the beat. In fact he seemed quite ecstatic at the outward destruction. The music was so loud the man with the sledgehammer probably didn't even hear the man screaming. He probably didn't even care either.

The final stanza rang out in the room, the man with the sledgehammer slut-dropped to the floor, ass twerking while singing along.
The Bee Gees song ended. The music stopped.

All that was left in the room was the sound of the man crying out through the gag in pain.

"What did you think of my dance?" asked the man with an Irish lilt in his voice.

The man with the gag continued screaming, blood vessels in his eyes popping in unison to his ragged breathing.

The Irish man stopped, the sledgehammer rested over the back of his shoulders. His lips pursed as he watched the man writhing on the chair.

"It's such a shame when people don't know talent when they see it," muttered the man, looking down upon the shattered kneecaps of his counterpart.

He raised the sledgehammer like he was about to bat a ball and brought it down across the mans face. A smile erupted on the Irish mans face, a toothy, white smile. The gagged mans head caved in to the side as the sledgehammer connected with his temple. Brains, skull and blood exploded across the room, across the Irish mans face and over his suit. The gagged mans head slumped and the crying stopped.

The Irish man dropped the sledgehammer like a discarded toy, gazing over his destruction with blank eyes. He turned, looking into the mirror opposite him.

The man that stared back had slicked back black hair, pale skin and a tailored suit with a black tie - he was drenched in blood spatter and brain matter.

Taking a white handkerchief the man started to dust off the blood like the droplets were water or ice cream across ones face.

He straightened his tie and placed on aviator sunglasses.

"James Moriarty, you dawg!" shouted the man, still envying himself in the mirror, "it's time to go and find some FUN!"

Moriarty left the room singing Stayin' Alive under his breath, the dead mans head still swinging from the kinetic energy left by the sledgehammer.

Chapter End Notes

Hope y'all are ready for some Moriarty fun-times!
Lexi threw herself down into Sherlocks chair. She kicked off her black laced boots and shoved her feet over the arm rest and lit up a cigarette without a word, her face a scowl.


Lexi took a long drag on her cigarette before blowing it up into the air. Her green eyes lazily rolled towards John and Sherlock who were standing by the doorway into the kitchen.

"Your brother's a real peach," said Lexi, her eyes resting on Sherlock's blue ones.

John nodded in understanding and Sherlock made a dramatic sigh before returning to whatever experiment he was working on. Lexi was sure she'd be able to catch up but her mood was too focussed on the awkward conversation she'd had with the man with the umbrella.

"Abduct you to an abandoned warehouse like a mass murder, did he?" asked John, propping himself in his chair. Lexi looked at John, the cigarette in her mouth, she nodded before putting her head back on Sherlock's other armrest. "He did that to me too, back in the day. I'm surprised you weren't more afraid."

Lexi snorted and looked back at John.

"Why would I be frightened of a man who clearly has substantial trouble walking long distances because he's abused years of sugar?" It was a rhetorical question, to which Sherlock laughed in the background and John frowned in confusion.

"I can also take care of myself, Doctor Watson," Lexi argued noting the incredulous look on John's face, John was obviously having a hard time figuring out how such a small person could look after themselves against three men, "like you I am also a doctor and I hope you would know how to disable a patient as well as heal them, it's reversed anatomy after all, but unlike you I am also quite skilled in martial combat," another puff on the cigarette, "I'm not, like, saying I'm Jet-Li or anything but I know how to disarm any guy wanting to grab a feel."

John nodded, his bottom lip sticking out impressed and now sated with Lexi's reasoning. Sherlock appeared in the living room, typing on his phone.

"Yes, Mycroft has a habit of abducting my friends," Sherlock froze and Lexi noted the rigidity in his face - saying friends was clearly not in the detectives repertoire, he cleared his throat, "I do frequently tell him not to spy on me but you know how the government, always prying into other peoples businesses."

"Your mother must have been as high as a kite when she named you and your brother," Lexi mused puffing out smoke like a steam train. John snorted as Sherlock looked over his phone with a glare. Lexi fluttered her eyes lashes at the detective his face went rigid once more when he looked at her for more than a few seconds, John seemed to pick up on the extended look from Sherlock because he shuffled in his seat and the two of them snapped to attention.

"So, uh, where did you get on our mystery CCTV friend?" asked Lexi, sitting up properly and stubbing out the cigarette on the side of her boot. The pinkette had noticed the skull in the corner but didn't want to seem to presumptuous by discarding of her own cancer-sticks in his makeshift ash tray. (Why did he even have one anyway?) Lexi shook her head to rid herself of the creeping thoughts, Sherlock glanced at her but said nothing.
"Not a thing," said Sherlock simply, showing Lexi the image at the same time.

"What do you mean 'not a thing'?" repeated John, his face blanching at his companions supposed defeat, "how does Sherlock, the worlds most prying man, not know who someone is based on location and facial profiling?"

"I said not a thing because there literally is not a thing about the man. He doesn't exist. There is no one who saw him enter or leave the pub, no fingerprints in the pub, nothing. The only witness we have is the man lying dead on a slab in Molly's lab."

Lexi sat forward, her elbows resting on her knees, her interest piqued at the new puzzle. She heard John begin to rattle off theories of who the man was but Lexi's mind dismissed them all, soon enough John's voice (and even Sherlock's - who was in the middle of berating his companion) became nothing but the rush of wind.

Lexi's eyes opened and she was standing on the top of a high rock, the sea was all around her and the wind whipped through her hair. In front of her was a whiteboard and in her hand was a black marker. Next to her stood the shaded image of the man from the CCTV, his face as distorted and pixelated as it was on Sherlock's phone. Lexi circled the man slowly, the obvious signs were there - those that had been on display in the image: black, slicked back hair, sun glasses, black suit with black tie. His face was even facing towards the CCTV camera but the cameras capabilities was shoddy at best. Lexi stopped and used her hands to zoom in on the image. The image zoomed in for her, still pixelated but only showing the tops of the mans shoulders and face, the woman frowned and tilted her head to the side. She wrote on the blackboard;

Confident.

Obvious.

Fearless.

Professional.

Lexi paused as the wind swept the other way, she looked up towards the horizon where the wind was suddenly blowing. On the far reaches of the sea were black storm clouds and rolling thunder, a few moments passed and lightning lit up the clouds. In the pit of her stomach Lexi felt the stirrings of butterflies, but, not the kind one got when they were excited. Instead they felt like the dark depths of emptiness, rising up and making her feel nauseous.

Bad.

Lexi opened her eyes to find John and Sherlock staring at her in silence. She wondered how long she'd been working things out in her mind.

"A man who can disappear, who pointedly looks at the only camera in London that captures his face, who wears sunglasses in the smog of London?" Lexi muttered, she looked up at Sherlock, "I think you need to speak to your big brother, detective. We're looking for a spook who doesn't mind showing his face. You said your brother relentlessly spies on you, yes? He'll have access to every camera around London. An unidentified man who can't be profiled surely will have popped up under your brothers radar."

Sherlock nodded slowly, his mind coming to grips with her deductions, but then he smiled manically clearly a new idea forming in his mind.

"We do need my brother to help us, but we don't exactly need to speak to him..." John sighed. Lexi
decided this had been done before, perhaps more than once, "Coats on, chaps! We need to break into Lestrade's office."

The night air was crisp against Lexi's skin as the trio walked towards Scotland Yard's police offices. It was well past 2am when they got out of the cab and Sherlock seemed very self-assured that he'd be able to stroll right past the night-guard on duty. Lexi said nothing and John sighed again. She was sure his presence at Sherlock's side was to be the detectives ignored spiritual advisor, his words of wisdom were often disregarded though he did seem determined to try. Who knew, perhaps one day it would work.

The front door automatically slid open to the bright lit reception area. A night-shift police officer was sitting behind the desk watching TV on a small screen, that didn't really surprise Lexi though, the NSY were known for their lackadaisical manner. Sherlock barely stopped, he flashed an ID card to the man behind the desk who barely raised his eyes from the TV.

"This way please," directed Sherlock, a very convincing Scottish accent lilting out of his mouth. Lexi stared at his back as they walked and chose not to make eye contact with the receptionist - not that he seemed bothered. They passed into the corridor full of working police officers and, against Lexi's pessimistic view, glided through the crowds unchecked and invisible. It seemed once a person had passed the reception desk they were free to roam the corridors at will. To serve and protect indeed...

Sherlock stopped at a door engraved with "Chief Dt. Insp. G. Lestrade". Lexi watched Sherlock open the door with a set of keys produced from his pocket. They got into the empty office and once John had closed the door and pulled down the blinds Lexi turned to Sherlock, who was in the process of hacking into Lestrade's computer.

"How did we just do that?" Lexi asked incredulously.

The detective seemed to disapprove of her question.

"That's the first silly thing you've said, Lexi, you sound just like John," the brow-beaten doctor didn't bother to respond to him, "I often pickpocket Lestrade when he's irritating me, I just so happened to lift his ID badge and his keys. Of course I placed them back once I made a mould and copy of them when he drove us to Baker Street the other night. The rest is pretty straightforward psychology."

Lexi's petulant nature came to the surface listening to him so she stuck her tongue out when Sherlock looked back at the computer screen. John caught her eye and smiled knowingly but returned his attention to peeking back through the blinds to make sure no one walked in on them. Lexi sat herself on the edge of Lestrade's desk, dangling her boots just above the floor, waiting for Sherlock to finish hacking into Lestrade's computer.

"All accounts of the NSY are attached to the government mainframe ... one just needs to know how to find it," muttered Sherlock, fingers flying across the keyboard at impressive speed, "aaaaand we're in. Now to just log in to Mycroft's account ..."

A duh-duh noise sounded up from the computer and Sherlock frowned, his face raising up from the screen. Lexi peered over to the computer and noted that the password had been rejected. Sherlock mumbled to himself and continued typing. Another noise sounded and Sherlock's fingers were sounding more and more irate by the second.
Lexi shuffled off the table and sat in the chair that Sherlock was leaning over. He looked down at her momentarily in surprise but said nothing. Lexi leaned towards the screen looking at the flashing cursor. "What exactly have you tried?"

"Oh a number of algorithms and numerical code related to Mycroft's accounts," said Sherlock, trying his best to deflect his failures. Lexi gave him a sideways glance before turning back to the screen. The red note book had been in Mycroft's hand throughout their entire encounter. On more than one occasion Lexi had caught glimpses of the page he was reading from. There was one word in particular that kept catching her eye. She typed it into the password box and received a 'da-ding!' as the account began to load. Their hijacked computer began to process the outside clearance it needed.

The pinkette could feel eyes on her and when she looked up Sherlock was staring at her irately.

"How did you know?" he asked, "I've read every computing algorithm there is to know and not even I knew that encryption."

Lexi smiled as the loading screen changed to the entry window.

"Not everything is about algorithm, dear Sherlock, your brother isn't half as intelligent he claims to be."

Sherlock stared at her intensely and Lexi could feel her cheeks turning rosy from his attention.

"His password is you. The one thing you don't think he thinks about - except it isn't as straightforward as that. Your brother is a government official after all, so it has to be more than just a name," Lexi explained, "He's too up his own ass to make it too encrypted though. Family is always a number one go-to for passwords."

Sherlock tapped his fingers on the desk, Lexi was enjoying this far too much.

"Sherly," she said, "Your brothers password was Sherly."

Sherlock stared at her for a horrified moment, John let out a loud 'HA' in amusement and Lexi turned her attention back to the computer painfully aware that they didn't have as much time as they would've liked.

Sherlock took over the keyboard but he didn't evict her from the chair. From her close proximity to him she could smell the faintest touch of aftershave, she liked it. (Her lips traced over his neck as she spoke, her hand going for the violin.)

Lexi sat back opting to bite her nail rather than think about that night. She took the moment to think about herself; the headache was still drumming away in her brain and the cotton wool feeling was still wrapped like a vice around her brain and eyes. Lexi had had no doubt that if Sherlock hadn't broken into her apartment she would be lying on a slab in the morgue of St. Barts, but that short moment where her thoughts had melted and the Always had evaporated had felt fucking magical. The amount of drugs she'd injected into herself was probably enough to kill an elephant and quite frankly she was shocked she even woke up. Sherlock had said nothing of the incident though she was sure when they were next alone he'd bring it up.
"Got it," a voice broke her from her thoughts. Lexi looked up and ducked underneath Sherlock's arms to see the screen. John came around the other side and leaned forwards too. The three of them were staring at the computer.

NAME: JAMES MORIARTY

AGE: ???

D.O.B: ???

WANTED: YES

PERSON OF HIGH INTEREST TO INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS

FOR CRIMES INCLUDING ARSON, LARCENY, MURDER, TORTURE, KIDNAPPING, TERRORISM.

SEE EXTENDED FILE FOR FURTHER DETAILS.

No one said anything for a few moments.


Sherlock was still staring at the screen and John's lips twisted. Lexi got the impression there was something she was missing. Sherlock's face was frozen, it conveyed no emotion and John's face screamed worry with a teeny tiny bit of fear.

"Something wrong?" she asked, eyes flitting between the two men.

"Moriarty ... is a name we've dealt with on a few of our cases. My blog ... 'A Study in Pink' ... 'The Wounded Soldier' ... they all link back to the name, Moriarty. We've just never had the question to the word," mumbled John, his face still staring at the mugshot image.

Sherlock had still not said anything.

The sounds of footsteps and raised voices became apparent to Lexi the longer the two men stayed silent. Lexi stood up, pushing the two of them aside before she moved towards the blinds. She lifted one of the wooden slats on the blinds and saw Lestrade stalking towards the door, shouting at the man who'd been on the reception desk. Obviously their log in had sent off an alarm remotely, probably to both Lestrade and Mycroft.

"We need to go," said Lexi running back towards the computer. She took out her iPhone and snapped a picture of the mugshot and attached document, she had a brilliant memory but needed time to compile the data in her head. A quick hit and run on information was not the way she stored memory. Lexi turned off the monitor realising they had no time to log off from Mycroft's accounts while Sherlock had eventually broken himself of his stupor long enough to look out the window to see how far down they'd have to jump. Going out the door was clearly not an option, Lestrade was already mad as hell at her for the earlier car ride. Even though Lestrade was moderately high up in the NSY, he didn't seem to have the same respect in terms of access to offices as his peers - they were lucky in that regard since many of the senior members of the NSY had offices on the top floor, Lestrade's was at the very back of the ground floor. The window out into the back alley was small
but thankfully the three of them were also small. A man of Mycroft's stature would have struggled to get out of the window. Lexi noted that if she were ever in this predicament again not to bring along Sherlock's older brother.

Out first into the small back alley went John, she heard his feet drop onto the floor and then next out went Sherlock his long coat billowing in the wind. Lexi was last and just as she went to climb out the window the door burst open.

Time stopped for Lexi. She weighed up her options. She could have jumped out the window and ran off with Sherlock and John, but the NSY even for all of their failings, knew there would only be so many pink haired women breaking into the Chief Inspector's office at 3 in the morning.

Lexi threw her phone to Sherlock who opened his mouth to speak. He caught the phone and stared at her with longing eyes. "Find out as much as you can about him, Sherlock. Then get me the fuck out," she glanced over her shoulder as a plethora of police filled the room, her green eyes looked back at the detective and his friend, "run!"

And then Lexi was dragged away from the window with her arms forced behind her back. Even for her skinny frame, the police pushed her to the floor so that she couldn't move. More footsteps sounded by the door, but Lexi couldn't move her head to see who it was.

Greg Lestrade kneeled down and came into her vision. "Fancy meeting you here, Doctor Stuart. Out for a midnight trip, were we?" Lestrade's voice was full of assuredness as his captive could do nothing but stare at him.

Lexi stared at the greying man a half smile across her face.

"I just find your office decor suuuuper cute," she remarked sarcastically. Lestrade sighed and looked up at the man who was practically sitting on her.

"Take her to an interview room and leave her there until I say so."

Lexi had a feeling she was going to miss her placement tomorrow.
If Detective Lestrade's jaw extended any further, Lexi was sure it would drop off. He had spent the past fifteen minutes staring at her across the table with his arms folded and a stern expression on his face. She had been plonked into the grey, mirrored room around 4-hours ago and had only had one person come into contact with her; the donut man. He'd brought her four donuts and a sad looking cup of tea. She would never understand why people brought her tea. (Maybe you're a tea person.) Lexi swished her hand in front of her face to get rid of the thought before returning to Lestrade's angry gaze. His face had gone from stern to concerned, perhaps because of her twitches to get rid of the visual aids her brain so often provided for her.

There was one last donut on the plate. Like a hamster she had stuffed two in her mouth at the same time when she realised she'd eaten less again than her cocaine trip. The third one had been somewhat less hasty since Lexi wondered whether or not it was some kind of test, a mental challenge. After two hours the third donut had been consumed. They weren't bad donuts, as far as donut judgement went, but Lexi was sure she would rather have been sitting at home -- (at Sherlock's) she had shaken her head dispelling the thought -- eating a takeout and pouring over this Moriarty person. Her stomach rumbled again at the thought of more food and for about half an hour Lexi had stared through the 'mirror' (she'd seen enough police shows to know it was a one way mirror) trying to figure out how many people were watching her and if one of those was John or Sherlock or Sherlock's delightful elder brother Mycroft. When she decided nothing was going to happen anytime soon, Lexi had pulled the plate with the donut on towards her.

She stared at the donut and the donut had stared at her in a game of wits that was so daring she wasn't sure she'd be able to cope. And then Lestrade had come in.

Lexi sat back from her staring competition with the donut and watched the detective as he sat and stared at her angrily. In the fifteen minutes it took for him to speak, Lexi had eaten the last donut - but not before the jam in the middle squirted outwards towards the Inspector and landed just in front of him on the table. Lexi almost choked on the last piece of donut but managed to refrain herself. Instead she forced the donut down and cleared her throat.

"My bad," she started casually, her finger pointing towards the jam.

Lestrade didn't move his face away from hers. He still said nothing.

"So, uh, are you having some kind of stroke?" Lexi asked, her hand finding its way under her chin and her elbow resting on the table, "I mean you can tell me 'cos I am technically a doctor."

Lestrade drummed his fingers against the top of his arm. Lexi decided he wasn't having a stroke and was instead really rather mad.

"THIS ISN'T A GAME, ALEXANDRA," shouted Lestrade suddenly after a few minutes of silence. Lexi sat back with her eyebrows raised - no one called her Alexandra unless they knew her. So he'd obviously spent a lot of the past four hours looking into her past and looking into her medical past too. Steel walls came down around Lexi, she felt suddenly on guard against the previously jolly man. If he was to be professional with her, she would respond clinically to him.

"Now I have your attention," Lestrade started, his voice substantially quieter, "just what the hell were you doing in my office? And just how did you get hold of Mycroft Holmes' security clearance? Are you aware you're looking at maximum time in prison for a breach in government security?"
It was Lexi's turn to drum her fingers. Lestrade had bags under his eyes, his clothes were creased and he had two day stubble. Someone hadn't stayed at home the past few days. Her eyes travelled to his fingers - his ring that had been on his finger when she'd first met him was gone. Lestrade didn't strike Lexi as a cheating man which meant there was the traditional 'too-much-work-not-enough-sex' relationship between the Chief Inspector and his wife.

"Trouble in paradise, Detective?" she asked, Lestrade looked at himself before frowning, "how's the on-call bed treating you?"

Lestrade looked positively foaming at this point.

"Alexandra are you even aware how much trouble you're in? You've been placed at a break in, for Christs' sake."

Lexi sat back and snorted, "Puh-lease, we both know my prints aren't the only ones there. And I don't think your consulting detective will work for you if he's put in prison."

Lexi had him in a vice. Lestrade's duty bound him to be professional but the man who obviously had constant battles with Sherlock looked like he wanted to smash her face into the table. He pursed his lips and sat back, looking for the right words.

Just as he went to speak the door opened. A woman entered the room, dressed in a smart pin-striped suit and skirt with black heels that Lexi assumed took years to master not looking like a twat in.

"Dr Stuart has been released into my employers company. It's all been approved with your superiors," she handed Lestrade a letter, who snatched it away.

Lestrade's lips moved as he read through the paper before looking back at Lexi with irritated eyes. He sighed before waving his hand in her direction.

"Off you go then, and if I catch you in the middle of anything, anything, I swear to God I'll arrest you for contempt."

Lexi pushed back her chair and stood up following the woman out of the door. Mycroft was going to be so mad with her.

"Thanks for the donuts, Inspector," Lexi called cheerily behind her.

When she got into the car, she expected the woman to get in next to her - as had happened last time. Instead the woman continued walking away and the car pulled away. Lexi frowned, she hadn't even had the chance to get her personal belongings. The pinkette tried the door when the car stopped at a traffic light, it was locked. Lexi tried to see through the window into the drivers portion of the car but couldn't see anything more than the outline of the driver. Lexi sat back in her chair and frowned, something felt terribly wrong with this whole thing. The pit in her stomach was back and Lexi for reasons unbeknownst to her wanted to be back in the police station getting grilled by Lestrade.

When the car eventually pulled up Lexi had found herself in Mayfair, where the not-so-cheap houses resided. The driver got out of the car and opened the front door to one of the three storey houses in front of her. Lexi stared at the doorway, suddenly not quite sure if this was a way for Mycroft to get her unawares. She sighed realising yet again she had little choice in the decisions she made, the man looked to be around 6ft 2 and Lexi was pretty sure if it came to a fight or chase his bulky size would probably snap her like a twig. Up the stairs Lexi went.
The black door closed behind her and Lexi eyed up her surroundings. Grandeur was the description that popped into Lexi's head. Most houses in Mayfair weren't cheap but this house screamed expensive, even for expensive's standards. The floor was made of proper oak that was varnished so much it reminded Lexi of a bowling alley. A sprawling staircase with curled railings split the house, the stairs were pure marble and the landing housed around a dozen or so closed doors from what she could see. Around her were custom made furnishings: chez longues, winged back chairs, antique side boards and exquisite vases which Lexi assumed were probably worth twice what she would earn in an entire year. She made a mental note not to be clumsy.

Lexi didn't know whether to walk through the house or stand where she was. Just then music could be heard from down the hall. Another closed door blocked her view of the source of the noise. Lexi walked forwards slowly, her eyes constantly taking in her surroundings - the Always always needed feeding. The music got louder as she got towards the door, she stopped outside it with her hand on the door knob. When Lexi listened hard enough, she could hear moving feet in the room in time to the music.

She pushed the door open.

In front of her was a man, probably 6ft or so, slender with dark hair. Lexi tilted her head sideway as she took in the scene. He was bopping around the room thoroughly enthralled in the music. He was facing away from her, so Lexi couldn't get a good look at his face but she found the man mesmerising. It wasn't until he turned as the music -- *(U2 - Elevation)* her face twitched to dispel the thought -- reached the end of its song that Lexi understood who he was.

Brown eyes met green ones and Moriarty smiled before clicking a button that turned off the music. Lexi knew that she should have felt anxious; the man in front of her was one of the most wanted men in Britain, a constant antagonist of Sherlock's and just down right dangerous. But Lexi couldn't detect the slightest notion of fear in herself and she was sure he could sense that too. He, she thought, was entirely like Sherlock - perceptive and intelligent. But there was something more behind the man, a certain sense of danger that Lexi only experienced riding through a drug high, that completely mesmerised the woman.

Lexi was so mesmerised she said nothing and did nothing as he walked up to her. Moriarty stopped a few inches from her face, his brown eyes devouring every inch of her both physically and mentally. He was intrigued by her and she was intrigued by him.

"You. Are. Fascinating," murmured Moriarty his breath minty from the gum he was chewing, Lexi found it oddly intoxicating. In her subconscious the Always noted he was Irish and that she seemed inexplicably captivated by him. But for the first time she couldn't pay attention to the Always because she was so immersed in Moriarty.

Moriarty leaned in close to her neck, just like she had with Sherlock those few nights ago, but he was the one who moaned as he took in her perfume. Moriarty pulled back, still making the same noise before looking back into her green eyes.

"You are very, very fascinating. And damn, you're hot too. I can see why he likes you."

Lexi blinked slowly, her mind eventually reaching through to her body, her eyes took in Moriarty but like Sherlock she saw nothing but question marks.

"Moriarty, right?" asked Lexi, moving past the man but keeping herself at the same short difference so that she brushed past him. She moved towards the centre of the opulent room and looked at her surroundings.
"Oh no, you my dear, can call me James," replied Moriarty his eyes greedily following her around the room.

"Tell me then, James, what use do you have of me? You wouldn't bring a med student to a fancy house in Mayfair just to make chit-chat."

Moriarty weaved his way towards her, through the delicate furniture until he was circling her again. Lexi had him truly captivated.

"Now, now, Alexandra, let's not rush. I like the foreplay the most," he jibed.

Lexi turned to look at him with a coy smile on her face, "it's the orgasm that I like the most."

He chuckled in his throat before leaning into his pocket, pulling out a phone and checking the time.

Moriarty moved towards the kitchen pulling a white packet out of his pocket. Lexi froze, her eyes trailing after the packet in his hands. It was then Lexi noticed Moriarty had had his eyes on her the entire time. Question marks still plagued her vision. He leaned over the breakfast counter made of pure marble and poured the white substance onto the counter, his eyes never leaving Lexi's face. Her eyes had already betrayed her though and she was watching the suspicious powder hungrily. The question marks were crowding her peripheral vision.

Like a man with experience, Moriarty cut up the substance with a razor blade that had been sitting on the counter already. Somewhere in Lexi's mind it registered that he had preplanned this entire encounter. But Lexi was too busy watching Moriarty cutting up the powder to care. The question marks were pushing their way into her vision and for the first time since the overdose, Lexi felt the itch. As if in response Moriarty took out a fifty pound note and rolled it together, he held it out to Lexi. The woman still didn't move, her face frozen. Outside the traffic blared, people were going about their lives and somewhere Sherlock was working on finding Moriarty, the man connected to the string of murders Sherlock had been working on. In the house on Mayfair Lexi's vision was being crowded by pulsing question marks and the Always was trying its hardest to break down the fringes of her mind, her mind was her last defence that screamed 'don't trust him' but it also faltered slightly at the powder in front of her.

Moriarty could see the inner struggle going on, even though she had been sure her face was frozen. He leaned over the table and snorted a line of the powder before standing back up and breathing in sharply. He had obviously considered that Lexi's mind had processed the idea of danger, but in Lexi's weakening mind all she could see was sweet silence and oblivion. She bit her lip. Again Moriarty held out the rolled up note, his smile now a toothy grin.

"Enjoy the foreplay and we'll get to the orgasm," he said cryptically. Lexi assumed this meant he wouldn't let her leave or tell her her reason for being there until after she snorted what looked like cocaine from the counter top. Lexi moved slowly to the counter, her mind barely able to function through the question marks that clouded her vision. The losing battle in her head told her she shouldn't but the addict in her reasoned that Moriarty wouldn't reveal his plan until she did. She could take one for the team, find out his plan and return to Baker Street a few steps ahead of the consulting detective.

The pinkette stopped just in front of Moriarty who held out the note to her. Lexi still paused and in response Moriarty placed his hands around her waist, bending her over the counter with the note being guided to her nose. His mouth came close to her ear, when he spoke she could feel his breath on her skin.

"Don't you want to know?" he whispered. The world slowly disappeared until it was just Lexi,
Moriarty and the white lines of cocaine. She did want to know, so badly, she wanted to silence the Always and get rid of the question marks that plagued her mind and vision. It was only one line, she reasoned, she had taken so much more *that* night and besides it was for the case.

Lexi snorted.

Her mind exploded into an obliteration of colours and calm. She felt hands around her waist turning her and in her swimming vision she could see Moriarty smiling at her and telling her how well she’d done and how much fun they were going to have. Her vision swam and Lexi supposed there was something stronger in the white powder than just cocaine - unless it was some of the purest cocaine Lexi had done in her entire life. Lexi wiped her nose with the back of her hand.

"Tell me then ... " she said, trying to focus her eyes and failing miserably, "why am I ... am I here?"

Moriarty's faculties seemed much less impaired than hers but she could see through her swimming vision and the exploding colours in her mind that his eyes were massively dilated. His hands were on her hips and through her dazzled gaze she could feel his lips on her neck.

"Why are you here?" Moriarty repeated, his lips trailing against her neck, "because I want you to be. Because I want you to see just how much Sherlock holds you back."

Lexi frowned, at least she tried to, her faculties refused to respond the way she wanted them to. Her mind was entirely at his mercy. She was entirely at his mercy.

"Why, what do you mean?" she asked, bending her neck slightly as his lips traced up towards her ear.

"Sherlock is so ... restrained, so boring, so not you. I've been watching you, Lexi, watching how you work, how your mind works. You're just like him, except you are far more in touch with your ... " he paused his lips finding her earlobe, "primal side. And being wild is so much more fun, don't you think?"

The drugs were making their way through Lexi's system at an incredible pace. Her nerve endings were hyper-sensitive and Moriarty's touch sent shivers down her spine. Somewhere below all the exploding colours and below the murky grey that surrounded her mind, the Always told her that this was wrong. But Lexi was an addict and Moriarty was precisely the drug she wanted and felt like she needed. A moan was the only thing that escaped Lexi's lips and somewhere she felt Moriarty chuckle as his lips made their way across her jaw line.

"I want you to know how brilliant you can be, without him holding you back. I want you to see how fun it is to walk on the wild side," he murmured, his lips eventually finding hers. She didn't stop him when his lips pressed harder into her own because his voice, his breath ... his very being was so very intoxicating and Lexi needed more. His kiss wiped away the Always in her mind just as well as any drug could and his tongue that explored her mouth made the colours in her mind explode even more.

Somewhere in reality his hands had found their way to the bottom of her top and he pulled it off of her with substantial ease. Moriarty let his mouth drift down to her collarbone, she couldn't stop him. Didn't want to. Her bra came away next and Lexi let out another moan as his lips and tongue danced over each nipple, just enough to make her hyper-sensitive nerves dance under the caress of his mouth but not long enough to give her what she needed, what she wanted.

Moriarty flipped her over against the counter one more time, but this time the offer of the note wasn't optional, he shoved it into her hand and this time Lexi didn't hesitate. Another explosion of colours smashed their way across her consciousness and in her drug addled pleasure she felt him slide into
her. Lexi wasn't sure when it had happened, or even when her clothes had come off entirely, but she
didn't make any move to stop him.

His voice danced in and out of her consciousness as she jutted with each thrust.

"Like I said Lexi, you are so much more ... complete when you let yourself fall," a moan escaped his
own throat, planned or not no man, not even James Moriarty, could resist the pleasure sex gave, "life
is so much more FUN when you let yourself embrace your demons."

Somewhere in her mind, Lexi agreed.

__________________________________

Ring --- ring --- ring --- ringgggggggg

Lexi sat up with a start, her head spinning from the movement. Her bedroom swam in to vision and
for a short moment Lexi was lost. Her mind could only really recall the music at Mayfair. Meeting
Moriarty. The cocaine. Was it even cocaine? She wasn't sure but she needed more of it.

Ring --- ring --- ringgggg

The source of her abrupt wake up snapped her mind to attention. Her phone was placed on the
counter top next to her bed, she frowned but on autopilot she answered opting not to say anything.

"Lexi, where are you?" it was Sherlock's voice on the phone and her mind swam with different
versions of events, was any of it real? The drugs jumbled her memory, and she was pretty sure she
was still functioning on the two lines she'd been given not ... she checked her wall clock and raised
her eyebrows in surprise ... two hours earlier. Her mind snapped back to the conversation.

"Home. I'm home," she replied, her voice not wanting to function just yet.

"Good. Lestrade said you disappeared into another unmarked car," Sherlock said, his velvety voice
soothing her down the phone, "we're coming to pick you up, we need to figure out what our game
plan is."

Lexi frowned, her mind still catching up with her awareness.

"No. Sherlock ... I need to sleep," she protested quietly, her eyes closing.

"Sleep can wait, Lexi, we have a lead that we can't wait on," he seemed quite determined.

Lexi sighed and opened her eyes properly, her room coming into full orbit of sight. That was when
she saw the bag. The bag with the white power in it. She froze and stared at it. There was a note on
the desk next to the bag, she stood up and read it.

_Ebrace your demons, Lexi._

-- M

Her hand touched the bag before she heard Sherlock calling her name through the phone.

"Okay, fine, I'll be ready in ten minutes," she muttered.
"Excellent, we'll meet you outside."

The phone went dead and Lexi dropped it back on to the bed. She was sure John and Sherlock were probably outside of the building even now, but then again that didn't surprise her. Her mind was so battered and tired, the Always was sneaking its way back into her consciousness. She rubbed her eyes and groaned into her hands.

There would only be one way to function on such little sleep and still as high as a kite. Half a line would do it, enough to have her faculties but not enough to explode her brain.

Ten minutes later and she was ready, her mind snapped to attention.

Lexi grabbed the note on the desk and ran her fingers along the writing. She sighed and folded the pocket away into her jean pocket before leaving her apartment.
Lexi had left her apartment with a remarkably clear head. In small doses the cocaine sparked up Lexi's mind into fast paced light, the Always danced across her consciousness and sang in harmony with her own thoughts. She danced down the stairs towards the duo who were waiting for her at the kerbside, Lexi absent mindedly wiped her nose with the back of her hand before stopping in front of the detective and his partner.

John spoke first, "so where did you disappear off to last night?"

Lexi squinted at John, her eyelids trying to block out the sun filtering through between the buildings.

"Well someone felt benevolent enough to let me go after our little early morning jaunt, I'm surprised really, Lestrade looked like he was ready to smash my face against the table," she said, her voice sounding far too energetic for a woman who'd spent the best part of her night in a police interview room.

Lexi's hand found its way towards her broken ribs. The drugs and sex and intense making out and obvious passing out had bruised them even more. She was sure if she took off her shirt the bruises would be a hell of a sight. Her attention returned to the present and she noticed Sherlock staring at her like she'd hit him in the face. Lexi averted her gaze and looked back towards John who was talking about Lestrade always being angry, her mind was disengaged from the constant nattering of John - who seemed to fill in the silence with chat - and instead she was looking at the floor, trying her hardest not to pay attention to the stare of Sherlock.

Eventually the conversation stopped and Lexi looked up, Sherlock had turned his attention to his phone and John was trying to hail a cab. Lexi blew out a sigh of relief but it became mixed with a sharp exhalation as the breath rattled past her broken ribs. She winced slightly but tried to retain her composure. Her foot started tapping as they waited for a cab to stop, the lack of motion was making her antsy and irritated, Lexi wanted to be somewhere, do something, do anything that didn't mean standing on the spot waiting for a cab and feeling the looks of disappointment Sherlock threw at her periodically.

A black cab pulled up and Lexi was the first one in, she sat in the car and patted her pocket where the cocaine rested. The last time she'd left her apartment she'd not been back for at least 24 hours, was she hell going to go that long without a hit. The comedown from the high in her mind wasn't worth it - but then, Lexi's mind was in a bizarre place and she had no time for the Always telling her it was wrong to continue the way she was. It occurred to her neither John nor Sherlock had gotten into the cab; when she looked back out of the window they were stood arguing in the street, the cab driver was reading his newspaper while he waited. Lexi tapped her fingers on her knees irately waiting for the men to get into the cab. When it was apparent it was going to be longer than thirty seconds Lexi's thoughts began to dwindle back to the white substance. She was sure if she staggered each hit that she could maintain a certain level of high that kept the Always at bay without impairing her mental function. Her hand dipped into her pocket, she unzipped the air locked bag without having to look and took out a pinch of cocaine. Lexi leaned over her knees as if she was trying to fix her laces -- (except she didn't have laces on her shoes) she shook her head violently to dispel the thought -- then as she sat back up she had the powder on the back of her hand, resting between the crook of her thumb and index finger.

When Lexi inhaled she retained as much composure as she could, her eyes double blinking and her hand instantly taking off the white powder on her nose. It was at that point that the car door opened and Sherlock got in.
"St. Barts," Sherlock said to the driver. John wasn't in the cab as it pulled away and Lexi looked at Sherlock, frowning.

Sherlock looked at her, "John's gone to follow up on something else."

"I thought we were going together?" Lexi asked averting her gaze. She was pretty sure she'd wiped away the excess cocaine from her nose but the way he looked at her, she felt like he was going to see straight into her mind. The past twelve hours had done a great deal towards breaking down the restraints and self discipline Lexi had spent years building up.

"We were, but I think John can handle it on his own," murmured Sherlock, face looking out the window. Lexi couldn't tell if he knew, her mind was trying to meet the level of cocaine in her system and it was failing to act to its usual perceptiveness.

"Why Barts?"

"We've had a separate message from Moriarty, one I don't think could be any clearer," Sherlock murmured cryptically.

The pinkette tapped her fingers irritatedly against her knees, her paranoia was getting the best of her. Sherlock glanced at her hands and then back up at her.

"So where did you go to last night?" he asked, breaking the tense silence, "you never did answer John's question. He's simple enough to be distracted by an anecdote but I am not..."

"Out."

"Where is 'out'?" Sherlock was challenging her, and Lexi said nothing instead choosing to focus her gaze out of the window while chewing on her thumb nail.

They remained in silence for the rest of the journey. When the cab pulled up Lexi got out first not bothering to check the traffic, Sherlock said something to the driver and got out. He didn't give any money over so Lexi supposed he had his own account with the drivers of London - either that or his brother paid everything for him. The petulant nature was working its way through into the high, she chastised herself somewhat before following Sherlock in. He passed down the stairs into the staff wing without even glancing at the receptionist, she followed him along to a chemistry lab which she recognised from her own first year practicals as a fresher.

Sherlock motioned to her to sit down as he went to one of the cabinets. She sat.

"Molly Hooper has been kind enough to make sure we aren't disturbed down here," he wasn't looking at her as he placed a clean syringe on the desk, he continued as he placed assorted paraphernalia on the desk. Lexi felt on edge, but she said nothing as Sherlock continued. "We have as much time as we need."

"To do what?" she asked, her vision dulled thanks to the cocaine. Were they to dissect something? Someone? Look at a dead body? Do a blood analysis? Lexi fidgeted too switched on to just sit still.

Sherlock's blue eyes levelled her gaze.

"To see what he gave you," his voice was careful and hid no sign of malevolence. But he knew and that was enough to make Lexi stand back off of her chair.

Sherlock watched her stand and sighed. She had, in her drug addled state, told him more than she ever could speaking.
"What do you mean?" she asked, guarded.

"Come now, Lexi. You disappeared into an unmarked vehicle and went off the face of the planet for four hours. You turned back up this morning out of the blue. And don't let me start on the erratic behaviour and dilated eyes," he closed the gap between them and grabbed her face, looking into her eyes analytically. Lexi pushed his hands away from her face and she stepped back slightly.

"You don't need a blood analysis to know that, Sherlock," Lexi snapped.

Sherlock raised his hands as if to calm her suddenly erratic behaviour, Lexi gripped the side of the table as if ready to smack it over Sherlock if he stepped closer.

"What did he say to you, Lexi?" asked Sherlock, his face a picture of concern.

Lexi went to reply but before she got out her words, the door opened.

"John I told you--" Sherlock's voiced was raised as if to tell off his ex-flatmate.

But it wasn't John.

"Actually, Lexi didn't do a whole lot of talking if I'm honest with you Sherlock," a familiar voice appeared next to her, but she didn't turn, "that's the thing about cocaine, it really brings out the fun."

Moriarty placed his hand around Lexi's waist. Every behaviour in her body told her to run, run across the room and into Sherlock's protection. But she couldn't move because her weak, shattered, drug addled mind wouldn't let her. She closed her eyes instead as she felt the cold barrel of a gun press to the side of her head and tried to focus on the Always. A tear rolled down her cheek, but she didn't speak.

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Sherlock stared at the duo in front of him. Of all the times for him to send John to a murder scene because he had decided that his time was better spent in the company of Lexi. His eyes searched the woman's face; past the defeated face she was beautiful, even for Sherlock's description of the word. Moriarty had played the Game phenomenally well, the consulting detective had spent so long looking for Moriarty that he had missed the signs that Moriarty had already found him.

"What better way to send you a message than to corrupt the person you're most captivated by?"

The gun pressed to the side of Lexi's head was an invitation for him to try something.

"You make an awful lot of assumptions about a woman I've only just met," Sherlock responded, his voice purposefully careless. The Game still wasn't over and if he had any chance of leaving the room with himself and Lexi alive - he had to be meticulous.

But the man in the crisp suit and slicked back black hair was anything but monotonous.

"Puh-lease, Sherly. Don't get me wrong, I know you don't exactly have a string of ex-lovers banging down your door and believe me, I really do know, but this girl?" he pressed the gun harder against the silent woman's head, "you would burn the whole world for her."

Sherlock continued to watch helplessly at the unfolding scenario. His hand moved slowly towards his pocket.
"And you should you know, really, you should," Moriarty paused pressing his nose against Lexi's neck, he had the time to tease Sherlock since he was the one with the gun pointed to the pinkette's head, "I don't like to fuck and tell but..." he stepped back and watched Sherlock before over-exaggeratedly nodding and mouthing 'she fuck's good.'

Another tear escaped Lexi's closed eyes. Sherlock had his hand in his pocket.

"And DID you know, Sherly, that it doesn't take a lot to drug an addict? Throw in a bit of cocaine to mask the flunitrazepam and you have one fucked up drug addict who doesn't even know they've been drugged," Moriarty smiled a toothy white grin, Lexi opened her eyes and looked up at Sherlock, she looked horrified.

"I am surprised though, given she's meant to be this super smart med student. Even your brother was impressed with her credentials."

Sherlock tilted his head in confusion - why did the man who he had yet to meet know everything about him? Even if he had been watching him his brother hadn't been in direct contact or even phone contact in months. Moriarty saw the confusion on his face.

"I do have eyes and ears everywhere, Sherly," he snapped, "did you think you could just get in the way for the past two years and not have me react?"

"Why are you doing this? To her? To me? Why not just outright try and kill me?" Sherlock asked, his hand gripping the item in his pocket. Their conversation was so very near its end, but Sherlock held his hand in his pocket not yet ready to end the conversation.

"God. Wow. Really? Am I that far ahead of you? Oh your brain must be so slow, how sad," Moriarty jibed, something Sherlock was not used to, "because why the fuck not, Sherly! I do everything that I do because I can. You popped up into my radar two years ago when you stopped the Hatton Garden robbery. Ever since then, well, that's our sweet, sweet history."

Sherlock had clarity for once. Moriarty was smart, the kind of intelligence that went beyond morality. He did what he did because he wanted to test how far he could take it and Sherlock had gotten in the way of his test and had since become his primary focus. Every job he had taken, every accused he had freed, everything had all been because of the man with the gun pressed to Lexi's temple.

Lexi was still staring at him, though her tears had stopped.

"So you've had opportunities to kill me, why haven't you?" Sherlock asked, his hand resting in his pocket. Their conversation was so very near its end, but Sherlock held his hand in his pocket not yet ready to end the conversation.

"Why would I want to kill you when I can fuck, in some cases quite literally, with everything you touch?"

The consulting detective, in one quick motion, brought John's gun level to Moriarty's face. Their argument outside of Lexi's apartment had been an argument over John not trusting Sherlock with a gun since the last time he'd had his hands on one he'd nearly shot Mrs Hudson by shooting at the wall. But Sherlock had taken it anyway because that's just what Sherlock did. He'd had his suspicions when Lestrade called him to say Lexi had been released into what had been a fake letter of excusal from Mycroft, though why the NSY even bothered to check by ringing Mycroft was beyond him. When he'd had a call from one of his homeless network telling him the same car had pulled up in the early hours with Lexi's personal belongings from the NSY and the unconscious pinkette herself, he knew she had been forced into a precarious situation. But this man, this creature in front of him was something else.
How much had Lexi hallucinated? How much had she remembered?

Moriarty openly laughed at the gun.

"And here I thought you were just happy to see me," he forced a fake pout before moving the gun to the back of Lexi's head, using her body as a shield.

"Well, I have things to do and people to screw over. I thought it was high time we met and what better way to do it than over Lexi Stuart? The woman who captured the famous Sherlock Holmes' heart?" Moriarty leaned forward and kissed Lexi on the cheek. Sherlock had to give her credit, she didn't flinch.

"Sorry for the ruphy, darling, but you played your part well and the amount of cocaine and flunitrazepam in your system did make for a pretty fun tryst. Then again you were gagging for it," he paused and chuckled, "the drugs I mean, not me. You really did try to resist but too much ruphy makes James a super bad boy. I hope you liked the little treat I left for you though, that cocaine has no flunitrazepam in it -- I just left that there like Pandora's Box."

Moriarty stepped back from Lexi, his gun still pointing at the back of her head. The pink haired woman looked furious.

Sherlock scowled at Moriarty, it took a depraved man to include the unknowing in their acts. But then Moriarty had just told him he was in it for the chaos, so it shouldn't have surprised him.

"How do you think you're going to get out of here? I'll catch you before you leave this place," Sherlock said, his eyes looking through Lexi and following the movements of the man behind her with his gun.

"Oh. Yeah, you're right," Moriarty paused, like he was thinking about it for a moment but then he side glanced at Sherlock as if he was chastising him for being slow again, he turned Lexi around so that he could place his hand on her cheek, "way ahead of you sunshine."

Moriarty brought the gun level to Lexi's stomach.

A single shot rang out in the room.

Lexi looked to her stomach, her eyes widening as they did. It wasn't like how it was in the films, her guts didn't fly out across the room and there were no explosions. A small, red trickle appeared below her stomach and she watched as the blood flow got larger. Lexi felt a hand on her chest and soon she was falling backwards. Her mind raced and somewhere she heard a 'toodlepip' and a door closing. Suddenly she felt warm as if she'd stepped into a bath, but it wasn't water warming her lower half, it was her own blood.

The medical training in her came to the forefront of her drug addled, shock absorbed brain. She needed to stem the flow of the blood. Her hands felt so sluggish but they crawled up towards the pulsating spot on her stomach. Lexi was surprised at how accurate the text books had been about shock, she couldn't feel a thing except warmth. She wondered if they had to shoot someone to prove some random doctors hypothesis. (FOCUS) Her brain forced her to move, Lexi tried to feel for the pulsating spot but instead found another pair of hands on her stomach pressing down hard. When she opened her eyes, she could see Sherlock leaning over her, keeping her as still as possible until the inevitable help came.
Lexi couldn't hear what he was saying to her, she could just hear what sounded like roaring water rushing past her. Her hand travelled up to reach Sherlock's cheek and she felt something else touch her face - another tear.

Was this what dying felt like?

It was a remarkable experience, though she was sure she'd never have the chance write about it later.

"I'm sorry Sherlock," she coughed, "I really am."

He replied to her but she couldn't hear him, black spots started to steal her vision.

She supposed that this was what it was like to die, after all.

Somewhere in the darkness Lexi could hear a faint beep.
Sherlock had had blood on his hands before. His own blood, John's blood, the militant's blood who was about to chop off Irene Adler's head. But having Lexi's blood on his hands was something entirely different, a unique feeling that he wouldn't wish on his worst enemy. He'd read about this kind of feeling before somewhere and he was sure it was called panic, perhaps a small dosage of fear too.

Of course time had passed by for Sherlock in slow motion, he'd seen Moriarty place the gun against Lexi's stomach and he'd seen the malevolent stare Moriarty had given Sherlock as he shot straight through her stomach. The time he'd been shot, by Mary nonetheless, had been meticulously executed. The bullet wound left in Moriarty's wake was savage, he assumed Moriarty had done his best to maim Lexi without outright killing her. There was no fun in executing someone when you could leave destruction instead. It was intended to hurt Sherlock more, this he knew but he didn't want to acknowledge it. Not now. Not when everything that had captivated his life for the past few days was left bleeding out on the floor. Sherlock had understood Moriarty even before he'd shot Lexi through the stomach. His explanation that he'd essentially ruphied Lexi using her addiction as a means to do so revealed enough to Sherlock; Lexi's mind was already a haze anyway with the cocaine smashing into her mind - her small frame and shaky perception under the influence probably meant she wasn't even aware it had happened. That had obviously been the case, Sherlock had seen Lexi's face at the revelation, it was probably more likely Lexi had had vague fragments of the event (he was not one to judge a high addict in their life choices) and Moriarty had essentially raped her knowing the pinkette didn't have all her faculties. Beneath the fear of losing what he deemed to be his biggest case, as all things with Sherlock were cases, lay anger. Anger knowing the only reason Moriarty had forced Lexi into a situation that was created to destroy any resilience to the oblivion found in drugs, with rape being a convenient side benefit, was to make sure Sherlock got the message; that Moriarty could do anything he pleased because Sherlock had loved ones and Moriarty did not. Sherlock wanted to make him suffer.

But right now in this moment, Sherlock had to let him go. His attention was transfixed to Lexi whose hands were trying their best to stem the blood flow of the gun wound. Moriarty had pushed her over and even though Lexi was already as light as a feather she dropped like a ton of bricks. To her credit she had fallen the right way, just as he had, to stop the acceleration of bleeding out. His coat had come off first using it as a gauze while he kept pressure on Lexi's stomach, his knees were covered in blood but that was the least of his concern.

"Lexi? Alexandra, can you hear me?" he called out urgently, trying to keep Lexi conscious. That was a hard job in itself, given she had already been as high as a kite her brain had enough to overcome let alone complete shock and blood loss. Somewhere in his fried mind he decided he liked her Christian name more than her nickname. Lexi's hands had moved and were pressed against his, the brush of skin seemed to be enough to bring Lexi around and her eyes fluttered open. In the last ten minutes Sherlock had seen and experienced more emotion than he ever had before, Lexi was staring up at him through watery, emerald eyes. Tears had fallen towards her ears as she looked at Sherlock with, for the first time since they'd met, perfect clarity.

"I'm sorry, Sherlock. I really am," her voice was shaky and Sherlock knew if they stayed like this any longer she'd die on the cold, hard floor of the med lab. The concern flashed across his face briefly but he forced a thin, shaky smile down at Lexi.
"You don't need to be sorry, Lexi," he said softly, "I should've seen the signs."

Sherlock felt something wet touch his cheek, if he could move his hands to check he was sure it was a tear on his cheek. Sherlock hadn't even cried when he'd been shot and he was pretty sure that had been the most pain he'd ever felt. Now looking down at the only woman who had made his brain slam on the brakes on the floor with her life ebbing away, he felt an insurmountable amount of pain. Lexi's hand had found his cheek and he was reminded of the night he'd saved her life and she'd stolen his violin from him and he'd been overwhelmed that someone else could play so beautifully yet so melancholy. His cheek pressed against her hand as he called her name, but the seconds slipping past saw the weakening of her hand.

They were in a hospital and there had been a gun shot. His mind had calculated it should have taken two minutes for the NSY to arrive on the scene and only 1 minute for some kind of medical assistance to arrive but still there were no first responders in the room trying to save Lexi. His panic was morphing into anger, he couldn't leave Lexi, the pressure his hands were giving was the only thing stopping Lexi dying even quicker, but if he didn't do something he may as well have sat back and waited for her to shuffle off her mortal coil.

Sherlock's cheeks felt hot and it crossed his mind that he was crying, silently but properly, for the first time. There was nothing he could do that wouldn't hasten the death of Lexi. For once Sherlock was ready to say he was out of his depth. Lexi's hand fell from his cheek and he watched her eyelids begin to flicker and fight with the tempting promise of death.

"Lexi don't fall asleep on me," his voice was ragged with anxiety, "there's so much I want to say to you. I'm just too stubborn to admit when I'm ... human."

Her eyelids had closed, Sherlock could feel her breathing turning ragged as her small frame fought with the internal bleeding and blood loss at the same time.

"FUCK," shouted Sherlock, his hands still heavy on Lexi's stomach. Sherlock seldom swore but he had deemed this moment worthy of fuck. It was a fucked up situation in which Lexi was fucked and he couldn't do anything to fucking stop it.

Just as Lexi's chest started to falter the help arrived. Sherlock was pulled back by hands as a crowd of people poured over Lexi. Another person was speaking to Sherlock but he had tuned them out, his eyes fixated on the spot he had been moments ago. He could still feel her hand on his cheek, his stupid tear-ridden cheek. Whoever was trying to assess him was getting in the way, they began to pull at his face with cold hands to see if there was any injury to him. Sherlock jerked his head away, his hands rising to his mouth as he watched the scene helplessly. Now he had his hands free Sherlock realised his lower face was wet not just from tears but Lexi's blood too, most likely when he'd skidded to a halt on his knees next to her and he'd touched his face without realising. He could hear the person trying to take away his attention from Lexi asking where the blood was coming from. Sherlock's eyes returned to the man in front of him for the first time since the response team had entered the room.

A man was squatted in front of him and Sherlock realised he was sitting on the floor having been pulled back as the medical team rushed around the what he was pretty sure was the dead Lexi.

His eyes drifted back to the scene in front of him, still being harassed by the man in front of him.

"It's not my blood," he muttered slowly. This seemed to appease the man who had now decided Sherlock wasn't worth attention given there was a dead person on the floor. He disappeared from Sherlock's vision in time for him to see defibrillator brought into the room.
Cardiac arrest. CLEAR. No beat. Raise the voltage. CLEAR. CLEAR.

Sherlock could hear the voices of the people around him and he continued to stare, now the dumbest person in the room, as from somewhere a body board effortlessly picked up Lexi from the ground and onto a trolley. Through the amalgamation of doctors he caught sight of the hand that had held his cheek not moments before dangling limp and lifeless from the trolley.

And then Sherlock was alone. In the debacle he'd been forgotten about but that was okay. For a while Sherlock sat and stared at the place where Lexi had been, her blood still soaked the floor. It pooled at his feet and Sherlock could do nothing more than wonder if the only person in the world who had been able to keep up with his own mind even existed anymore.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you're all still enjoying this fanfic <3

The smut is in coming, brace yourselves c:
Love Is a Vicious Motivator

Lexi Stuart had died.

Twice.

The blood loss had been the first cause but the medical response team had been skilled enough to bring her back from the grips of death. The second had been mid-surgery when the doctors were trying to repair the carnage left in the bullets wake, Lexi had been classed as clinically deceased for four minutes and even as they fought to stabilise her heart beat it was still little more than halted. Regardless Lexi's body had decided to bounce back from the brink and the surgery continued precariously.

The surgery had taken seven hours to complete and in those seven hours Sherlock had sat perfectly still, eyes fixed to the floor even as John and Lestrade had come by. John had been mostly shocked. That wasn't new to Sherlock, John was always shocked about something which was endearing in a weird sort of way. He'd rubbed his head characteristically and looked at Sherlock like he was a piece of glass ready to shatter at any moment. Sherlock had said nothing during the conversation with the doctor; his persona became even more detracted as she explained Lexi's chances of surviving the surgery. John had been the one to do the talking while he had sat in a pool of self-pity and loathing.

He had been bested by Moriarty, in more ways than one. Moriarty had revealed himself as the shooter of the crucifix case, he had been behind the cab driver who'd been killing people with a mysterious pill and he'd been the mastermind behind the multi-million pound robbery at Hatton Garden's before Sherlock and John had foiled it. This was his way of telling him to back off - he'd left Sherlock alive and John, though he was still rubbing his head, was also unscathed. It was a dare in some sense since Moriarty was intelligent enough to know that revenge was first up on Sherlock's playing cards. Lexi had just been a pawn in Moriarty's game, an insignificance easily replaced, her fall, her rape, her death: they had all been done in order to twist the knife. To make it even more delicious a game for himself. This was Moriarty and Sherlock relished the chance to hurt him.

But first he needed to know for sure just how far over the edge he would have to fall in order to make himself feel vindicated. If Lexi was dead he was pretty sure he'd crash and burn bringing Moriarty with him. So he sat and he waited.

Lestrade rocked up about half an hour after John had. The doctor had disappeared back into the surgery so John relayed the news to Lestrade. He'd already been in the hospital investigating the lab so he was probably aware already, but John seemed to get some sense of calm out of 'doing' something so Sherlock refrained from telling him to shut up. The Detective Inspector appeared in Sherlock's line of vision, spoiling the game of chess he was playing in his mind with the tile as a board, Sherlock tutted and looked at Lestrade properly.

"What?" he said tersely, half expecting Lestrade to get offended.

Amazingly Lestrade was quite restrained.

"Sherlock, what happened?"

What had happened? So much had happened but Sherlock wasn't sure how much he wanted to reveal to Lestrade. He knew Lexi's ordeal with Moriarty wasn't his place to talk about and he was pretty sure she would probably keep it quiet to avoid any awkwardly long conversations about rape and PTSD. That area was a no go. The drugs was also a no go, he'd pocketed the bag of cocaine
he'd found on her just before the room had filled with doctors and nurses, if John or Lestrade knew he had it they'd both think he was on drugs again (that was a temptation but not on his first list of things to do). If he explained that the cocaine was Lexi's he wasn't sure whether Lestrade would arrest her for possession, his attitude of her seemed less than copacetic. John already knew about Moriarty, they'd had a long discussion in the early hours of the morning after running off from NSY without Lexi and they had traced his steps based on the peculiar crimes he was behind across London. Lestrade would be interested in that, certainly, but Sherlock didn't like to reveal his deductions until he was positive he was right, he'd calculated that there was a 0.0063% chance he was wrong and Sherlock did hate being wrong. This case couldn't just be left to collect dust and more bodies though.

"John and I have traced all the bizarre cases we've been dealing with across London to a James Moriarty," Lestrade frowned with thought, "yes - the man who was on your desktop when you arrested Lexi this morning. He has a network across London and possibly farther that we have unwittingly gotten in the way of and disrupted. The shooting was his message to back off."

"So we should be looking for this ... James Moriarty, then?" asked Lestrade, typing into his phone.

Sherlock shook his head.

"No, no. He's much too smart for that, he has eyes and ears everywhere. Mostly likely in your little band of so-called police officers too. We won't find him until he wants to be found."

Lestrade stood, clearly not happy with Sherlock's pessimistic deductions.

"So - what - we sit on our backsides and wait for him to come crawling back into view?"

"Well ... the NSY, yes. John, Lexi and I --" Sherlock broke off with the abrupt thought that Lexi probably wouldn't live to help them bring down Moriarty, he felt Lestrade and John watching him, "John and I will continue to work on cases we think he's connected to until he rears his head again and then I'll stop him."

"And how are we going to do that?" John asked, his arms folded.

"Anyway I can," muttered Sherlock, his gaze returning to his chess game on the floor.

He could hear John and Lestrade talking between themselves about Lexi, about himself, whether he would cope, what he meant by his phrasing of 'anyway'. But it didn't matter so much because Sherlock would do what he pleased, he usually did.

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At some point Sherlock had fallen asleep. He didn't know when or how long for but it had happened. He was woken by someone shaking him gently, when he sat up he was alone save for the nurse waking him up. Blinking sleep out of his eyes he waited for him to speak.

"Are you the relative of Alexandra Stuart?" asked the man in his red scrubs.

What a peculiar way of phrasing the question, Sherlock thought, was he a relative? Decidedly not. Did she even have any relatives? There was so little Sherlock knew or could deduce about the sarcastic pinkette. No one had turned up over the last seven hours, so he was reasonably sure Lexi's family, if she had any, were either too far away or weren't in contact with their daughter. Sherlock was for the time being the closest thing she did have to a relative, however.

"Yes," he replied.
"Alexandra is in a stable condition. The surgery had a few complications but otherwise she pulled through. Her abdomen was pretty torn up but the surgeons have fixed most of the damage. She'll have lasting complications and obviously a scar but otherwise we feel she'll be okay," Sherlock exhaled a sigh of relief, "We'd like to keep her in for three days. Cases like this are usually a patch up job, some antibiotics and pain management but Alexandra's heart stopped twice during surgery so we need to keep her under observation until we feel comfortable enough to let her go home independently."

Sherlock nodded, relief flooding over him like a wave.

"You can go and see her if you like, she's in a private room since she still qualifies as critical. Ward 32, room 5."

"Thank you."

He didn't wait for the man to leave instead he walked, still in his blood stained clothes, to Lexi's room.

Sherlock paused at the door, debating what to do, what to say. Would she even be awake? He chewed his lip thoughtfully before pushing the door open. Lexi's room was substantially nicer than being on a usual ward. Her bed seemed more bespoke than the NHS standard, she had access to an LCD 50" TV which was displaying the BBC news - he found it funny that they were reporting a segment on the shooting in St Barts - she had flowers placed in a vase on the window sill and she had a stellar view of London out of her window.

His blue eyes were enchanted with Lexi though who was lying on the bed, her eyes closed and a breathing tube placed just below her nose. Sherlock decided that she looked like shit. He was enthralled in her regardless. Rather than standing like a shadow at the door, he opted to sit in the chair next to the bed intended for visitors. It was probably the most uncomfortable thing in the room.

His eyes washed over her delicately, like a paint brush attending a canvas. The covers hid the damage done by Moriarty, from this angle she looked like she was just sleeping but he knew she would wake up in an exorbitant amount of pain, his head tilted to look past her and he noticed the morphine drip into her arm. At least she wouldn't feel the withdrawal of the cocaine while she was in hospital that was something they would deal with together back at Baker Street - if she wanted to, at least. Forcing Lexi into anything was a bad idea, as he had discovered not a day ago.

Sherlock wasn't sure what to do with himself, he wanted to hold her hand even though that was an alien thought to him. One didn't just hold someone's hand because. Her hand on his cheek had been enough to want to hold her again and for once he was willing to admit it to himself. On the other hand he didn't want to be too presumptuous, would she even want him here after she woke up? After all, she was only in this position because Sherlock had more or less thrown her into the investigation.

Against his better judgement, Sherlock's hand found Lexi's. He was surprised at how cold it was and he wrapped his fingers underneath her hand to keep her warm. The movement and skin on skin touch was enough to make Sherlock feel hot pinpricks in his eyes. This emotion thing was not good for him. Would she even hear him? Would she know how sorry he was?

"I am so sorry, Lexi," he muttered, his voice barely a whisper, "I should never have gotten you involved with everything. There are no words I can say that could give you back your dignity or your faith in anyone."

His face felt hot again and he moved his face against his shoulder to get rid of the tears.
"I can leave if you want me to, I'm half tempted to leave you a note but the thing is I'm selfish," his gaze was still to the floor, though his other hand had found its way to join his other hand in holding Lexi's.

"I'm so selfish that I can't picture myself not being with you. You're the only person whose able to keep up with my thoughts, to smash my thoughts to smithereens when I miss something, to make me catch myself," he muttered, "Alexandra, you are addictive and I don't want to sober myself by leaving you. Mycroft told me you were dangerous for me to be around and he was right, just not in the way he was thinking. You've captivated me since the day we met, staring at Mrs Hudson's front door."

He chuckled a little, silently, at the memory of the two of them discussing the door knocker with great interest. Even then he had paused in the street when he had seen her. It didn't matter if she was a little bedraggled, or that she probably wore too much makeup for the amount of time she wore it because it began to smudge when she was irritated with herself and she rubbed her eyes. It didn't matter that she was as anti-social as he was, or that John found her rather odd. It didn't even matter that he had to save her life because she had unceremoniously tried to end hers, at least he suspected that was the reason after all Lexi wasn't stupid to mix up her doses, it really didn't matter because the essence of Alexandra Stuart had mesmerised his own existence and not even Irene Adler, for all of her talent, could stand up to her brilliance. Alexandra Stuart was his sun, a necessity and a beauty to behold.

"I still play violin better than you..." a wheezy voice interrupted him from his thoughts.

Sherlock looked up to see a bleary eyed Lexi looking at him with a small smile on her face, he couldn't help but laugh at how stupid he probably sounded and how sarcastic Lexi was, even on waking.

"I am sorry for what he did to you, Alexandra," he whispered, staring into her green eyes.

Lexi blinked slowly, her pain was dulled by the morphine but it also made her eyes foggy.

"You've nothing to be sorry for, he played us both," she whispered her hand now entwining his.

"When we catch him, I vow I'll make him pay, make him suffer," Sherlock spat with vehemence.

"You'd have to beat me to it first," Lexi replied a half smile on her face. Even in the face of danger she seemed able to shirk of her worries better than he could.

He still couldn't read her, he couldn't work out what she was thinking even though he tried. Even after a while Irene had been deductible but Lexi, other than the bare bones of information he had picked up from her by just being close to her, she was still a mystery.

"Sherlock," again she interrupted his thoughts, "what happened, what's going to happen - with Moriarty I mean, we can't tell anyone."

Sherlock nodded silently mulling over her words. What had happened was easy enough, it had happened, both of them just had to keep their mouths shut and not mention it but what was going to happen? That was a different story entirely. From what he could tell, Lexi wanted to rip apart Moriarty just as much as he did, but he would stop if it meant Moriarty getting his deserved punishment. Lexi was still a great unknown, but he was pretty sure it wasn't going to just end with the police cuffing the black haired man.

"You have my word, Lexi."
"Thank you."

Their conversation tapered off as Lexi tried to comfort herself by getting into a more agreeable position. Sherlock watched her struggling for a few moments before helping her, he placed his hands around her waist, while she put her arms around his arm and helped her raise herself up on the bed so that her stomach was still flat but she could observe more. The last time he'd been this close to her she'd been dying. He took the spare few seconds to take in her beauty, her life.

She looked up at him, melancholy in her eyes still.

In that moment Sherlock did something very peculiar.

He kissed her.

A small noise, more of shock than anything, came from Lexi but she didn't fight him off, her entire body relaxed into his embrace and she kissed him back.

For those few moments the two of them were in complete bliss. No interruptions, no man with a gun, no John - nothing. As if in response Lexi's arms tightened around Sherlock's neck and he had to be careful not to pull on her waist even though his entire being told him to. Sherlock found her lips were like a high, he found his entire mind kicking into overdrive but not in the sense that he needed to solve as much as possible before he had his comedown, oh no, this overdrive wanted to continue kissing Lexi until they could no longer.

His lips were pressed against hers passionately but softly, like he was terrified he'd hurt her even more. Lexi was holding herself in his arms for as long as she could, but he became aware of the strain it was causing her stomach and, even though his mind told him to continue, he pulled away but only just. He could still feel her breath on his lips. Neither of them said a thing. Nothing could be said.

He took his hands from around her waist and took her arms from his neck. He kissed them both gently before he let them go. Lexi still hadn't moved. Sherlock was pretty sure she'd continue if she could move, but given her state, he doubted she could have moved very far. Their kiss had been passionate but it also had been desperate, filled with the many things that neither of them had said to each other and both thought had been too late to say. His hands rested on either side of Lexi and he was still leaning over the bed.

"You are my world, Alexandra Stuart."

Lexi smiled at him, there was little she could have said to benefit the conversation so she remained silent. Sherlock stood up and righted his bloodied clothes, he still wanted to look smart even if his shirt, trousers and shoes were covered in Alexandra's blood. He went to leave before she called to him.

"You never told me, Sherlock, was your mother high when she named you Sherlock? Or is there another name I'm not privy to?"

Sherlock turned and grinned at her.

"William Sherlock Scott Holmes."

A small laugh came from Lexi, who winced slightly at the pain it caused. She still smiled though.

"Well, William, I guess your mother wasn't high."
"No, I don't think so," he paused and looked at her, "why Lexi?"

Lexi regarded him as he had just before with the same question.

"Alexandra May Stuart."

Sherlock smiled, deciding it would probably be best to proceed with things after he had a shower.
Knifing Monet

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sherlock sat at his computer staring at the screen with his face pressed into his left hand, elbows resting on the table. In truth Sherlock was pleasantly surprised the table was still standing given he tended to stab it with the hunting knife he’d procured from the last person who’d decided it was worth killing him. He tended to stab inanimate objects in frustration when he couldn’t deduce whatever it was he was working on. The last time he’d done so he’d very nearly killed Mrs Hudson because she’d come into his room, without knocking, while he was throwing the knife at the yellow spray paint smiley face on the wall. Today he had decided it wasn’t worth the effort getting up to throw the knife so he sat with it in his right hand, every so often stabbing the table in boredom.

Sherlock did not understand Moriarty. Not one bit. To him everyone had a motive, a purpose, a drive that allowed them to live their lives until they shuffled off their mortal coils either by their own motives or just by old age. Moriarty was an enigma. He hadn’t committed any crime (other than attempting to murder Lexi) that made sense. His actions were pure chaos; the crucifix, which had intrigued Sherlock but had turned out rather disappointing, the pink lady, the cab driver, the disappearing lover - all were masterminded by Moriarty just because. The only link Sherlock could see was himself. That was what confused Sherlock, what case had he been on that had significantly impacted Moriarty’s plans? Their meeting in the med lab had been useless in terms of significant information - Moriarty had mostly been toying with Sherlock’s feelings about Lexi. If that was his intention, to mess with his feelings, then Moriarty’s plan was to make Sherlock fall into oblivion. Without the woman who had so quickly captivated him, had become his whole life for inexplicable reasons, the consulting detective would surely fall. His human nature, his emotional conduct, was up for grabs and manipulation as far as Moriarty was concerned. Sherlock would not allow Moriarty to see his emotional wellbeing, his human side as it were, as a weakness.

So there sat Sherlock, stabbing every so often the desk, looking at a map of London with red pinpoints. The pinpoints were places where particular crimes had been carried out by the consulting criminal. Of course, none of the crimes had actually been committed by Moriarty; he had carefully masterminded them all and chosen easy pawns to manipulate in order to carry out the crimes. None of it could be traced to him. All of them were random, strange, but random. Sherlock didn’t see the reason for Moriarty’s choice in crime, all were to pique Sherlock’s interests.

He sat back and let out an exasperated groan just as John walked through the door. John stared at him for a moment before turning into the kitchen.

“Morning,” he called as he put the kettle on.

Sherlock stabbed the table in reply.

“What’s got you in a strop?”

“What’s got you in a strop?” Sherlock said petulantly, as if he were talking as a child questioning why they had been grounded.

“What about him?”

“I just don’t get him.”
John, as was the social etiquette apparently, brewed them both a cup of tea. He plonked it down on the table next to Sherlock, trading in his knife for the cuppa.

“You know this is my table right? If you remember I lent it to you when we moved in, so you know, please don’t stab it,” chastised John, putting the knife back where it belonged as a pin for the letters on the fireplace. The table was pretty buggered anyway, John probably knew this but still liked to remind Sherlock that not everything in the world was his to play with.

“Why the pink lady? Why the cab driver? Why the disappearing lover?” both of Sherlock’s hands had found his face now and he slumped forward in his chair in a huff.

“You’re overlooking this so much, you know,” said John sitting down in his arm chair facing Sherlock.

“What do you mean? How do you get something I’ve spent countless hours on and devised a number of algorithms for?” asked Sherlock, his attention piqued enough to turn and look at John with accusing eyes. “No offence, John, but you aren’t exactly the sharpest tool in the metaphorical box of life.”

John snorted before picking up the newspaper Mrs Hudson had placed on his side table. Even though he wasn’t living there anymore she still seemed to deliver the newspaper every morning, except Sunday’s because there was no post on Sunday’s and no one wanted to go to the shop to pay premium for a Sunday paper. John said nothing, flicking through the pages and leaving the detective staring at him in exasperation.

“How John?” asked Sherlock becoming more irate.

“I should just let you stew for a few more hours. Maybe a couple of days. It’s quite simple really,” muttered John not looking up from his paper, “I’m relishing this rare moment, just so you’re aware, it isn’t often I outthink the great Sherlock Holmes.”

Sherlock groaned again, twisted back around and put his head on the table seemingly defeated. John looked up from his paper, his smile being hidden by the printed page. His pleasure at making Sherlock wait was beyond estimation. After a few more minutes of John appreciating and revelling in the moment and Sherlock making small huffing noises against the table, John put the paper down and folded it on his knee.

“You really don’t get it?” he asked, watching Sherlock sit up like a meerkat.

“Is that not obvious?”

“Moriarty has only one motive, Sherlock,” said John leaning forwards, his face turning serious, “you. He is obsessed with you because he’s a psychopath, a genius psychopath, but a psychopath none the less.”

“Still though, the way he’s masterminded all these crimes…”

“They were to engage you, Sherlock, if Moriarty has eyes and ears in the police force he can effectively watch every move you make and evaluate you. He is literally stalking you.”

Sherlock frowned, he wasn’t used to chaos. Everything in his life, no matter how bizarre or fucked up, had a linear progression. Moriarty was an explosion, not linear. He had a hard time grasping the idea of someone doing the things Moriarty had done just for the shits and giggles.

“Well,” started Sherlock, taking a long sip of his tea and folding his dressing gown over his trousers,
“that’s not creepy or anything.”

John sat back, “yep.”

Sherlock looked back at his computer, tapping his fingers on the abused table.

“We have no choice then, John, we have to play his game and find a weak spot. Something will pop up eventually and when it does we’ll stop him.”

John sniffed, raising his eyebrows at the detectives resolve.

“So what do we do then?”

Sherlock smiled slightly tapping on his computer instead of the table. He brought up John site. Even though he had his own called ‘Science of Deduction’ where he had put all his contact details for potential cases, John’s blog had proven far more popular much to his disapproval. Even Lexi had found him through John’s blog. On the blog Sherlock travelled to the inbox page and read the hundreds of messages asking for help.

Missing cat; “Nope.”

Burglary; “Boring.”

Murder; he clicked on the message, read it and sniffed, “husband did it.”

Kidnapping; “forward to the NSY. Gary is capable of looking for people, just.”

“It’s Greg,” John interjected.

Sherlock shrugged, “meh.”

Disappearing Monet painting; Sherlock paused, “ooooh. I found one. John get your coat, we have a new case.”

“Wait — what? I thought you were going to see Lexi?”

Sherlock walked to his door, swapping his padded dressing gown for his trench coat and scarf.

“I can see her afterwards,” Sherlock said, looking down at his scarf to make sure it was correct. One thing Sherlock made a habit of doing was ensuring he looked acceptable, even though his social etiquette was abhorrent.

“The visiting hours finish in two hours,” replied John, taking his coat off of the back of his chair and shrugging it on. He cared significantly less about looking immaculate, his coat had a slight crease where he’d shrugged it off and onto the bed, probably when he was distracted by Mary about wedding arrangements. It didn’t occur to the detective it was probably to do with other things, his mind wasn’t attuned to thinking of John and Mary as anything more than, well, John and Mary.

“So?” asked Sherlock rhetorically, “it isn’t like the nurses stop and check, they’re much too busy doing nursey things.”

John allowed Sherlock down the stairs first, supposing it wasn’t worth arguing with the man. He descended next and waited as Sherlock opened the doors onto the street.

“How do you know this case has anything to do with Moriarty?” he asked, squinting his eyes until they were accustomed to the harsh light. Sherlock tended to forget to turn his lights on, the dark
wallpaper also didn’t help vision. Whenever John left Baker Street he always felt like he was coming out of a cave and into the light.

“I don’t,” replied Sherlock, buttoning up his coat, “but if a case interests me it’s enough to assume that he has some kind of hand in it.”

John nodded in approval. If Moriarty was as obsessed as John thought then chances were he was watching Sherlock regardless of what case he took. Then again, Sherlock was particular about what cases he put his time into and he would only ever leave the flat if it warranted proper investigation.

“I suppose you’re right,” conceded John.

Sherlock frowned and smiled at the same time, as if John’s statement was stupidly obvious. In Sherlock’s mind it was - John was stupidly obvious, but as always, in a very endearing way. Asides Lexi, John was his rock. That didn’t mean he couldn’t jibe him from time to time.

“Of course I’m right,” snorted Sherlock, he raised his hand out onto the roadside.

“Taxi!”

Chapter End Notes

If you got the Harry Potter nugget, well done ;)}
When Pigs Fly

The queue to the National Gallery Museum of London was roughly two hours. News of the disappearing Monet painting had spread fast and it seemed every tourist or artisan in London had heard tell and had come to gawk at the now empty space. Lestrade stood at the top of the stairs where visitors were being funnelled into one half and police were being for the NSY. Sherlock glided up the steps his lack of police uniform making tourists disgruntled at losing their place in the queue. He paused as Lestrade caught up with him but didn’t stop entirely making John smile to himself because the older detective had to trot to catch up to the consulting detective. They passed through security unchecked by a nod of Lestrade to the officers on duty and quickly through to a wide, white room with oak stained wooden floors. One would consider it pristine apart from the massive, gaping space where the original Monet painting should have been. A plethora of police officers walked in and out of the room and it took every ounce of moral fibre in Sherlock not to tell them to leave because they were incapable of doing their jobs and were probably contaminating the crime scene with their incredible stupidity and oafishness.

“Lestrade you know how I feel about people in my work space,” muttered Sherlock, staring at the empty frame with intense thought.

The NSY boss pursed his lips at Sherlock’s words. Of course it was difficult for a man to admit that his own officers were incompetent at their jobs but he was also painfully aware that he required Sherlock’s skills in order to solve a crime that wasn’t exactly straightforward.

“Alright, everybody, I need ten minutes alone please!” Lestrade called turning in a full degree motion and waving his hands around. Sherlock supposed this was to try and encourage the busybodies to acquiesce to their uppers’ commands, he said nothing about the looks however as they disappeared.

Soon he was alone, well, as alone as he could have been with John and Lestrade waiting for him to have some spark of his usual intellect. Indeed Sherlock did have his spark of intellect but not before his mind went through its usual process of deduction.

The frame was untouched, save for the detectives who’d tried to dust it for prints. Sherlock was positive they would have found nothing though, apart from their own changes to the frame, he could tell the frame itself hadn’t been budged. The sun stains on the wall were constant all the way along the frame - if it had been moved in any way, even a bare millimetre, there would have been the telltale white marks previously hidden by years of protection. So the painting had been removed without any tampering of the frame.

Sherlock’s hands ran over the side of the frame completely disregarding the usual protocol to wear forensic gloves. The consulting detective did not do ‘protocol’ given half of them were broken by the very people trying to maintain them. For all of their incompetencies Sherlock was pretty sure Lestrade and his officers would be able to differentiate his own prints from any one else's that happened to be on the frame. Sherlock pursed his lips in disdain - given the painting was worth around £64 million the frame itself wasn’t very robust. He estimated the frame was roughly 20 years old and was frequently dusted with chemical free cleaner that wouldn’t have any unfortunate side effects on the painting itself.

The polish was obvious to any eye but Sherlock’s keen one noted that it had a fine layer of dust, asides from the NSY finger printing dust, which he found highly unusual given it’s usual maintenance record.

“Is there a specific restoration expert in charge of this part of the museum?” asked Sherlock, breaking
the silence preluding his split-second deductions.

Lestrade stood with his hands in his trouser pockets looking, as he always did, quite baffled with the question.

“I think so, yeah, one second,” Lestrade replied before turning on his heel and barking at a thin dowdy man with slimy slicked hair. Sherlock let out a purposefully loud groan at the sight of Anderson. He did not like Anderson, not for his sneering or for his clear need to measure member sizes, because he thought he was intelligent. Sherlock supposed for the average man he probably was but the problem with Anderson was that he constantly believed himself to be on the same level as Sherlock and constantly tried to deduce, usually to little success and it tended to hinder rather than help.

“I thought the room’s average IQ dropped,” Sherlock mused, rolling his eyes much to the chagrin of John. A sneer erupted from the NSY officer and he turned to face Lestrade, Sherlock and John with an inflated sense of self-importance.

“There’s only one cleaner for this part of the museum, a lady named Maria Gustaves, she’s a curator here with a specialist degree in artisan preservation,” he told the trio as if his facts were somehow helping save the day, “she hasn’t been into work for the past few days, so it’s clearly obvious she’s in on the theft.”

Sherlock turned now disinterested that the arrogant man had been of all the use he was going to be.

“Yes, shut up Anderson. As always your moronic grasping at your own job lowers the IQ in the room,” Sherlock mumbled, no longer looking at the man. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Anderson bristle and Lestrade raise his hand in a warning to keep quiet. Anderson huffed but turned back to examining the barrier between the public walkway and the painting frame with no sarky response.

The frame had been dusted recently, perhaps in the last few days, which meant someone had been arriving into work instead of Maria Gustaves. Wherever the woman had disappeared off to was of concern but not to Sherlock, she probably had minimal to do with the theft itself but had been used as the access to the painting. It also meant that whoever had taken it looked like the curator enough to pass by security and have private time to access the painting. Whipping out his phone Sherlock quickly google searched the museums staff roster sure enough Maria Gustaves popped up as one of the head curators of the left wing of the museum: 5’4, auburn hair, green eyes, pale and freckles. The freckles could be easily overlooked, only someone with close relations to the curator would notice a lack of freckles, and the auburn hair was probably a dye job, Sherlock was sure if he checked the CCTV the imposter would have a hue or two brighter shades of auburn to Maria Gustaves hair colour. Her height and eye colour would be natural from experience the detective knew that coloured contact lenses were a pain to keep in for extended periods of time and touching of the eye while handling the painting would detract from its value. Auburn hair, as close as it probably was to Maria Gustaves’ hair, would likely naturally be a shade of brown so Sherlock assumed he was looking for a woman of roughly the same age with brown hair, green eyes and pale skin with training in handling antiques.

There were only so many circles that would deal with a stolen Monet painting and fewer still that would deal with a female, specialist thief. His homeless network would probably be able to navigate the black market but he needed someone to go asking proper questions that wouldn’t scream ‘I’m An Undercover Officer’. Sherlock turned to John who had been talking to Lestrade about how the painting had been removed without touching the frame (of little consequence since he had deduced the culprit, though it was an intriguing technique) he sniffed trying to rememberer it was rude to
interrupt people when they were trying to be intelligent. John had told him a few times it was socially unacceptable to constantly undermine people.

Lestrade and John turned to him, their faces looking expectantly at the curly haired detective.

“John my homeless network are looking into the black market, chances are the painting is in the middle of lying low given how prominent and obvious an antiquity it is. I estimate we have 48 hours before it disappears forever, so I’d like you to go and ask some questions when we get the location of the next ‘auction’.”

John nodded clearly quite used to the unwavering demands and simultaneous vote of confidence. Sherlock could see the doctor’s mind working overtime with a cover story, Sherlock smiled. Oh how innocent John could be.

“Your fiancee John, I’m sure she can give you the help you need,” Sherlock quipped, his eyes returning to his phone. Johns face lit up in epiphany and he too turned to make a phone call to his ex-assassin of a fiancee.

Sherlock was rather quite impressed with himself, three minutes was a new record for crime solving. Now was the part Sherlock hated: the waiting game. Nothing was worse than letting others do the legwork while he sat and twiddled his thumbs. It was a dangerous situation for Sherlock to be in, left alone with his own mind. He supposed it was enough time to solve a case or two at Baker Street, but not before he stopped at the hospital to see Lex. If she was anything like he was in a hospital bed, he reckoned she was, she’d be going mad with boredom and had probably instructed the doctors on how incompetent they were at their jobs. His stomach fluttered at the thought.

A few more days and she’d be discharged and an even more difficult task would like ahead of him. Weaning Lexi off the drugs she’d drowned her system in. He knew she’d probably be tweaking the morphine drip in her isolated moments to curb the withdrawal from heroin and cocaine (he’d be doing the same) so her withdrawal would wait until she got out of the hospital. It would prove an interesting time one where she’d be filled with anger, pain, paranoia and euphoria all at the same time and he’d be with her for as long as she needed it. Her crux was drugs, as his had been once, and he knew she’d never get over the temptation, as he also did, but Moriarty used it to wound the detective and he would manipulate it as much as possible. If she’d agree to it he’d help her pull away from the cocaine and heroin even if it meant consuming an unhealthy amount of nicotine and alcohol to curb the withdrawal.

Sherlock righted his coat and nodded to John and Lestrade who were both busying themselves with the case. They knew where he was going and neither wisely said anything.

“Cheerio, gents,” Sherlock called as he left the room.

Sherlock knew that the private room Lexi had been placed in was too good to be sheer coincidence. When Sherlock opened the door to her room a bunch of tulips in his hands (another alien decision for him, he’d stared at the flowers in confusion and had to rely on the advice from the florist on what Lexi would appreciate. He didn’t even know if she liked flowers, but it was social convention and Sherlock found it oddly satisfying to make her smile) Mycroft Holmes had been standing at the end of Lexi’s bed, umbrella in hand, waiting for his younger brother with a displeased look on his face. Sherlock was pretty confident the face Mycroft pulled, like he’d smelled something rotten, was a permanent fixture.

Lexi was asleep in her bed, probably doped up on morphine after the doctors had done their rounds.
She’d had little sleep in the past few days so her body had probably caved to the round the clock care and attention. Sherlock looked at Mycroft cautiously who’s eyes washed over him analytically. He lowered the tulips instinctively, Mycroft was not one for random bouts of sentiment or kindness and he often judged his brother for his emotional outbursts.

“Well, well, brother mine, we have been very busy recently,” Mycroft began his voice apparently unbothered about disturbing the sleeping woman. Sherlock assumed Lexi was in a deep enough of a sleep not to be disturbed, regardless of outside stimuli.

“I trust you found what you were looking for on my accounts?”

“What do you want, Mycroft?” Sherlock countered cautiously.

“I told you to tread cautiously, Sherlock, yet here you are hopelessly bound to a drug addict,” Mycroft said sharply. He usually had a displeased tone that matched his face but today Sherlock noted his tone was significantly more vehement.

“Don’t call her that, Mycroft.”

“Would you prefer me to call her a delinquent?”

“I’d prefer it if you pissed off, if I’m honest.”

“Hmph,” retorted Mycroft aware that he’d hit a sore point in his little brother, “I came here to tell you to leave her be, brother mine. The path she walks will only end in tragedy and I’d prefer not to pick up the pieces of your broken psyche when it happens.”

Sherlock crossed the room, quick as a flash, his face for once threatening to match that of his brothers.

“My life is my own, Mycroft and I’ll live it however I damn well please,” Sherlock spat, his face inches from his brothers. This had ruffled Mycroft’s feathers, he knew Sherlock was stronger than he was and that it wasn’t beyond him (as it never had been) to defensively lash out.

“I wish that were true, Sherlock, but you are an asset to this country and you are a Holmes - you cannot and you will not drag it through the dirt.”

“So the mighty Mycroft falls on his knees begging his brother not to screw up the family name or his big brothers job,” Sherlock responded, “your worry is flattering it really is. But it is my turn to warn you Mycroft. Back off or I will make your life extraordinarily difficult.

Mycroft analysed him once more before stepping back from the challenge.

“If only you knew how difficult you already make it, brother mine.”

“Well, brother mine,” Sherlock spat, he hated the phrase, “your perfect statistic can go perilously wrong. It is pathetically difficult to screw with you and your life, your job, your country.”

Sherlock had his loyalties and he would never go against what he knew was right, but this would only stretch to a certain extent when it came to Mycroft. He had once spelled ‘piss off’ on the CCTV across London just to show his brother he couldn’t control what he did. Adding a few more chaotic scenes to the political scene was child’s play for Sherlock’s skill set. Given how much his brother relied on his services it wouldn’t be overly hard to make his brother’s job undoable.

Mycroft seemed to have the same thought process as Sherlock and he sighed defeatedly, looking
down at his shoes.

“I do these things to protect you, Sherlock, even if you don't believe it.”

“I’ll believe it when pigs fly, Mycroft.”

The elder Holmes snorted at the analogy.

“Stranger things have happened, Sherlock, stranger things have happened.”
The sound of a beeping machine brought Lexi back around to the land of the conscious. The soft dripping of the morphine forced Lexi into a state of semi-awareness. Then the pain of her stomach forced her into the land of awareness. Her face scrunch up in dismay at being awake, it meant more long hours of staring at the ceiling, pretending the nurses were doing their jobs properly and fiddling with her morphine drip to pass the time. The initial three days had turned into a ‘precautionary’ six days, the precautionary six days had turned into an eight day stint. The stomach wound itself wasn’t horrific Lexi knew from her own experience as a doctor that this was so, the pain however was coalescing with the withdrawal she was having from the cocaine and heroin bender she’d been on. That was the horrific part.

Thankfully the pinkette had a high enough pain threshold to be able to sit up properly and move around the room, albeit slowly. A few days ago she’d awoken to find tulips on her bedside table she wasn’t sure who from because they had no note but she had guessed the way Sherlock glanced at them, as if hoping they weren’t in the bin, meant he’d probably bought them for her. It had made her smile since she was pretty sure that the very act of giving itself was a strange concept for the detective. Of course she hadn’t said anything because she knew that he would have brought it up himself if he’d wanted recognition for his gift. Silent words were more than enough, though he tended to come when he thought she was asleep. Their kiss a few days ago was more than likely pressing on his mind, more than he cared to admit, and awkward conversations with her confined to a hospital bed was the last place either of them wanted to be. Today was the day however. Today was the day she’d be getting out of Barts because was she hell going to sit for another weekend with only the BBC to keep her entertained.

As if they had read her thoughts there was a knock on the door and a troupe of med students came in followed by a senior looking surgeon. Lexi scanned the class briefly, presupposing they were all first year med students on some of their first hospital rounds. This would prove mighty interesting.

“Alexandra Stuart. 22 years old. GSW to the stomach. Major complications in surgery. 8 days post op. Vitals strong. Bloods normal,” reeled off the senior surgeon smiling politely at her, he knew who she was because everyone in the hospital seemed to know of the sociopathic med genius who chose voluntarily to stay in a degree that was substantially below her skill set.

“Comments? Next steps?”

The group of students shuffled with their papers all of a sudden as they realised the doctor was waiting for one of them to speak up. Oh how naive they were, thinking that this was the hardest part of their day. A few moments passed and the doctor spoke up again.

“Now, students - we don’t have all day.”

Still no one spoke. Lexi raised her eyebrow in surprise, it was as basic question as any even a non-trained civilian would get it right. Slowly a man, roughly twenty, stuck up his hand sheepishly. The lead doctor rolled his eyes and tutted loudly.

“You aren't in a classroom anymore, Edwards.”

“Oh uh, yes sir - I mean, yes Dr Lancaster,” the man named Edwards’ hand was still in the air. One of his classmates smacked the guy in the ribs. He lowered his arm and rubbed his ribs instead, stroking a sore dignity than a sore chest.
“I would uh - that is, we should, uhm,” he cleared his throat and Lexi could imagine the internal monologue running through his head, “we need to redress the wound and uh, move her to a bigger ward?”

Lexi couldn’t help but snort at the response. Did he think he was a porter?

The other students shuffled their papers again in fear that they would be picked on next. Doctor Lancaster closed his eyes as if looking for the patience of a saint before sighing and looking to the rest of the group.

“Anyone else able to one up Edwards’ stupidity?” he asked, daring someone else to speak.

When it was clear that no one was going to, Lexi cleared her throat.

“Given that I am the world’s worst patient and because no one else here seems to want to speak; the patient has expressed a wish to get the hell out of here, given she can walk to a degree, is able to manage pain sufficiently and isn’t ready to bleed out or flat line at any minute. I am sure you as doctors are quite agreeable that I am the last person you want to be dealing with given half of you haven’t even spelled the word metronidazole properly.”

Lexi nodded at a woman who had been drawing over the word repeatedly and the student slammed her notebook against her chest in embarrassment.

“Unfortunately, Doctor Stuart, you are not standing up here with the other students. Thank goodness you aren’t, we have enough with you on shift as it is,” muttered Lancaster, his eyes looking back down at his notes.

“But yes, class, Alexandra is correct. She is the world’s worst patient because she is more often than not better than everyone who sees to her. I imagine if she’d not died on the table she would have tried to stitch herself back together. The penetrating abdominal trauma is healing quite well, all things considered. The patient is to be given the relevant aftercare pain relief and ensure she knows when to receive follow up appointments,” he eyed her over his notes, “not that you’d likely come to them but it’s worth trying to treat you like a normal person.”

Lexi half smiled but kept her mouth shut. The sooner he signed those shiny little papers in his hands, the quicker she’d be for getting out.

A shadow appeared in the doorway to the room blocked partially from view by the seven or eight med students clambered around the bed. Lexi didn’t need to stretch though since the females of the group identified her visitor before she needed to see.

“Oh my god, it’s him!”

“No way is that Sherlock Holmes.”

“He isn’t wearing the hat.”

“What’s he doing here?”

Lancaster signed the papers on his clipboard before ushering the round out of the private room. “It’ll be waiting for you on the nurses station, Alexandra. Do try not to get shot anymore.”

And then they were gone and it was just Lexi and Sherlock. She smiled at him from across the room before sitting up properly and forcing herself out of the bed. In a flash he was there helping her up, his hands around her waist protectively. Lexi’s stomach couldn’t help but flip over when he touched
her, though it was foiled partially by the stretching pain in her stomach too. Standing almost felt alien to her given she’d been forced to stay in a bed for longer than a week but she trusted that the man beside her wouldn’t let her fall, so she allowed her smaller frame to lean against his surprisingly toned one.

“I see I’ve arrived at an opportune time,” he commented, smiling sideward at her.

“Freedom,” she cried in an exaggerated stupid voice, “it calls to me!”

“Are you sure you’re ready?”

The pinkette threw him a shady look.

“You’re damn right I’m ready, if I have to wait anymore I’m going to go mad with boredom.”

Sherlock considered her words for a moment before conceding to her opinion. It wouldn’t be long before she broke herself out of the hospital and that would likely cause more harm than good, for the both of them.

Lexi righted herself without the help of Sherlock though her hands lingered on his longer than necessary. He stepped back a little to give her room and she suddenly recalled how good it was to use her legs.

“Have you been up to much, then?” she asked as she pulled what little stuff she had together.

Sherlock pondered for a moment before tilting his head to the side, “well…”

____________________________

Mary wore an eloquent dress to an eloquent do. Her pale skin was complimented with a floor length baby pink gown that danced with studded sequins and floral embroidery. The man at her side also complimented her look; John looked extraordinarily dapper in a black tuxedo and bow tie. He looked every bit the part of a high class, underground black market that was ready to auction off stolen artworks and antiques.

Sadly though John had had little of a plan when it came to what was considered undercover police work. Mary had organised a few ‘stings’ in her life on behalf of the British government so this one would be a piece of cake in comparison. John had expected the auction to be in some shady back alley where only delinquents would hang about in. The auction was quite the opposite; the guests were upper class high flying socialites who’s clothes were more than likely worth more than John and Mary’s little house off of Putney. It had been a long time since Mary had been surrounded by such danger - beneath every false smile in the room was an armoury of scandal and power ready to bring down their peers. John seemed none the wiser, nodding at everyone who looked at him and helping himself to the canapés as they made the rounds. His innocence made her warm and fuzzy inside, that was the man she was going to marry - simple, sensible, sensitive John Watson.

Mary took a sip of the glass of prosecco in her hand, she took note of the taste deciding that this was the kind of wine she wanted at her wedding. Later she would ask one of the waiters what vintage and make it was. For now she was in work mode to try and find a stolen painting, Mary loved it when she was consulted on criminal activity though she did wonder why it was always she who was consulted first by both Holmes’ and John.

“Stop fidgeting John,” Mary muttered looking around the room and assessing the danger.

“I’m not.”
“You are, you’re stuffing your face with canapés. You eat when you’re stressed.”

“Well excuse me, we’re trying to do a bust on a multi-million pound underground smuggling ring,” John retorted but quickly lowering his voice when he caught the look Mary threw at him.

“If you want to make it so obvious yes but don’t do it when I’m in the room,” she continued guiding him through the crowd and towards the middle of the chairs facing the auctioneer’s stand.

They sat on the far end assuming an inconspicuous position from the stage, close enough to see everything but far enough away not to be noticed later. They sat in silence for a few moments seemingly because John had decided it wasn’t worth arguing about his stress eating to the stalwart Mary. Mary looked at John with a sideways glance before looking back at her prosecco - it really was a nice prosecco - before looking back at him again. He sat watching everyone with his head slightly tilted upwards and looking down over his nose. The way he was holding his head meant he was huffing with her he often reminded Mary of how a child would look when they were huffing too, indignant and offended.

They sat in silence for a few more minutes while John huffed and Mary sipped her prosecco. She leaned in close to his shoulder, her eyes still facing forward.

“I haven’t forgotten you abandoning me over cake tasting,” she said with a tight hearted tone.

John sniffed but didn’t turn to look at her.

“I thought we discussed this already,” he sniffed, “I’ve already apologised.”

She laughed and looked back towards the now busying stage. The auction was soon to start. The high flying criminals and business people began to find their streets.

“I just hope you like the flavour I picked,” she jibed before taking another sip of bubbly.

For the first time since they began to squabble John looked at her properly he knew she was over it. Being best friends with Sherlock meant that from time to time it was practically impossible to keep other commitments. It no longer bothered her too much now; after spending more time with Sherlock (and after he outed her past to John which, given her shooting Sherlock, wasn’t too big of a deal) she became painfully aware of how dependant he was on others. Mary had been the third party to the relationship, so she assumed a certain sense of removability.

That didn’t mean she couldn’t get angry when her husband to-be forgot about their cake tasting appointment. She’d had to try forty kinds of cake and after cake number ten the sugar amalgamated into one, John was much more of an aficionado than she was when it came to sugary foods. John shuffled in his chair and pursed his lips, trying to think of a decent comeback.

“You wouldn’t jeopardise the cake … right?”

Mary went to reply but was interrupted by someone tapping on the microphone on the stage. It was time, apparently. The seats had filled remarkably quickly and the room, which she had thought was quite large when they arrived, seemed small given the headcount. Her eyes scanned the room slowly looking for the auburn haired woman Sherlock had described, someone with that bright hair colour would be seen easily provided she still had the same hair colour. Green eyes, pale skin and freckles however was a little more reliable. At the corner of the stage Mary spotted her shuffling papers about. She had dark hair this time, an obvious dye job to get rid of the auburn, and was dressed just as poshly as the rest of the room. The only difference was she was standing to the side of the stage rather than in front of it and she had a phone to her ear. Her facial expressions and the way her lips
kept shaping the word ‘sir’ over and over made it clear that she was speaking to her employer. Was it this Moriarty? Was he on the other end of the phone? Mary placed her hand on John’s leg with her eyes unmoved from their target. John followed her gaze and she felt him stiffen when he caught sight of who they were after. It wasn’t as if they could do anything now, though, given that the room was heaving and there were security guards the size of mountains around the stage. Mary supposed when one was dealing in stolen, multi-million pound pieces security was necessary. The blonde haired woman patted her fiancé’s leg reassuringly, her eyes returning periodically to the stage so it wasn’t as obvious that she was stalking her target. Old skills came back like memories just like it did for someone remembering how to ride a bike for the first time in years. She had her target, next was to extract the information required and report back to her employer. They needed photographic evidence and physical evidence, preferably the mystery brunette’s phone because it would have all the evidence they’d need to chalk the theft on Moriarty - if it even was him on the phone.

The first piece up was a jewelled necklace with intricate diamonds wedged in every spare space between the links. Mary pondered how it would look on her neck but then she heard the starting bid, £3.75 million, and decided very quickly that it would look better in a giant bolted safe hidden underwater and only accessible by some supernatural kind of mechanism.

The second item was a cane made from jade. It dated back to ancient Mongolian China to a Buddhist monk who only had one leg. She had to give it to whoever had arranged this auction; they certainly knew their history before selling it. £1 million. Mary could feel John sweating slightly at the prospect of so much money going on something so … frivolous.

The third item was the jackpot, the Monet painting had been lovingly preserved during the theft and Mary noted the security guards standing straighter at the prospect of trouble over the Monet painting. Bids started at £65 million and Mary watched as the bids kept rising all the while the auctioneer was noting down each bid and number. Eventually it was sold for a staggering £400 million - apparently greatly popular - and Mary watched the auctioneer take note of the winning bid and number of the bidder. That was what they needed as well as the phone, they’d need to trace the painting later and the details on the page would be what they needed to retrieve it.

Forty-five minutes passed with numerous items, stolen and genuine, being sold. At the end of the auction people began to move and Mary patted John on the elbow.

“Here’s the plan, John,” she started keeping an eye on the mystery brunette, “I want you to get that piece of paper on the auctioneers desk, we might need it later. Give me two minutes and then make a big scene on the stage.”

John nodded then frowned.

“Where are you going?”

“To see a woman about a phone,” Mary replied before kissing her fiancé on the cheek and disappearing through the crowd.

Mary grabbed another glass of fizz on the way past a server and approached the woman, making sure she trod on the dress to look like she was having difficulties. The mystery woman had moved past the security guards and Mary made a very convincing tripping up woman. The prosecco flew through the air and landed on the brunette who gasped, dropping her bag, papers and phone.

“I’m so sorry!” Mary started, pulling herself up and trying to shuffle the papers on the floor.

To her credit the mystery woman remained calm and collective, smiling professionally at Mary and grabbing her own things together.
“It’s quite alright,” she commented with a southern London accent.

“Let me help you,” Mary exclaimed leaning past the woman and shuffling the papers together.

At the same time a huge commotion erupted from the stage.

“I DON’T BELIEVE THAT MAN OVER THERE HAS THAT MUCH MONEY.”

Mary knew John’s voice even when it had a false drunken drawl on it. As the woman stood up to see what the issue was (she was still keeping an eye on the Monet painting and John’s proximity would worry her) while Mary took the opportunity to continue shuffling her papers together and nab the woman’s phone at the same time.

“Looka ‘im, though -“ John staggered as he fell against the auctioneers stand, sending papers flying. Two security guards walked towards him, their arms splayed out in a herding motion, clearly used to drunken socialites getting angry over losing out on a bid. He rolled on the floor slightly and tried to pull himself around before being hoisted off the floor by the largest of the men.

“I think it’s time you got a taxi home, sir,” said one of the men turning and nodding at the door.

That was Mary’s cue also. She stood, handing the brunette her papers back, apologised once more and made her way towards the exit. Mary stood outside looking at the phone as John was all but thrown down the stairs. When the security disappeared back inside the venue John righted himself and cantered over to Mary who was waiting on the other side of the road. Mary smiled at him warmly.

“Did you get it?” she asked, her eyes glancing over John.

“Yep,” he replied, opening the breast of his jacket pocket and flashing a piece of paper at her. He turned and leaned out onto the road.

“Taxi!”

Mary stood as one pulled up still amused that in central London taxi’s literally curb crawled. When they pulled away from the venue and away towards home Mary reached into John’s pocket and got the paper out, curious as to its contents. John peered at it at the same time before inhaling sharply. Mary looked up at him and frowned before looking back down at the paper.

“Well,” John muttered, “I’ll be damned. Look at the proprietors name on the Monet painting.”

Mary looked and shrugged in confusion.

“Who is that?”

John sighed, folding up the piece of paper and placing it back in his jacket pocket.

“Irene Adler. The Woman.”
Hit Me When You're Down

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The bō staff slammed horizontally off of Sherlock’s stomach with a heavy thud, he slammed into the floor with an ‘oof’ his breath virtually all but leaving him. Sherlock rolled onto his back trying to pick himself up off the floor by crawling forwards but the whack to the stomach had really taken him off his feet, both metaphorically and literally. A slender hand appeared next to him offering him aid and he was heaved up off of the floor to stand in front of Lexi holding the bō staff in her right hand with a smile on her face.

Two months had passed since Lexi had been discharged from Barts and in those 8 weeks a miraculous series of events had occurred. The first had been Lexi’s extended stay at Baker Street though she had protested at being coddled by the detective she had eventually acquiesced when she realised many of the normal things she did independently were now substantially more difficult. Lifting anything or, in the first few days, getting out of bed was a hassle. She had had access to Sherlock’s room while he stayed in the spare bedroom. It had occurred to her that she wouldn’t say no if he’d slept in the same bed as her but Sherlock seemed to have a set outlook of, well, just about everything and Lexi decided it was best not to broach the subject with him. Since their kiss in the hospital there had been no kissing but the sexual tension between the two could have been cut with a knife. Sherlock seemed hellbent on repairing Lexi’s faculties both physically and chemically.

That had been the second event - her withdrawal from the cocaine and heroin. She had spent three days throwing things at the detective, pacing the flat, sweating, throwing up and shaking. Her mind had gone from self-pity to self-loathing to outward loathing that turned into anger at Sherlock for being stalwart against her best attempts to leave the apartment. He had been remarkably okay with the situation and he was completely unphased at her delirious hallucinations where she had stood and stared at the ceiling watching it morph into different shapes. Sherlock had even held her when her legs wouldn’t respond to her brains commands and she had fallen to the floor and ripped some of her stitches out. Lexi was as emotional as a brick under normal circumstances but when she was on the floor and she ached and wanted to crash back into oblivion to make her thoughts stop and when she wanted her body to curl up and hibernate or end entirely she had been a wreck. When she had begged Sherlock to let her die because the withdrawal was too much and when he’d had to hide the sharp objects in the kitchen, he’d still sat on the floor and held her to let her know she wasn’t alone. And he had been calm through it all. In hindsight Lexi had supposed it was because he had been there himself before and whoever had held him had been just as supportive as he was to her.

Lexi was more indebted to him than she could repay him for - he had saved her life three times; first when she’d (now she realised had been purposeful) overdosed the night they’d met, then much later he had acted as a tourniquet after Moriarty had shot her, finally he had been there for her when she faced her own demons, he had held her, held her hair when she’d thrown up, stopped her from hitting her head as she began to seize because going cold turkey was always that dangerous and he had artfully dodged the cups and plates she had thrown at him in desperate anger. Sherlock had even skilfully sent away John and Mrs Hudson and they had spent the week locked in Baker Street while Lexi’s mind dragged her through oblivion and into her own personal hell. Sherlock Holmes had saved Lexi’s life and, if Lexi had believed in a religion, she owed her soul to him too.

Trying to repay such a debt was a difficult task but once Lexi became fully functioning and her stitches had been removed and there had been a lovely jagged scar across her stomach she had decided it was time to teach Sherlock better self-defence. Lexi was rusty but she had turned up two
hours earlier to their meeting time to train with her own personal trainer who ran her through the routine. It was like riding a bike, once she had been beaten by a stick a few times (with careful avoidance of her stomach) she had been able to keep up with her trainer and floor him a few times. The art of the bō staff, or as her trainer liked to call it bōjutsu because he liked to watch too much anime, was difficult to master but Lexi had been training since she was 14 because she had been beaten black and blue by the school bullies for being two years ahead of everyone else. She felt quite proficient at it considering a good portion of her life had been dedicated to training. When John had quipped about her being defenceless Lexi had smiled politely and told him she could defend herself, what she hadn’t mentioned was her ability to take out John’s legs before he’d moved across the room. It was amazing what medical knowledge and martial arts training could do for a woman in the 21st century.

Lexi helped Sherlock up off the floor and he grunted with the effort. He stared at her for a few moments before picking up his own stick and gripping it tightly.

“Are you okay?” Lexi asked with one raised eyebrow.

“Never been better, shall we continue?” Sherlock panted bringing the bō up into position. Lexi grinned at him and brought her own bō behind her arm so that it almost looked like part of her arm. She took a few steps backwards and placed her right foot behind her. Sherlock righted himself his eyes analysing her stance. Lexi had to give it to him, he was learning quickly just as she had expected but Lexi too had the same level of thinking so she was one step ahead of him just as she had been with the violin. To make the spar easier Lexi moved first lunging forward on her right foot and bringing the stick across to hit Sherlock’s side. He countered quite easily before flipping her bō away and bringing his own towards her ankles, Lexi twisted away pirouetting behind the detective. She brought the bō against his back but Sherlock was quicker than she had realised and he countered the blow by turning and bringing his own bō up to parry her. They ended up in a stalemate where both were attempting to overthrow the others stick. Given sheer physical size Lexi realised Sherlock would win the parry because he was stronger than her so she pushed upwards instead of against his bō to break off the parry.

Sherlock moved like lightning, his face completely concentrating on the fight. He moved his stick around behind him, twisting his body, before bringing it back around to counter her own counter with a blow to her legs. Lexi hissed at his speed before deciding she’d need to take it up a notch. As Sherlock leaned to take out Lexi’s legs Lexi used his momentum against him and cartwheeled over him using his shoulders as a post to do so. As she landed she twisted, feeling the burn in her stomach, and brought down her bō staff across Sherlock’s bent legs. He hadn’t expected minor gymnastics out of her so he stumbled when she hit his locked knees and Lexi grabbed the moment to swing and take out his feet from underneath him. Sherlock went over like a ton of bricks because he had been relying on his legs to keep him upright but just as Lexi let down her guard, midfall, Sherlock brought his own stick around and smacked her ankles with his stick so she fell to the floor too. He had pulled the stick towards himself instead of away so that Lexi quite literally fell into him as he rolled onto his back. The pinkette wondered if it had been intentional to knock her into him either to protect her stomach when she fell or because the two of them sparring had instigated further flirting.

Lexi landed on top of Sherlock in shock, he grinned at her clearly pleased with himself and Lexi paused for a moment marvelling at how beautiful he was when he had few problems on his mind. They were covered in sweat and both of their hairs were stuck to them but it didn’t matter for her because in that moment she became eclipsed by his beauty.

“I think I won that round,” Sherlock mused breaking Lexi’s momentary trance.
Butterflies fluttered in the pit of her stomach but she pushed them down and smiled at the detective.

“I will admit you’re getting better but you only hit me that one time,” she countered not moving from his grasp.

“Well I didn’t realise you were some kind of makeshift doctor ninja.”

Lexi laughed before moving away from him. Just as she did however he placed his hand on her shoulder and gently pulled her back to him. Lexi acquiesced and moved back into his body. His blue eyes looked at her, and only her.

“I’m glad you’re feeling better, Lex,” he said softly, his hand not leaving her shoulder.

Lexi looked down at the floor for a moment, a small smile on her face. She felt like a blushing school girl but it was okay because the mat room was empty aside from the two of them. What could she say to the man that had saved her more times than she’d care to remember? How could she tell him that all she was, the very essence of her being, was owed to him? It was too much of a mantle to give anyone, especially Sherlock who seemed to have the weight of the world on his shoulders. She supposed countering a nut job terrorist was stressful.

Lexi leaned in to him and let her lips press into his. He responded by moving his hand from her shoulder to her cheek and he pulled her into his embrace further. Lexi let out a slight moan and, completely forgetting that someone could walk in, climbed on top of him thoroughly enjoying the sudden and necessary physical contact. Lexi didn’t wait for permission from Sherlock, she kissed his neck and he did little fight off her attempts, instead she found his hands on her waist as he tilted his head slightly in order for Lexi to continue kissing him. Sherlock pulled her face towards him again and she followed his lead as his tongue danced across hers. At some point, though she wasn’t sure when, her hand had found itself running through the detective’s hair while the other had ran underneath his shirt. She could feel his muscles running against her fingers and she decided that Sherlock had to have some kind of secret for keeping himself so fit. They stayed like that for a few moments, both of them taking the opportunity to win the mini battle of wills playing out between the kisses, until Sherlock quite literally flipped Lexi so that he was on top and she was at his mercy.

He kissed her neck and lingered at her collarbone, seemingly debating whether to continue further.

Instead his lips found their way back to hers before Sherlock broke off and looked at her with an intense gaze.

“If I’d known how easy it was for you to be distracted, I would’ve won ages ago,” he whispered, continuing to kiss her cheek lightly.

Lexi came back around to the realistic awareness that at any moment someone could walk in and she would be out of a place to train. She let out a ragged sigh, ruffled by the sudden intense passion of the past few minutes. She forgot how addictive he was, like every kiss was an injection of heroin and the addict in her wanted more, needed more, until she passed out into oblivion. His voice however was sobering and she returned his gaze with an affectionate one, placing her hand gently on his upper arm.

“If I’d realised how much of a weak spot I was I would’ve used it against you a long time ago,” Lexi replied before pushing herself up and sitting cross legged on the mat. She brought her legs together so that they were in a perfect cross for yoga, then she brought her hands together on her knees and closed her eyes. Lexi felt Sherlock shuffling next to her.

“What are you doing?” he asked, sounding genuinely perplexed at her actions.
“Meditating,” Lexi replied, her eyes shut but a smile on her face.

“You…” Sherlock trailed off, thinking about his words before he spoke, John’s moaning had clearly rubbed off on him, “You believe in meditation?”

Lexi opened one eye and smiled at him knowingly. He was fishing to see if she believed in a higher power, she noted he still couldn’t read her as well as he’d like.

“Sit, Sherlock, like I am.”

“I don’t think my legs can bend that much,” he replied eying her suspiciously.

“Sit.”

Lexi felt a thud next to her as the detective sat and then a further shuffling as he tried his best to copy her posture. Silence came for a few seconds before she heard Sherlock shuffling.

“Take the time to process information Sherlock, replay our spar in your head and learn how I countered nearly all of your moves.”

There was another pause in conversation.

“I still won,” he murmured after a few moments.

Lexi smiled but kept her eyes closed.

In a locker near the reception was Sherlock’s phone, it lit up repeatedly and buzzed enough to get the attendant, who was clearly a part timer looking for extra cash, to angrily kick the set of lockers. He wasn’t sure who, but someone was incredibly popular.

‘Call me, Sherlock. If you’ve seen the news, call me. I should have told you weeks ago but you were so busy and I didn't want to get in the way when it seemed irrelevant. Call me.

- John’

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who is enjoying this fanfic, I started writing this in my spare time but it's great to know that people are enjoying this c:
Lexi had to give John and Mary credit, their little house off of Putney was the picturesque image of a home all budding marriages desired; white cottage shutters, a thatched roof and a oak wooden door. By all standards John and Mary had what she was expected to want as a twenty two year old woman. By those same standards she was also meant to enjoy romcom films and bottles of wine and scratch her way through a crowd of women for the newest edition of *Fifty Shades*. This was not what Lexi enjoyed, though she supposed from an outsiders perspective it was easy to see why so many cherished John and Mary’s house with its sweet rose bushes and cobbled paving stones.

In her own personal opinion their little house off of Putney was too perfect, like a dolls house, even the rose bushes were meticulously maintained. It was strange that she could never have imagined John as a gardener. Did they pay someone to do it? Was it Mary? Did she like completely symmetrical rose bushes? Lexi’s mind was drifting from the current situation whereby she was perched on the armchair near Sherlock in John and Mary’s quaint living room. Sherlock was stood nose to nose with John arguing heatedly about Irene Adler.

That was a name that, over the past 24 hours, had been rammed down her throat whether she’d liked it or not. Sherlock also seemed particularly on edge about the name, he had dropped everything when he’d responded to John’s calls and he certainly didn’t do what normal people did when they read something saying ‘check the news’. He’d made a quick phone call and had called for a taxi, pulling Lexi out of the doors of the gym. She hadn’t even had time to shower he’d been in that much of a rush. In the taxi she’d tried to ask him what was going on instead Sherlock had sat punching his thumbs angrily into his phone, his brow furrowed. When they’d pulled up at a small house in Putney Sherlock had been straight out of the door of the taxi leaving Lexi in the lurch and in debt to a cabbie who wanted fifty quid from her. It was a good job she’d gotten money out before she’d met Sherlock that morning. When she’d jumped out of the taxi Sherlock wasn’t anywhere in sight. The only telltale sign of his wake was an open oaken door that looked unusually out of place being open. It was easy to trace Sherlock when you knew what to look for; anything mismatched and unusual had his fingerprints all over them.

Lexi followed in Sherlock’s wake cautiously edging her way over the threshold of the little house in Putney. The sound of shouting came from down the hallway and Lexi picked up two voices, John and Sherlocks, arguing.

“I didn’t tell you about it because I knew you were busy with … with - -“

“For goodness sake John, her name’s Lexi. Lexi. It’s two syllables John, even you can recall two syllable words.”

“I knew her name I was getting there you prick.”

“What about Irene?”

“Oh so you are still interested in her? What happened to Lexi, huh?”

Lexi paused by the doorway into what seemed to be an old style farmhouse kitchen, it still had telltale signs of the 21st century however with waterfall taps and top of the range cooking facilities. A woman with a short blonde bob stood with her arms crossed on the kitchen island looking bemused with the situation, she clocked her first but said nothing as the furore continued.

“It isn’t like that John,” Sherlock’s voice became muted almost as if he had remembered that he had
arrived here with Lexi, “Irene was all over the news, John, I didn’t save her to have her set up to be the first person in over half a century to be executed.

So he had had someone like her before, from what she had heard, though she was cautious with her own thoughts since she knew little of the situation.

“I bet you haven’t even told Lexi yet that she’s a cheap fake.” John was cut off abruptly by Mary coughing purposefully to have the two men turn to see Lexi standing in the door. John looked at her like a rabbit in headlights still forming the ‘f’ on his lips as if ready to say fuck but he said nothing.

Lexi said nothing to John or Sherlock, who were both staring at her with mouths agape, instead she turned to Mary and smiled fakely at her more out of politeness that necessity.

“Can you turn on the news please, Mary?”

Mary smiled back at her with the same expression painfully aware of Lexi’s predicament. She was wounded at the conversation the two men had been having and her pride had been dented slightly but she had her dignity still in tact. Exploding angrily at the both of them a la Vesuvius style would win her no friends. Mary, too, realised this and nodded slightly before moving to turn on the tv above the small settee that was nestled into a snug in the kitchen. She flicked through the channels to BBC1 and left it on the news. On a red background with white writing made Sherlock finish John’s sentence - ‘fuck’.

‘BREAKING NEWS: BUCKINGHAM PALACE AND WINDSOR CASTLE BOMBED, HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II, HIS MAJESTY PRINCE PHILLIP AND HEIRS CHARLES, WILLIAM AND HARRY FEARED AMONGST THE MANY DEAD. FEMALE DOMINATRIX ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF TERRORISM.’

No one said anything as the BBC showed an aerial view of both Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle both of which were aflame, only the husks of Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace were visible. Even in the aftermath of the explosions the firefighters were still visibly struggling with the flames. Lexi was surprised that the government was allowing broadcast but then she supposed that whoever had done it knew that there was too much camera footage to blot out the incident entirely. John piped up first eventually finding his voice after her entrance.

“Have you heard from Mycroft?”

Sherlock couldn’t tear his eyes away from the television. He turned his head but his eyes were stuck on the screen as the aerial footage displayed the carnage.

“What?”

“Mycroft, Sherlock, have you heard from him?”

Sherlock found the power to pull his eyes away from the television before looking back down at his phone.

“Well he keeps calling but I just assumed it had something to do with him being a massive pain in the ass.”

John put his hands on his hips, Lexi still stood silently while Mary filled up the kettle, seemingly
non-perplexed with the unfolding events around her.

“Guess I should ring him,” Sherlock muttered looking back down at his phone.

“Guess you should ring him,” John repeated a fraction of a second later his voice on the verge of shouting at Sherlock again.

Lexi, who had shuffled around the room in the middle of the argument to lean against the chair Sherlock was standing in front of, slumped properly into the chair. She thought it was extraordinarily snuggly for a spare chair shoved in the kitchen but who was she to comment on the fluffiness of chairs? Lexi found herself dwelling on the minute details as Sherlock stormed off into the corridor to phone his older brother. She would be pleasantly surprised if Mycroft actually answered given his job was probably under scrutiny.

John was still pacing back and forth in front of the television and Lexi took the moment to watch him with unveiled scrutiny. If Mary had noticed she said nothing as she made the tea. What was it with these people and tea? Lexi was born and raised in England but that didn’t necessarily make her a patriot of tea. John looked massively irate, as if he were blaming the entire thing on Sherlock, and in response she tapped her fingers on her knees.

“What was with your text then, John?” she asked placidly making the older doctor stop his pacing.

“With what text?”

“The one you sent Sherlock saying you should’ve told him sooner but it wasn't worth it at the time.”

“We can wait until Sherlock gets back and then we can discuss it,” John said matter of factly, Lexi pursed her lips.

“I think perhaps the three of us should speak before Sherlock rejoins us, you tend to have a pissing match when you speak to Sherlock these days.”

John frowned and went to open his mouth but Mary cut him off first with a gentle tone that probably had more underlying warning than Lexi was aware of.

“Lexi has a point, John, explain to her what we found out at the auction.”

John crossed his arms apparently even more irate that he’d been ganged up on.

“What do you know about Irene Adler?”

Lexi sat forward piqued by the name yet again.

“Though it irritates me intensely, very little except that she’s a dominatrix according to the news.”

“Irene Adler is one of the world’s most accomplished con artists, on top of being a dominatrix that is, she’s cunning, smart and the only woman to ever make Sherlock lose at his own game.”

Lexi chastised herself inwardly for feeling a pang of jealousy about the way John spoke of Irene Adler. Even though it was childish to think that, especially for a man as enigmatic as Sherlock, she was the only one to captivate him. Of course he had other people in his life and she was no more than a silly girl for thinking otherwise. Lexi’s silence had clearly been noticeable to both John and Mary who were exchanging looks to each other like a silent conversation; one where Mary was telling John off for being so brutal and John was saying the age old ‘yes dear, sorry dear’.
Lexi cleared her throat.

“And what does she have to do with the black market auction and the bombing of Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle?” she asked hearing Sherlock in the hallway arguing with his brother.

“Irene was the proprietor of the Monet painting but under an alias. Whoever sold on the painting at the auction funded the operation to bomb the royal family. Irene was the one who was sat waiting in the house that the NSY raided.”

Lexi tilted her head at the story, not understanding the reasoning for Irene’s actions. This woman was intelligent enough to beat Sherlock at his own game yet she carelessly laid a breadcrumb trail straight to her front door. If she was so intelligent and had truly wanted to blow up two of the biggest landmarks in England, why did she make it so obvious?

“What does this Irene get out of taking the fall for killing the royal family?”

Mary leaned against the kitchen counter mercifully forgetting about the tea she had been brewing.

“That’s where we draw a blank. She won’t talk to Greg or any of his officers except with the message ‘Because I Can’,” Mary finished as Sherlock entered the room, “Greg and Mycroft were tipped off weeks ago about the auction and Irene but they had no evidence to make a move, until today.”

Sherlock was standing chewing his thumb nail watching the television again apparently completely absorbed in the aerial footage. Lexi knew that he was trying to process the information he’d been given rather than watching the news. John returned to pacing but this time watching Sherlock like a predator eying its prey.

“What did Mycroft have to say about it?” John asked still pacing. It would be a miracle if there weren't track marks on the wooden floor by the end of the day.

“Not a great deal. It was more an argument about my being out of touch than anything to do with the bombings,” Sherlock murmured, still watching the television. The live footage changed to a biopic on the royal family, that would probably dominate every channel for at least the next three months.

“Well, you know, maybe you should have answered your phone,” John responded, his arms folded again.

“John,” Mary sighed trying to interject before more arguments erupted.

She was too late though because Sherlock twisted around from the television and stared at John.

“Oh I’m sorry that I haven’t been holding up the country these past few weeks,” Sherlock’s voice was treacherously close to shouting, “why don’t you take it up with Mycroft? You seem to be in touch with him more than I do.”

“Why? Because you’re the bloody one hung up on Irene,” John’s eyes flicked to Lexi momentarily before trying to meet Sherlock’s challenging gaze. Lexi looked down at her converse as Mary’s eyes trailed over her too.

“So I saved her life, don’t I do that for practically everyone? Maybe for once I don’t want to rise to the occasion. You tell me often enough that I’m selfish - at least let me live up to it.”

Lexi stood up abruptly in between the two men who were looking more like peacocks squaring up to each other than men.
“Enough,” Lexi said, her voice level but sharp enough to make everyone in the room look at her, “this isn’t getting us anywhere.”

Sherlock and John opened their mouths to speak but Lexi held up both her hands.

“I don’t want to hear it. Both of you shut the fuck up and use your bloody brains for something more than measuring who has the bigger dick.”

Both John and Sherlock closed their mouths, shocked at the crude language. Out of the corner of her eye Lexi saw Mary break into a grin.

“Irene Adler is a con artist, John you said it yourself, she’s paid to carry out jobs. If she facilitated the theft of the Monet painting and the bombing on the royal family she didn’t do it carelessly, she made it obvious on purpose. Whoever hired her to do it did so either because they had leverage to do so or because the payment outweighed the punishment.”

Sherlock and John nodded slowly, seemingly coming to terms with each other and focusing their minds on the problem at hand. Mary was still grinning at her.

“So the problem we face isn’t why Irene took the fall because that’s pretty obvious; she did it because she was paid or blackmailed to,” Lexi continued, “what we need to work out, without jumping the gun for Moriarty, is who set her up to take the fall and why.”

The chances of it being Moriarty were explicably high, ‘because I can’ was what Moriarty had said before he’d shot Lexi. If it was Moriarty then it would make sense that the carnage was pure carnage for the sake of it, though Irene’s involvement was yet to be made clear. It was clear that they needed to speak to Irene. Sherlock seemed to have the same realisation.

“We need to speak to Irene, before any of the officers get to her. We don’t know who the mole is in the NSY but it’s probably why Irene won’t speak,” Sherlock said, typing into his phone again.

John peered over the top of the phone eventually breaking his forced silence.

“What are you texting to Lestrade?”

“To give us time to speak to her, any time is better than none,” Sherlock said looking up and dropping his phone into his coat pocket.

John nodded once again understanding slowly what needed to be done. He grabbed his coat off of the settee. Sherlock turned and politely smiled at Mary.

“Mary you have contact with my brother, yes?”

“I do.”

“Get him to look into anyone in the NSY who has financial troubles, family medical bills or anything illicit worth exploiting. We need to find the mole before we can trust anyone associated with Lestrade,” Sherlock said.

Mary nodded before frowning.

“Why can’t you do that on the way to the NSY?”

Sherlock considered her question for a moment before putting his hands in his pockets.

“Because I just called him a prick and he’s probably huffing with me. Mycroft has always had a
weak spot for people of the feminine persuasion,” Sherlock smiled again, “and also I can’t be bothered to speak with him again, he bores me.”

Mary snorted in amusement.

“Fair enough. Leave it with me.”

Sherlock turned to Lexi.

“Are you coming?”

Lexi blinked slowly realising she’d been silent since her brainstorm.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t mind a lift into central London anyway.”

Sherlock clapped his hands together, the spark in his eyes appearing at the prospect of being on Moriarty’s trail. Lexi tried to ignore the jealousy she felt in her stomach.

“Fantastic. We can catch a cab in the street then, Plato knows there are enough of them in London. See you later, Mary.”

John kissed Mary on the cheek as Sherlock and Lexi filed out the door, Lexi waving slightly as she left. John turned to leave too but Mary called out to him before he could join Lexi and Sherlock.

“John.”

John turned and smiled at her.

“Yeah?”

“I like her.”

“Yeah, I know you do.”
Worthy of Donuts

Lestrade barred the way into the interview room. He had a massive frown on his face as he watched Sherlock, John and Lexi approach. Lexi knew they were in for a to-do with the Chief Inspector. Ever since her overdose and Sherlock’s use of his car Lestrade had disapproved of Lexi. Come to think of it John also disapproved of Lexi as did Mycroft. Was there really no one in Sherlock’s inner circle that did like her? Lexi let out a long sigh as they stopped in front of Lestrade. Sherlock inclined his head analysing the detective.

“Hello Garry. Are you here to open the door for us or…?” Sherlock said lightly going to open the door himself. Lestrade stepped in his way and folded his arms.

“I said you, Sherlock, *you* could speak to the suspect. Not your little brigade of followers. And for the love of all that is holy, it’s Greg.”

Lexi and John must have pulled the same look of disapproval because Lestrade averted his gaze from the two doctors and tried to remain stalwart against Sherlock.

Sherlock rubbed his face with both his hands, Lexi knew he was getting tired of being given orders. He let out a long sigh and looked at Lestrade, the look he gave him was hidden from John and Lexi but Lestrade shuffled slightly obviously unnerved with him too.

“Lestrade do we really have to have a pissing match about something that’s going to happen anyway?”

Lestrade raised his eyebrows in shock but shook his head a few moments later. He was too used to Sherlock telling him to get lost. He stepped to one side and allowed the trio to enter the room. The police room was adjacent to the one Lexi had been kept in all those many months ago but it looked identical. Irene Adler was sat chained in handcuffs to the table her make up looked remarkable given the amount of time she’d probably spent in the room and she could understand why Sherlock had liked her; she looked dangerous. A small bubble of pride rose up in her stomach when she noticed Irene was not privileged enough to be the beneficiary of the powdered donuts. Lexi didn’t think Irene was the kind of woman to eat donuts, she didn’t even look like the kind of woman to eat cucumber. The memory of those donuts was whispering sweet nothings in Lexi’s ear but she resisted the temptation to run out and ask Lestrade and instead resolved to lean in the corner while John and Sherlock sat down.

There was a moments silence while the trio stared at each other, Lexi said nothing but observed instead, acutely aware that she was more of a ghostly presence rather than a physical one. Irene Adler only got more beautiful the longer one looked at her; her brown hair was impeccably kept in a roman style bun, her ruby red lipstick was perfect as was her eyelinier. Even if these hadn’t been on point, Irene Adler was a natural goddess. No wonder she made enough money by conning people. The dominatrix thing had to be more out of pleasure than business, though, it probably didn’t matter much if she was given money for her services. Lexi didn’t think morals were much of an issue for the brunette. She could see why Sherlock, as John crudely put it, was “hung up on her”, she emanated pure beauty mixed with pure deadly. Like the perfect storm - beautiful to behold but equally capable of putting you six foot under. Another pang of jealousy rippled its way across her need for donuts which left a bitter taste in her mouth. She had put on a healthy amount of weight since getting clean, if there was any such thing as truly being clean, but she was no wear near as curvy or slender as Irene. If she had to think up the perfect body type for a woman Irene was it. She was skinny but not enough to look like an addict, curvy but just in the right places and Lexi could imagine her behind was perfectly well shaped as well. She didn’t like Irene Adler.
“Who paid you, Irene?” Sherlock asked monotonously breaking the silence.

“I have missed you, handsome.”

Even her voice was smooth and velvety. Lexi decided she would probably have had sex with her too. Sherlock didn’t seem too amused with the conversation, however.

“Who paid you to take the fall, Irene?”

“And John, my dear John, it’s been too long. You look well. I’ve heard you’re spoken for - congratulations,” responded Irene, her eyes sparkling with what Lexi assumed was either mischief or genuine happiness. She spoke to both of them, John in particular, like an old friend who’d been on holiday rather than off blowing up most of London and its countryside.

“Damn it, Irene, stop carrying on. Are you aware of how much danger you’re in?” Sherlock’s voice had risen in irritation enough to make Irene twist her head back towards the detective. But not before her eyes settled on her for a few moments.

“I am. Who’s this little treasure?” she asked, eying her up again. Everyone seemed to eye Lexi up the same way, like they were trying to break through her face and into her life story just by making eye contact a few times. “I’d introduce myself properly, my dear, but I’m afraid I’m slightly indisposed.”

Irene shook the handcuffs as if to make a point with a friendly smile on her face, her brown eyes said otherwise though - like a snake they sized her up. It made her slightly uncomfortable to remain in the same position but Lexi knew if she did move Irene would understand how she felt about her. It was a woman’s intuition and didn’t take a genius to work it out.

“She is a colleague, none of your concern,” Sherlock said without stopping for a breathe, “Irene I don’t have a lot of time to talk to you and I can’t help you unless you tell me who hired you.”

John leaned forward on the table trying to look as involved as possible. Irene rearranged on her chair before tilting her head up slightly and looking down at the two of them like they were schoolboys. That was probably another of her favourite BDSM games.

“You know who.”

“Why would you just tell us, then?” John asked, frowning.

“Well, because he told me to be candid with you, silly,” Irene replied her brow furrowing as if John had asked her a stupid question.

“Why?” Sherlock cut in, his voice still a monotone. Unlike Irene he wasn’t up for playing games. (Can you even play games when the woman you love is in this much trouble?) Lexi chastised the thought, it was her own mind that played tricks on her. She rearranged herself against the wall, now leaning on the other shoulder. Irene looked at her again but looked back to Sherlock when he spoke.

“What do you mean why?” she asked with genuine confusion.

“Why did you do it? What does Moriarty have on you that would make it near impossible for you to get out of this situation with your life?”

Irene sat back, clearly narked that Sherlock wasn’t reading her mind.

“Everything.”
It was Sherlock’s turn to sit back this time, he clearly understood the answer but neither John nor Lexi did. Thankfully John piped up first.

“So? So what if he ruins your profession, its better to have a life to live let alone a job.”

Irene looked sharply at John, suddenly not playing any kind of game. Those snake eyes were back.

“Not everything in this world is better than being put in a prison cell, my dear. The information Moriarty has on me …” she paused and looked down, “is enough to have me hunted on every continent.”

Lexi thought that was a tad dramatic but both John and Sherlock stared at her with a seriousness that meant she wasn’t being dramatic. Just how much did Irene know? Enough to intrigue Moriarty, for sure. John continued on his line of questioning.

“Why you?”

Irene Adler smiled apologetically at John.

“Because I can.”

“What do you mean because you can?” he asked bamboozled with the statement.

“Not because she can John, because Moriarty can,” Sherlock replied first, “it’s what he said to me just before he shot Lex.”

If Irene’s ears could prick in interest, they would have. She looked at Lexi with those snake eyes again before looking lazily back at Sherlock.

“I’m so glad you know what it means,” Irene said with a smirk on her face, “I was sick of saying it.”

“It would appear Moriarty is fucking with whatever he can closely related to me in order to fuck with me,” Sherlock mused staring off into the distance.

“So why assassinate the entire royal family?” John asked.

It dawned on Lexi that, although John was probably a very intelligent man (one had to be to be a doctor, no less an army doctor) he had a habit of being the one who asked all the questions. She didn’t think anyone was stupid enough to not know the answer to that but when Sherlock nor Irene spoke Lexi realised they truly didn’t know. Had this been any other occasion she would’ve lorded over them with her knowledge but now was not the time.

“I hope he doesn’t think I’m aware who the King is,” Sherlock quipped.

“It is - was - the Queen not a King,” John replied chewing on his bottom lip in thought.

Irene was watching Lexi again with snake eyes.

“Who in your close circle is a high ranking official in the government, Sherlock?” Lexi asked quietly, waiting for the information to click in the detective’s head.

“Oh. Well. Shit.” Sherlock said, pulling out his phone.

John still, as always, looked confused. She could tell his brain was still trying to work things out.

“Mycroft, John,” Lexi continued ignoring the smile on Irene’s face, “Moriarty is targeting near
enough everyone ever held in Sherlock’s high regard.”

“This way Moriarty had dealt a blow not only to his big brother but also to …” Lexi paused, unsure of what exactly Irene was to Sherlock. The hesitation showed through and she caught Irene’s grin broadening out of the corner of her eye. “Irene. He’s dealt with Irene too.”

It was an awkward way to phrase things but Irene was staring at Lexi with a cheshire cat grin and had pushed her off her thought process. The realisation dawned for John and he let out a puff of breath before rubbing his head in what Lexi assumed was a stress response. Moriarty had already, theoretically, killed Lexi (twice if you went by the many times she had to have her heart restarted) and now he had incriminated Sherlock’s … well, Irene, into one of the greatest assassinations in British history. There wasn’t a massive list of people on the receiving end of Sherlock’s affections but it was enough to blow up some of London over. And Moriarty was just getting started. Everyone Sherlock had ever allowed himself to love was at threat from the mysterious Moriarty, all because he had a curious fascination with Sherlock. The question wasn’t where next but who next. This seemed to cross Sherlock’s mind too because he stared at John for a long time, worry starting to seep into the edges of his face.

Conveniently timed Lestrade appeared with his head poking through the door.

“Time’s up. MI5 is here.”

Sherlock and John both stood up clearly used to knowing when to disappear.

As they left the building of the NSY a black car waited by the roadside. In union Sherlock, John and Lexi let out a long sigh. They all stopped in a line as the car door opened and a portly, well kept man with an umbrella stepped out the car. Mycroft had a weasel-y smile on his face which unsettled Lexi because it was so obviously fake. Mycroft stopped short of the trio and tapped his umbrella off the ground as if it were a staff, no one said anything as he examined them. Lexi took the opportunity to examine him too. Behind the greasy smile was a man burdened with a great deal of stress: his usually impeccable clothes were showing the strain of two day wear, minimal creases of his suit and dark circles under his eyes betrayed the sleepless night he had had. His hair, usually kept combed to a certain angle, was still sleek but not as pristine as usual. His shoes were scuffed from pacing in whatever room he’d been stuck in and the corner of his smile was fighting the urge to scowl twitching every so often as he stood and stared.

Lexi did not like Mycroft Holmes.

“I see you have had contact with Ms Adler, little brother?” Mycroft asked, seemingly ignoring John and Lexi’s presence.

“Obviously,” responded Sherlock with a touch of animosity in his voice. Lexi got the feeling that more words had been exchanged between the two other than the phone call Sherlock had had in the hall at John’s house.

“Then you’ll know what she said is imperative to the safety of this country,” Mycroft continued, his voice straining slightly from its usual polite manner.

“Yep,” muttered Sherlock, craning his neck for a taxi.

“And?”

“And what?”

The patience of Mycroft snapped and his smile was replaced with the scowl that had been dancing
on his lips since he’d gotten out of the car.

“What did she bloody say?!”

Sherlock righted his scarf, purposefully making Mycroft wait. He seemed to notice, however, and tapped his umbrella on the floor even more. Lexi half-smiled and momentarily met Mycroft’s angry gaze, she kept her eyes level and stared at the man who did nothing but pester her about her life choices. Eventually Sherlock piped up.

“You already know who orchestrated this, Mycroft. You don’t need me to give you a step by step account of Irene’s sweet talk just to know she was blackmailed by him.”

“And that’s it? That’s all she said?”

“Yes.”

“Sherlock, if you are withholding information from me you are also withholding information from Her Majesty and England,” growled Mycroft trying his best to threaten his younger sibling. It seemed to have little effect however.

“Well, actually, there isn’t a lot I can do about informing the Queen since she’s, y’know, dead,” Sherlock quipped, John and Lexi both smirked but they forced solemn faces when they met with Mycroft’s gaze. Sherlock seemed to notice the anger (or was it devastation?) in his brother’s eyes.

His voice softened slightly and he took his brother by his arms.

“I promise you, My, I’d hold nothing back if it meant catching Moriarty. I’m going to solve this, you have my word.”

Mycroft looked down at his umbrella for a moment, absorbing his brothers words. Lexi was permitted to see the one piece of brotherly affection amongst all the animosity. The two brothers, as alien to each other as they were, still had each other’s backs. It seemed that even beyond snarky words and intellectual degradation (from both parties) the two Holmes brothers loved each other and in the gravest of circumstances, and for Mycroft it was, rose up to hold the other one from oblivion. Lexi wondered if this also applied to Sherlock’s drug addiction but now wasn’t the time to ask.

“I know I do, Sherlock, I know. You will call when you know anything?” Mycroft said softly looking directly at his brother. John and Lexi, it seemed, had disappeared into the background again.

“You’ll be the first, brother,” Sherlock answered, patting his brother on the shoulder reassuringly. Mycroft seemed to be sobered by this because he stepped back, took a deep breath in and looked properly at Lexi and John.

“You both know how I feel about who Sherlock keeps in company,” Mycroft’s tone had gone back to being superior once more and his gaze lingered on Lexi, “but I cannot force him to stop talking to who I…’’ he paused trying to think of the right word that wouldn’t result in Sherlock smacking him in the face, “… think distract him. If you both are to aid in Sherlock’s investigation I won’t stop you and neither will the NSY or any government official.”

Lexi was surprised at Mycroft’s sudden change of heart but she didn’t want to say anything to jinx the situation. Instead she kept her lips sealed and waited for Mycroft to finish his small inspirational speech.

“I had word from Mary, explaining the situation, and she’s asked you three be given leeway to continue doing whatever it is you’re doing. As long as you have every intention of bringing Moriarty
in you have my blessing."

“Well, isn’t that a relief,” muttered John in a tone that was intended to be sarcastic but came across
polite and respectful. In response Mycroft did another smile but this time it seemed more genuine as
if he appreciated the debt he would owe to his brother and his companions.

Mycroft nodded to them all before turning on his heel and getting back into the car. After ten seconds
or so the car pulled away leaving the three of them on the pavement surrounded by police officers,
MI5 and news reporters trying to do their jobs properly. Lexi considered the encounter Sherlock had
just had with Mycroft. Given that he had just learned of Moriarty’s overall master plan (to basically
destroy the life of Sherlock and anyone close with him) and his nearest target had been Mycroft he
seemed awfully nonchalant about talking with his brother. It was probable the Holmes brother’s
didn’t share affection often and the scene before of somewhat care had been just about as much as
they could both muster. Lexi wondered what it was like to have a sibling concerned about one’s
wellbeing, even if it was as dysfunctional as Sherlock and Mycroft’s relationship.

“So what’s going to happen to Irene, Sherlock?” Lexi asked, breaking the brief silence.

Sherlock considered her question for a moment the panic on his face rearing it’s ugly head once
more.

“The people will want justice for the death of the Royals. Mycroft will be tied in a position where he
will have to prove, to foreign leaders and the people of England, that the government is capable of
apprehending a terrorist - even if that terrorist didn’t really do anything in the first place.”

“So Irene will take the fall unless we find Moriarty?” John asked, his arms crossing.

“No, no. There hasn’t been a mass regicide in years, it’ll take more than just a prison sentence to
appease an audience.”

John frowned, his head clearly too set in modernity and democracy to understand the gravity of
Irene’s situation. Sherlock didn’t reply he instead walked to the end of the pavement and called for a
taxi. It seemed Sherlock had a deal with the taxi companies of London since its all they ever seemed
to do. In the back of Lexi’s mind somewhere she wondered if either of them had actually walked
across central London before or if they took taxi’s everywhere. John was left staring at her, still not
understanding Sherlock’s statement. Lexi sighed wishing that when she’d left Baker Street this
morning for training she’d put on her coat, it was cold and the frost was getting to her arms.

“She won’t be put in prison, John, they’ll make a big thing of it on the news and they’ll find her
guilty of mass regicide. The only sentence for a terrorist who kills the Royal family is death.”

John stared at her for the longest of moments as if he didn’t believe her. Lexi wished her mind was as
naive as John’s seemed to be.

“If we don’t find Moriarty, Irene Adler will be executed.”
This chapter was written on Valentines day so enjoy the smush~

The drive from New Scotland Yard’s HQ in central London back to Baker Street was done in silence. Sherlock spent the entire trip staring out of the window and Lexi and John were sitting quietly wishing the taxi journey was nearly over. Lexi still hadn’t forgotten that John had near enough called her a cheap fake of an Irene Adler and, though she wasn’t one to take things to heart, it stung a fair bit. John and Lexi’s relationship had never been, by any means, ‘normal’. The first few times John had met Lexi she had been off her face on cocaine and Lexi knew John disliked drugs intensely, he had been there when Sherlock had fallen off the proverbial wagon a few times and he resented the detective for the time he had to dedicate to him to ensure his sobriety. John had hoped Sherlock’s new, for lack of a better word, aide was going to continue the same level of wariness he had given but instead he had been lumped with Lexi who had been forcibly dropped into Sherlock’s world and by extension, John’s. So in John’s mind he had been faced with two sociopathic addicts who seemed to only further corrupt each other. Lexi saw Sherlock from another perspective though, to her Sherlock had incredible inner strength. There had been a multitude of occasions Sherlock had had the opportunity to dabble in narcotics but he hadn’t even, outwardly, acknowledged their existence. Lexi was sure even now, a few months after her last overdose and clean living she’d still feel the pit of temptation to quell the Always flare up in her stomach. Sherlock was unconventional by society’s standards he was arrogant, blunt and as people kept referring to him a prick. But that didn’t make him completely without hope of ever living his life without the constant overshadowing of John and Mycroft’s disapproving smiles. It was for this reason John and Lexi shared the awkward silence in the cab - because both had conflicting thoughts on each other and of Sherlock. They both cared for him though and that was why they both put up with each other because without Sherlock they’d both be floating in an air of uncertainty; John with his leg and Lexi with the Always.

When the cab eventually managed to navigate through the locked down streets of central London it pulled up outside Baker Street to Mrs Hudson standing with her hand on her chest and an anxious expression on her face. Lexi had become fond of Mrs Hudson in the past few weeks. Her level of awareness to all things … illegal was greater than both John and Sherlock had thought and beyond her ditsy demeanour she really did know what was going on in their lives. Mrs Hudson had once appeared in Sherlock’s flat while Lexi was restringing his violin, to which she’d unceremoniously “borrowed”, and they’d had quite a candid discussion about the misdemeanour’s Lexi had gotten up to. ‘It is what it is’ Mrs Hudson had said when she indicated her awareness of Lexi’s withdrawal and then she had gone on to discuss how she hoped that Lexi would be able to stop Sherlock throwing knives at her wall because she was sick of having to patch up the wall when the plaster gave way. Lexi had bonded with her even more when Mrs Hudson had poured their teas down the drain and had poured them both a whisky on ice. They’d both had a mini toast to good health and had finished off the rest of the bottle when Sherlock had arrived back home with bags from Waitrose. Both Mrs Hudson and Lexi had eyed up Sherlock suspiciously as he stood there looking altogether odd with his shopping bags and then they had both burst out laughing.

At least Mrs Hudson liked her enough to appreciate her company. (Like the mother you never had.) She shook her head to get rid of the thought and approached Mrs Hudson before John or Sherlock could. In response Mrs Hudson had grabbed her by the cheeks and checked her over, she then ran to
Sherlock and John and did the same. Once she had finished checking them all over she came back to the door looking far less stressed.

“Mrs Hudson are you okay?” Lexi asked, placing her hand on the older woman’s arm protectively.

“Oh I was so worried about the three of you! When I read the news I thought I’d come and tell you but then I remembered you’d both been out early and then there were cars and sirens!” babbled Mrs Hudson getting more worked up when she recounted her story. Lexi rubbed her arm reassuringly a little touched that she had been worried about the three of them even though she constantly told John and Sherlock she wasn’t their mother but their landlady.

“It’s quite alright, Mrs Hudson, we were with Lestrade at New Scotland Yard,” Lexi replied her voice surprisingly calm in comparison to the brunette in front of her.

Sherlock and John crowded the woman too and she looked at them all worriedly for a moment before huffing and entering the house. The trio followed her in like lost puppies. No one said anything as Mrs Hudson repeated the news to them, they didn’t want to offend her when she was clearly distressed, though, Lexi had had to throw a few threatening looks at Sherlock when he’d tried to interject a few times. His gaze had mer hers and then he had closed his mouth and looked very much abashed.

By the time Mrs Hudson had gotten settled and drinking whisky in the front room it was growing dark outside. Although they’d been out since the early hours the day had seemed to slip by as the, quite literally, explosive news had been given to them. Now they were faced with a great challenge; finding someone who was for all intents and purposes invisible.

John left a few hours later when the moon was high and there were foxes lurking on the streets outside hoping for an evening meal. Lexi was sat in Sherlock’s arm chair because John had been sat in the one she had claimed the past few months - after all it had been his. Legally, he still owned it so she couldn’t complain when he sat himself down.

Lexi watched Sherlock pacing backwards and forwards with a cigarette sticking out of her mouth. She had been determined to kick all of her habits when she started her clean streak but Sherlock had said that smoking, although sort of bad for you, wasn’t going to kill her as quick as other diseases or accidents. Lexi had agreed with him partially after all she had almost died twice and neither of those times had been related to smoking. It was a blasé outlook to have on life but the junior doctor didn’t mind too much - she was just happy to be alive.

After five minutes or so, Lexi placed the stub of the cigarette in one of the ash trays she had claimed by the side of Sherlock’s chair. He’d never admit it but more often than not he had been banished to John’s old chair while she had claimed the cosiest seat. Lexi watched Sherlock pace and pace and pace, his rhythm almost memorising; one thing Sherlock lacked was a television because he had said they were distracting and that newspapers would suffice. Lexi had disagreed with him but she wasn’t in the position to bring her own with her given neither had discussed her living arrangements yet.

They had yet to even discuss this morning. Their short but intimate make out session had been intense and Lexi would be lying if she said she hadn’t felt his hardness against her leg but they had but they had been dragged back into reality by the banging of lockers and yelling of customers running to the swimming pool. And then the Royal family had been assassinated and there had been less discussion on their personal lives as with their professional ones.

So now there they were with Sherlock pacing back and forth thinking about Irene Adler (what even was she to him?) and Lexi sat contemplating how she should address the situation of his feelings to the woman sat in Lestrade’s custody. After another five or so minutes Lexi bit her lip and decided it
was perhaps best to not address her feelings. Instead she decided it was probably better to order food and let him pace while she ate her dinner and then she could play the violin to pass the hours until she felt tired enough to sleep. Before any of that could happen however she needed her pyjamas.

Sherlock didn’t seem to notice as she got up, passed by him and walked into her impromptu bedroom (that was really Sherlock’s). She stared at the small collection of pyjamas she had making a mental note to tell Mrs Hudson off for doing her laundry even after she’d asked her not to. She was their landlady not their mother or maid. In the end she decided on a Pokemon pyjama set where the shorts were a mixture of Charmander, Squirtle and Bulbasaur. The pinkette shrugged off her top first and then her jeans leaving her in her underwear and her bra. Lexi was pleasantly surprised at the weight she’d put on in the past two months - she’d gone from a tiny 90lbs to 120lbs in muscle in 8 weeks. Lexi stood in front of the mirror adjacent to the bed and looked at her reflection, the scar that jagged across her stomach was beginning to lose its pinkish hue. She would forever be marked by Moriarty, even if she had surgery to remove the scar there would still be some notion of his abuse. In the back of her head Lexi made a note to do the same to Moriarty before she put a bullet in his brain.

She pulled on the shorts first before turning back to her drawer and sifting through looking for the Pikachu top. The top in question was white and blue striped and had a huge print of Pikachu on the front - it wasn’t hard to miss yet Lexi was having trouble finding it. After a few moments she found the suspect top at the bottom of her drawer hidden behind other various forms of pyjamas.

It was then that she heard someone clearing their throat at the door. Lexi turned, top in her hand to meet Sherlock’s gaze. She gave him credit for not doing what every man did blatantly and eye up her breasts which were only covered because of her bra, though she had no doubt he probably had already registered it but was smart enough to hide his awareness.

“What did you think of today?” he asked her, voice soft and eyes looking into her green ones.

Lexi paused to consider the question. What did she think of today? Even past a ‘the Queen was blown up’ standard Lexi had met the only other woman who had captivated Sherlock. And she still knew little about her except what it said on Lestrade’s file. Then there was Mycroft’s plain view disapproval of her, as well as John’s, Today had been in sarcastic terms a right barrel of laughs.

“Interesting,” responded Lexi carefully, aware that she knew little of how Sherlock felt for Irene.

“May I?” asked Sherlock, his hand motioning towards the end of the bed. Lexi shrugged in response. He sat.

“I am sorry you had to find out about Irene like this,” Sherlock said clearly unsure of where to start. Lexi stiffened, unsure of how to respond.

“It’s …” she paused thinking of the right way to phrase her thoughts, “it’s okay. Everyone has things in their past they don’t know how to talk about. It’s cool.”

Sherlock watched her for another moment before looking down at his feet.

“Irene isn’t exactly … conventional. But she isn’t as brash as she seems and she needs our help.”

Lexi shrugged on her top before turning and smiling at the detective who was again searching her face for some sign of acceptance.

“Irene is fine. She doesn’t worry me. I mean, yeah, we should probably find and shoot the fuck out of Moriarty before she gets executed but in the way you’re worried about - it’s fine,” Lexi said turning to talk to Sherlock properly, “she isn’t my concern.”
Sherlock frowned and stood up to walk over to her.

“What is, then?” he asked, standing in front of her. Lexi considered her thoughts for a moment before letting out a long sigh.

“Both John and Mycroft seem to think I’m toxic for you, Sherlock,” she said softly, her eyes lowering in embarrassment that she was so sentimental. Lexi expected rebuke from Sherlock and her thoughts grew even more pessimistic when he didn’t reply straight away. Sherlock’s hand softly cupped her chin and pulled her face up to meet his. His eyes were just as soft as his grasp had been and he smiled at her.

“Lex - when you were shot by Moriarty I thought you were gone for good. Like a light being snubbed out before it had time to become incandescent. In the short amount of time I had known you my entire life became defunct. And then you were alive and your light was brighter than the sun and my brother was trying to tell me to let you go and lead your own life,” Sherlock said, his voice soft.

Lexi went to exclaim at Mycroft’s audacity but Sherlock cut her off before she could.

“I nearly punched him in the face,” he said more bluntly with a grin on his face.

Lexi started laughing because she knew it was probably easier to punch Mycroft Holmes in the face than it was to reason with him. Sherlock chuckled before his hand found her cheek.

“My point is Lex, it doesn’t matter who says what or who gets in my way, I will always find your light even when it’s almost extinguished.”

Lexi looked at him for the longest of moments before smirking and looking at him again, this time with more mischievous eyes.

“What if I decide I don’t want to be around you anymore?” her voice was light and cheeky, Sherlock would know Lexi was being sarcastic.

He considered her question for a moment by tilting his head to the side as if he was weighing up his answers until he broke out into a smile and another chuckle.

“Then I guess you’ll have to get a restraining order.”

Lexi burst out laughing, appreciating his sincerity and his honesty. Sherlock could have lied to her then and there about how he felt about John and Mycroft’s meddling but he had instead been as brutally honest as possible.

Lexi bit her lip mulling over her thoughts.

“You know, we never did finish our training this morning…” she muttered, “I still think I won.”

Sherlock put his hands around her waist and half smiled.

“I don’t think that’s quite how it works, Lex…”

“Wanna bet?”

Sherlock tilted his head in confusion but before he could say anything else she kissed his lips. Whatever he had been about to say disappeared into an overwhelmed moan and he hungrily returned her kiss. Lexi pursued the kiss by gently biting Sherlock’s lip, his response was to kiss her neck playfully. She could feel his hardness on her leg again.
Oh how lucky they were to have been in a bedroom.

Sherlock plucked the pinkette off of the floor while Lexi simultaneously wrapped her legs around his waist. He pushed her back against the drawers until she was sat properly on the drawers with her legs still wrapped around his taut waist. Lexi could feel Sherlock’s heartbeat pulsating quicker and quicker still. She was sure her heartbeat would match his if she stopped to check. When they collided with the drawers Lexi let out a small gasp at the intensity of his embrace but it didn’t stop him finding his lips back to hers. It was better than any high Lexi had ever had or any other encounter she had had for that matter. Every time their tongues met a sharp butterfly would kick in her stomach demanding more. Lexi demanded more than just being on a dresser, she forcefully pushed herself against Sherlock with her legs wrapped around his waist so that he was holding her again. She felt him grin at her assertiveness but it didn’t stop him gently nipping at her ear lobes and kissing the crook of her neck.

The bottom of the bed collided with the back of Sherlock’s legs and he fell backwards landing on the bed with Lexi straddling him. It didn’t seem to stop the pair though as Lexi found her hands running up Sherlock’s shirt which had loosed itself from his trousers in their fumblings. His taut abdomen felt exquisite against the soft of Lexi’s hand and as if in response to the skin on skin contact Sherlock pulled her into a stronger embrace. She acquiesced to his intentions and continued to kiss his lips. Lexi felt Sherlock’s hands caressing her bum and she suddenly wished that she hadn’t put on her shorts so quickly. Her hands worked on the detectives shirt and soon he had lost the white cotton linen that always made him look professional. Lexi didn’t mind. She took a moment to take in his magnificence; their training had improved Sherlock’s natural physique since she had seen it last when she ripped off the ECG stickers in A&E. His muscles were perfectly chiselled and she momentarily debated whether or not she had died and gone to wherever it was dead people went. For the time being it didn’t matter and she would revel in the opportunity.

Lexi gave a small, cheeky smile to Sherlock before her lips disappeared and kissed every inch of his chest. She lingered at his waistband feeling a slight jagged breath escape his throat before moving back up towards his chest and then back to his lips. The bulge in Sherlock’s pants was undeniably large; every kiss they shared felt like electricity and both responded in a way that spurred the other one on, the detective’s bulge got harder and his breathe got more irate and every inch of Lexi tingled with pleasure.

For the entire night they explored each other, in every sense of the word, both of them play fighting for dominance until they both found their release. It was easily the early hours of the morning when they fell back onto the pillows, naked and curled into each others embrace.

Lexi was tucked into Sherlock’s shoulder and the detective watched her bare breasts fall up and down as she slept. He couldn’t help but smile at her beauty. if he had told himself three months ago he would be hopelessly under the mercy of a woman as beautiful as Alexandra he’d have laughed in his own face. Yet here he was having made love to someone who had stolen his heart entirely.

Even though the world was, quite literally, blowing up around them they had for the time being found a small piece of happiness with each other. There was a certain sense of foreboding about the days to come and undoubtedly all of their lives were in danger.

But for the first time in a long time Sherlock was contented with his lot. He kissed the sleeping woman’s head before closing his own eyes and letting his bliss carry him to sleep.
How Do You Like Your Eggs in the Morning? I Like Mine Without a Battering Ram.

London was on lockdown. The expanding threat from Moriarty had sent the government into a panic; all transport was banned, businesses were closed and for the first time since the Second World War the London Stock Exchange had been halted. It was, for all intents and purposes, martial law. Armed police walked the empty and unusually quiet streets and if one looked closely out of their window’s they would see other people peeking out of their windows too, as if too terrified to open the window in case they were told off by the police patrols.

Sherlock had been woken to the sounds of a phone ringing, but he wasn’t sure from where. Last night had been explosive, metaphorically and physically, and in the furore Sherlock hadn’t paid any attention to where he’d dropped his trousers. The phone went off and Sherlock let out a sigh of relief and closed his eyes again. Lexi still hadn’t moved, the pinkette was snuggled into her pillow like it was a life jacket and her eyelids were so clearly heavy that he wasn’t sure even if he did try and wake her if she’d be able to open them. With his head back on the pillow he couldn’t help but tilt his head to look at the naked woman in his bed. The temptation to try and wake her was almost too much to handle, the seductive outline of a mandala tattoo danced down her back and disappeared under the covers and just as the detective was about to play follow-the-tattoo with his lips the phone rang again.

Sherlock let out an audible sigh - it was clear someone wanted to speak to him. Lexi only stirred enough to grumble at the noise and rotate her snuggle position. He sat up and pulled on a pair of light grey pyjama bottoms from his bedside cabinet, if it were that important the caller would acquiesce and call back even if he didn’t answer on the second try. True to his predictions the phone went off and the ring tone rang out again. There were three possibilities; John, Mycroft or Lestrade. There was a fourth but it wasn’t worth contemplating on such a fine morning. Opening the bedroom door that had unceremoniously been kicked shut the night before, Sherlock followed the noise into the hallway. Somehow, and not even his detective skills could answer how, his trousers had found themselves half way to the kitchen. The ringing came from one of the pockets and Sherlock bent down and pulled the phone out of the right pocket. He looked briefly at the iPhone’s screen: Mycroft.

“What?” snapped Sherlock, his irritation flaring at the very thought of his brother.

“What do you mean what? You have work to do, Sherlock,” replied an equally irritated voice down the phone.

“You only asked me to solve it,” he checked the microwave’s clock - 7.30am, “8 hours ago.”

“Yes, 8 hours ago! You should have been finished by now, you are under the employ of Her Majesty, you can’t piss around.”

“Actually, Mycroft, I’m not,” Sherlock mumbled reminding his brother that his employer was no longer amongst the living. A short silence followed him down the phone before he heard Mycroft let out a long exhale of breath.

“Please, Sherlock, don’t be difficult. Please do this for me, there are so many things at stake now, so many leaks needing to be plugged and the state of the country needing repairing. Foreign powers are trying to make a move on how we react to the attack and Russia in particular is pressing hard for replacement foreign ministers who were also killed in the blast. If we don’t contain this thing soon it
won’t just be martial law, brother.”

Sherlock rubbed his eyes to get rid of the sleep and listened to the despair in his elder siblings voice, for once he knew Mycroft wasn’t trying to manipulate him into doing his own work. Sherlock might have been a dick but not always.

“Okay, My, okay. Are we going to be stopped in the street?” Sherlock asked, peering out from the living room window. Three armed police were sitting on their walkie-talkie’s, all three seemed to sense his eyes watching them because they all looked up at him before leaning back into their walkie-talkie’s.

“No, not anymore you won’t,” Mycroft replied sounding slightly relieved.

“I’ll call you when I have news,” Sherlock said going to hit the end call button.

“Sherlock,” the detective froze and put the phone back to his ear.

“Yes?”

There was a slight pause before Mycroft spoke.

“Thank you.”

Sherlock clicked the end call button without replying.

He padded down to the end of the hallway, leaning in to his room to see what, if any, signs of awareness there was in Lexi. Sherlock knew there were more pressing issues than watching the chest of Lexi rise and fall, he knew that there was an entire country sitting on a knife’s edge. But there was something to captivating about watching Lexi sleep.

He did need to wake her up.

He knew one way he could wake her up.

Sherlock slid back into the covers, they were warm and inviting and made him want to press himself against the naked Lexi’s back and fall back to sleep. However he didn’t doubt that his brother would probably have the police batter the door down to get him up if he dallied for too long. Instead he opted to kissing from the top of her shoulder blade into the crook of her neck. His lips seemed to be the adrenaline she needed to stir because she smiled and pressed her back against his chest. She still had her eyes closed.

Why oh why did the British monarchy choose now to get themselves blown up?

Sherlock was torn between temptation and duty (not to the monarchy, for he never knew who was in charge and when, but to his brother). Eventually his duty bound brain won out against his lust filled heart and he pressed his lips to Lexi’s ear.

“We have a job to do, Lex.”

Lexi stirred and rolled slightly but her eyes were still closed.

“I did my job last night, Sherlock,” she mumbled with a slight smile on her face.

Sherlock snorted in amusement and kissed her lips once before pulling back and pushing some of her hair out of her face.
“I didn’t mean that one, though we should definitely come back to that,” he paused and watched Lexi’s eyes flutter open, “I meant the one that involves—”

“The one that involves shooting Moriarty in the face,” Lexi interrupted rubbing her eyes just as he had not minutes before.

“Yes, the one that involves shooting Moriarty in the face. Though I do hope we can, you know, ensure the world knows he was the one to create the mayhem before we do the whole shooting thing.”

Lexi let out a yawn.

“That would be a good idea, I suppose.”

Sherlock chuckled.

“Yeah it would.”

Lexi sat up right, letting the duvet drop and expose her breasts. Sherlock watched her for a moment before having to remind himself that there were always consequences for testing his brothers patience. Battering rams and police officers were not what they required at 7.30 in the morning. But that didn’t mean he couldn’t drag his feet slightly. Sherlock let out a loud, over-exaggerated, exasperated sigh and slammed his face into his pillow.

“It isn’t faaaaaaair.”

He heard Lexi laugh and felt her soft lips press gently against his shoulder blade.

“You’re right, it isn’t fair. You still haven’t paid me back for the job I did last night.”

“Please don’t make this harder than it is for me to get out of the bed, Lexi.”

He felt Lexi move from the bed and her shuffling around getting into her pyjamas.

“That’s okay, Sherlock, you stay in bed. But just know that the first person to be ready is clearly the one most intelligent,” her tone was mocking, she was trying to get him out of bed.

“Ha. I am a highly capable individual who doesn’t need to be acknowledged or accepted for his superior intelligence, we both know that—”

Sherlock broke off as he suddenly jumped up and off the bed running for the bathroom. He heard Lexi curse as she realised she had been played at her own game. Of course Sherlock was childish enough to want to win. He slammed the door and locked it shut behind him hearing Lexi swear again.

He turned the shower on in the bath and let the water run for a few minutes. For all the functionality 221B Baker Street had instant hot water was not one of them. Sherlock heard a click behind him as the door opened. A very naked Lexi leaned against the door frame, a cheeky smile on her face and a penny in her hand. She’d obviously picked It up from the bedside table. His level of perception however was somewhat hindered as he stared, mouth agape, at the beauty of the woman stood in front of him.

“Did I tell you I can pick simple locks too?”

Sherlock was speechless, he couldn’t quite find the right words in between wanting to say ‘fuck me’
(literally) and ‘fuck you’ (for beating him at his own ruse).

Lexi stepped past him and got into the shower, pulling the curtain around to stop Sherlock’s puppy eyes.

For a moment he didn’t know what to do with himself, so he stood there rooted to the same spot, still trying to get his brain to work. Then a head popped around the shower curtain with another cheeky smile attached with it.

“Are you going to stand there all day or are you going to join me?”

Sherlock didn’t need asking twice.
The ashes of the fire that had devoured Buckingham Palace still hung in the air, drifting down like snow. The emergency services had only just been able to put out the fire as dawn had broken it seemed that all the antiquities stored in the Palace had gone up like tinder taking everything and everyone with it. Crime scene investigators were still on site analysing and taking forensic evidence to totally dominate the case against Irene Adler. With so much evidence and a willing confession Lexi found it hard to believe that any kind of trial would see debate, she even doubted if any lawyer would take on the case given how incredibly stupid it was to even try and defend her, she was sure if someone did they’d face more than just a few nasty letters through the post.

There were still charred corpses in the rubble and ash and the smell of burnt flesh hung in the air. They wouldn’t touch the bodies until all forensic investigation had been completed but Lexi counted a handful of investigators taking small samples of bone for identification. From what Lexi could see there were about 60 or 70 corpses easily visible from the remains of the Palace but her morbid intrigue outweighed her moral shock at the senseless death. All morals aside this was a sweet shop for a doctor and a medical intern; the corpses were the candy and the remains of the Palace their wrappers. She and Sherlock passed through the street wide cordon with no interference, in fact, they managed to glide through as if they were invisible. She imagined Mycroft had told the police that they were not to engage with the two and to give them whatever they needed, if they were to solve the case, keep Irene alive and let Mycroft sleep peacefully at night there would be minimal disruption to their investigating.

Lestrade was stood in the centre of the remains of the Palace looking mighty tired and mighty stressed. When he caught sight of Lexi and Sherlock a momentary wave of relief crossed his face but no sooner had it appeared did it disappear under a, what Lexi decided was a common fixture upon the man’s face, scowl.

“Where’s John, Sherlock?” he asked, seemingly not paying any attention to Lexi.

“Stuck,” replied Sherlock cryptically.

“What do you mean stuck?”

Sherlock looked at him for a moment, his face trying to work out whether Lestrade was joking or having a hard time understanding the idea of there being no John attached to the detective.

“I mean stuck, as in, to remain in one place because one cannot move from that location. Really Lestrade, do you need a dictionary?”

Lexi wished Sherlock was a little more tactful than he was, Sherlock was a necessity for the NSY but that didn’t mean they (Lestrade) couldn’t make his life much more difficult (read: her life much more difficult). An even darker scowl was beginning to cross Lestrade’s face, Lexi laughed lightly as if it was meant to be a joke, though they both knew it wasn’t.

“What he means is with London being on lockdown he can’t get into the centre without his own car.”

Lestrade transferred his gaze to her, looking more displeased that she’d appeared in his line of vision. She supposed he was still angry from her breaking into his office and probably for being a (recovering) drug addict. Those closest to Sherlock were extraordinarily protective of him and it really did make her wonder how far he fell when he tumbled of the sobriety wagon. She imagined it
wasn’t pretty.

“Right…” Lestrade muttered, taking a slight pause to quell his obvious need to smack Sherlock in the face, “your brother told us to give you unrestricted access to the crime scene and asked that you also go to Windsor Castle too.”

Sherlock snorted, “how are we meant to get out of London?”

Lestrade seemed momentarily pleased that the great Sherlock Holmes wasn’t as full of answers as he thought.

“There’s a helicopter waiting for you in the street, we had to clear out cars and make a makeshift helipad so the emergency services could get in and out of London.”

Lexi raised her eyebrows, she had never been on a helicopter before. From the blasé look on Sherlock’s face, he had plenty of times.

“Thanks, Gary,” Sherlock said with a ‘you know you’re my bitch’ smile.

Lestrade simmered with another scowl before Sherlock turned towards the biggest pile of rubble.

“It’s Greg,” he muttered trying to keep his calm. Instead he changed his mind and turned and began to shout at another police officer about contaminating a crime scene.

Lexi turned and followed Sherlock. When he stopped in front of a charred corpse and bent down to look at it, Lexi caught up. Sherlock had long legs and walked significantly faster than she could.

“Why do you always say the wrong name with Lestrade?” she asked, crouching to join him looking at the body.

“Because it amuses me to no end to wind him up,” Sherlock replied with an uncharacteristically devious grin.

Lexi smiled back and both then turned their attentions to the body. She stared at it for a long time, running through the identifiers of the body, for anything suspicious or anything just outright weird. Tatters of clothes were stuck to the bones along with barely-there chunks of flesh covered in soot. The fire wasn’t raging long enough to burn so thoroughly, it means there was a specific agent used in the bomb that made it hotter than usual. Lexi’s head tilted, she pulled out a pen from her pocket and lifted a few pieces of paving away from the corpse. Asides from the gnarly remains there were few indicators of who the person was. Lexi eyed up the detective who had his little magnifying glass out looking at the teeth of the body. He was so cute when he focused on something. You need to focus, he’s looking at a barely dead body.

Lexi looked back down at the corpse and used her pen to sift through the rubble that had collected around the body. A small silver and yellow brooch fell into the chest cavity of the skeleton. The pinkette leaned forwards and peered down into the cavity, debating how deep the brooch had fallen. She had no gloves to get handsy with the victim, though she wasn’t squeamish she didn’t exactly relish the idea of sticking her hands all over a crime scene and a probably sticky-off-the-muscle-mass corpse.

“Give me your glove,” she called to the detective.

Startled at the random request Sherlock looked up from his magnifying glass.

“Why?” he replied, as if he thought she was going to pull some kind of prank on him.
“Give me your glove, Sherlock.”

He took off the glove when he realised she wasn’t messing around and handed it to her without saying anything, only interested in what she was doing. She put her hand in the glove and looked back at Sherlock.

“Your hand is so warm, you’ve practically thermo-heated this glove.”

Sherlock shrugged and watched her shove her hand into the cavity of the corpse. With her hands on the brooch she pulled it out into the cold sunlight and held it up so they could both see it better. The brooch itself was a yellow flower with silver diamonds embellishing the petals, it wasn't cheap. On the back was a brand of the jeweller.

Or so she thought.

Lexi very quickly changed her mind when she rubbed off some of the soot covering the proper lettering. EIIR. Sherlock leaned in towards her trying to get a better look of the brooch.

“So you know what that means, Lex?”

Lexi shot his a sideways glance before turning the brooch back over.

“You really need to keep up with the times,” she said dryly, “EIIR: Elizabeth II Regina. This is the Queen’s remains.”

Sherlock seemed surprised at their luck of finding the monarch's body straight away. If anything was going to tell them something about what Moriarty was up to, this would be it. He leaned back over the body and checked the teeth again, while he tinkered about Lexi placed the brooch back down gently onto the floor and moved the rubble around the skull some more. Two pearl earrings rolled over by the force of the moving debris and Lexi decided there was no doubt that this body was the body of the poor old Lizzie. Sherlock made a small ‘hm’ noise which caught her attention.

“What?”

Sherlock gave her the magnifying glass and motioned to her.

“Check the teeth.”

Lexi leaned over taking a proper look at the remains properly. In between the teeth were small fibres that hadn’t been licked away by the fire, the pinkette leaned further still until she was only a mere two or three inches away from the body. The smell was acrid and assaulting her senses but the fibres in the teeth were intriguing her the most. From what she could tell they were like small fibres of wire or rope, she didn’t think the Queen would have been into bondage, though it was a possibility, and the only other viable reasoning there could be was that the Queen had been bound before the bomb had exploded. So how come she hadn’t been missed by her guards or butlers or any random assortment of tourists hoping for a photo opportunity?

“Ooooh,” breathed Sherlock, gaze fixed on something else entirely. Lexi looked at the rubble he had pulled, noting that he seemed to have no worry about getting shouted at by Lestrade for contaminating things. Of the pulled back debris there were three things of interest; a gun, another skull and a small plaque. Using her gloved hand Lexi pried the plaque from the skulls mouth.

‘Because I Can’ was imprinted on the plaque - a taunt from Moriarty most likely. It didn’t strike her massively odd to find Moriarty’s signature phrase on a metal plaque, in order to survive the fire the plaque would need to be made of a strong, resilient metal. What struck her as really fucked up was
the way in which the plaque had been rammed into the mouth, Lexi imagined it had been done before the fire and she was sure that the victim was probably alive when it was rammed into the upper jaw with force. The top of the skull had caved in towards the back, small fragments coming away as Lexi placed the plaque back where she found it.

“Sherlock, do you understand what’s happened here?” she asked, looking to the man who had been sitting with his fingers pressed to his lips in thought.

“I can deduce that the Queen was tied up, probably by the bomb. Her security team, or more likely her private security team were also bound and gagged.”

“This poor guy here,” Lexi muttered motioning to the caved in skull, “was smacked with a blunt instrument but not before he was forcibly made to bite into the metal plaque.”

“I imagine the other security team members were shot with the gun before he died. Moriarty is a sycophant who likes to play games with people, he was probably there before the bomb went off.”

A short silence fell between the two as they took in the gravity of the situation. Lexi stood up and pulled off Sherlock’s glove offering it back to him. In the process of her looking at the various pieces of debris Sherlock had taken off his other glove, presumably because his sensibilities were offended at the idea of having only one glove on. He shook his head when she offered it to him, so she instead shoved it in her coat pocket (thank god for big coats since Sherlock seemed to have giant hands, or massive gloves).

“Well?”

Sherlock and Lexi turned to the voice, finding Lestrade standing with one hand holding a cigarette and the other in his pocket. Sherlock frowned.

“I didn’t think you smoked?”

Lestrade stared at Sherlock, as if deciding whether or not he was being sarcastic. Deciding that Sherlock was probably incapable of on-point sarcasm he nodded slowly.

“Yeah, I don’t. At least, not officially.”

He held out the pack of cigarettes and Lexi took one gratefully. She still indulged in nicotine and occasionally Sherlock did too but mostly when he was bored. Today was not one of those days. He shook his head and waited until Lexi had had her first drag and then filled Lestrade in on what they had found. If the police detective had wanted relief of some kind by their presence, it probably wasn’t working, as they explained his face dropped further and further until he decided to light another cigarette immediately after he had finished his first.

“Christ,” he murmured. Lexi could see his brain working overtime.

Even though Sherlock tended not to engage in smoking, he did appreciate the nicotine kick to keep him going, he stood in the path of Lestrade’s cigarette smoke. Lexi smirked slightly but didn’t say anything.

“Don’t fear, Lestrade, we have a lead to catching Moriarty. You just need to do… whatever it is you normally do, and we’ll solve the case,” Sherlock said jovially with an unusually happy smile.

Lexi cleared her throat and shook her head minutely at Sherlock who frowned and let his weird smile drop. They had discussed this before, his attempt at empathy was woefully mistimed and he often tried to be empathetic in the wrong situations. This was one of them. He was such a dork.
“What’s your lead?” Lestrade asked trying to ignore the weird smile. It only helped him look awkwardly at Lexi for an answer instead of the detective, who was still trying to work out how and when to smile appropriately.

“The plaque is a specific type of metal. Most metals would at least be charred or warped from the heat of the explosion. It didn’t change which means it’s a specialist type of metal. If we can trace the metal we can trace Moriarty’s steps,” explained Lexi.

Lestrade seemed pleased with this idea, taking another drag on his cigarette.

“Mycroft still wants you to check out Windsor Castle,” Lestrade added seemingly somewhat warmer towards the pinkette than earlier.

“We’re likely to find the same thing in another body, but if we have more than one metal plaque we might increase our chances of tracing the metal,” Sherlock mused before nodding to himself and motioning to Lexi.

“Guess we’re going on a helicopter. See you later, Greg,” Lexi said politely, slightly apprehensive of the idea of a helicopter.

Lestrade nodded to her and let her pass, he caught himself in front of Sherlock however.

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Sherlock almost bounced into Lestrade’s chest. The man was smaller than him but he was strong, he didn’t even flinch when Sherlock essentially chest bumped him. Sherlock stepped back slightly trying to work out something to say that suited the situation. He looked over Lestrade’s shoulder and noted Lexi was being guided by the pilot into the helicopter waiting for them, he watched her stop at the door to the helicopter and try on her headphones - even though the attack was meant to be (and probably was to other morally bound people) horrific, she was enjoying herself. Like he was. The thrill of the hunt was far more titivating than the outcome - though both would relish the opportunity to kill Moriarty. There was no going back now that their minds had decided that fact. Sherlock looked back to Lestrade, who’s eyes seemed somewhat softer.

“I’m sorry I never took the time to get to know Lexi, Sherlock.”

Sherlock was blindsided by the genuine remorse in Lestrade’s voice.

“Uh, I mean, you still could but I suppose it’s alright?”

Lestrade snorted slightly in amusement.

“I know you don’t do the whole heart to heart thing, and neither do I, but it’s worth mentioning that Lexi is okay by me. I know she’s had a hard time with Mycroft and John, but after everything she’s been through it seems silly not to appreciate her inner strength.”

Sherlock looked down at his shoes. It was seldom that he thought others were right - this was one of those times. Lexi had been through more than anyone else. Moriarty had made it clear he wanted to hurt them all, but Lexi seemed to be more of a crux for him than anyone or anything else. She had taken it in her stride, even if her own inner demons were trying to kill her too. It opened up a level of emotions Sherlock previously thought were impossible and impractical for him to feel. So what could
he say to the man he liked to wind up that wasn’t something sensitive? Sherlock looked back at the inspector who was waiting for his response.

“Enjoy your media day, Greg, it’s going to be a long one,” he replied with a smile on his face before walking towards the waiting helicopter. For once he had said the right name. A small, but genuine, nod towards Sherlock’s sensitivities.

He felt Lestrade’s eyes on his back and then he heard the inspector call his name. He turned back slightly, still walking.

“What’s going on between you two? Do I have to address your Christmas card to both of you now?” Lestrade asked, his tone light.

Sherlock’s grin widened.

“I don’t do Christmas, Lestrade.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” shouted Lestrade as he boarded the helicopter.

Sherlock looked to Lexi who was sitting with her headphones on and dangling her legs over the chair. She was small enough to have a gap between her feet and the floor of the helicopter.

Lexi looked to Sherlock, a half smile on her face. Besides the death and destruction the medical intern seemed to be enjoying herself.

“I didn’t think I’d be getting on a helicopter when I woke up this morning,” she said lightly.

“There were a lot of things I didn’t think I’d be getting when I woke up this morning,” Sherlock responded with a smile as he placed on his own headphones.

As the helicopter lifted from the street outside of the remains of Buckingham Palace, Sherlock was treated to one of the pinkette’s world famous sideway evil stares.

The game was on.
The Bloodied Crown

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry for the delay on the newest chapter. I have a lot in the works though for this fanfic and there'll be a lot more angst and temptations in the coming chapters.

Muchos love for sticking by me

Fury ♥

Windsor Castle had a similar hue of death that Buckingham Palace had, except there were a lot more press (as in, 100% more) than at Buckingham Palace. Eton was obviously a hard place to lockdown in comparison to central London, it might have been only forty-five minutes or so from London but it was extensively linked to the countryside. The air was much fresher out of London, if one could disregard the fragrant smell of ash and death that Windsor Castle was emitting. The helicopter ride had been a new experience for Lexi and, all death and madness aside, she had enjoyed every minute of it. When Sherlock wasn’t looking at his phone or typing intensely on it he dropped sideways glances at her smiling face every now and again. Lexi wasn’t too keen on technology, she tended to only appreciate technology like television, which was ironic since Sherlock stayed away from it. ‘Fuzzed his brain’ apparently, she just reckoned he was terrified of getting addicted to a tv programme like QI. Or Grey’s Anatomy. She liked to eat popcorn and laugh at the scenes where they did surgery because they, only rarely, screwed it up monumentally. Plus Mark Sloan had his shirt off in almost every episode so that was an okay bonus.

The helicopter landed about ten minutes away from Windsor Castle on the far side of Eton. Even here there was somewhat martial law; businesses were shut and residents were told to stay in the vicinity of their own properties. That didn’t stop them standing in their oversized gardens with binoculars eying up every new development. The only in and out flow of traffic were police vans, medical coroners and news vans but the mass of people bungled together with cameras acting as little flags for each news station was, in its own way, traffic too. Lexi and Sherlock were ushered off the helicopter by armed police officers and led into a tent. For an impromptu tent it was awfully technologically furnished, Lexi guessed a mobile command centre, there were about ten or fifteen personnel inside the tent on computers, CCTV monitors, radio waves, telephones and even telegram. In the centre of the hubris sat Mycroft. No one communicated with him except to offer him reports and information, he looked as tired as he had sounded on the phone to Sherlock. When he caught sight of the two he let out a sigh, whether it was with relief or with anxiety Lexi wasn’t sure, but he didn’t attempt to hide it so Lexi assumed it was the former. As they approached Mycroft two men stopped in front of them, barring the way. Lexi stepped back shocked but Sherlock tutted and put up his arms acquiescing to the body search; apparently it was prudent for Sherlock Holmes to get searched even though he was perhaps the only person on the planet not capable of mass regicide. Lexi was searched as quick as Sherlock was and they were left facing Mycroft who should have had a smile on his face at the indignant personal space breaching. Instead he looked incredibly sad and it struck Lexi that Mycroft was probably an avid fan of the royals. She felt bad for him. In the space of twenty four hours his world had gone tits up; job, security, home - anything stable in Mycroft’s life was now an unsurety. Even his little brother who was probably one of the most predictable things in his life was now an unstable object at the whimsical demands of a mad man. Yet nothing had been linked to Moriarty, there was no breadcrumb, recording, thumb print or evidence that the Irishman had been involved in the terrorist attacks around London. All they had to go on was the confession
of Irene and Lexi wasn’t sure how trustworthy the hired mistress was - even if Sherlock seemed completely convinced of her innocence.

“Brother,” greeted Sherlock, his hands resting in his coat pockets.

“Brother,” responded Mycroft, “I take it you have a lead from Buckingham?”

“A metal, we need to trace its manufacturer but first we need to make sure it isn’t just a red herring.”

“You’ll need to wear police gear to access the site, both of you, faces covered and bullet proof vests,” Mycroft instructed before spinning back towards the TV coverage of the bomb site at Windsor.

“No,” retorted Sherlock instantly, “you know I don’t wear that kind of stuff.”

Mycroft let out a long sigh before lighting a cigarette.

“Please don’t fight me on this Sherlock. We both have better things to be doing.”

Sherlock’s face twitched as he went to reply but Lexi side swiped his ribs with her fist hard enough to knock him off topic but gentle enough for it not to hurt. She implored silently to Sherlock to, for once, acquiesce to his brother. Today was not the day to be pissing off the elder Holmes.

“Have you escorts?” Sherlock asked, biting his bottom lip in irritation of having to follow the rules of someone else’s game.

“There’ll be someone in a Jeep outside to take you straight there through the exclusion zone once you’re both ready.”

With that Mycroft Holmes returned to his job. If she had known, or had, any siblings she was pretty sure she would find it extraordinarily hard to disconnect the way the two Holmes brothers did. Lexi decided that she wouldn’t be sending Mycroft an awkward annual Christmas card. They turned away from Mycroft and were instantly bungled towards a tactical uniforms officer.

“You are both required to wear bullet proof vests and face hiding balaclavas, up to the nose is fine but we don’t want any of the press catching wind of who each investigator is; orders from the top,” explained the cockney man who quickly gave reason for the mass push on security gear.

Sherlock sniffed indignantly but didn’t say anything.

“Do you know how a bulletproof vest works?”

“I imagine it does what it’s name implies, stops bullets and is a vest,” remarked Sherlock dryly.

They all knew what a bulletproof vest was but it was likely for insurance purposes the man had to fill them both in on how to use the equipment. Lexi couldn’t help but smirk at Sherlock’s blatant sarcasm. The man stared at Sherlock, seemingly not able to understand how he could be so jovial about the entire situation. He took in a sharp breath and pointed to the vest.

“The vests have an interior mesh that acts like metal, they will stop bullets from penetrating the skin but they won’t stop the kick a bullet has. If you’re shot you’ll still take the impact of the bullet and probably end up with a cracking bruise or a few broken ribs.”

“Nothing I haven’t had recently,” Lexi replied bitterly.

The man didn’t respond to her comment but instead picked up a piece of black fabric.
“This is your balaclava - the intention for this is to cover the main parts of your face from the press, you’ll have to drive through the main portion of the reporters and walk the rest of the way from just in front of the exclusion line. This means the press will likely surge towards you and if that occurs we don’t want either of you being tagged in the Chronicle tomorrow morning or you’ll have every reporter at your door demanding an interview.”

Lexi raised her eyebrows but didn’t say anything instead nodding in understanding. Sherlock still had a sour look on his face but he didn’t say anything. The police officer left them to get their gear on and Lexi couldn’t help but chuckle at Sherlock staring at the vest petulantly.

“Don’t tell me you’ve been bested by a bit of clothing,” Lexi jibed strapping her vest around her small frame.

Sherlock sighed before taking off his coat and jacket, he went to put on the vest but paused. Turning on his heel he walked over to Mycroft, who was sitting watching them, and dumped his coat and jacket on him.

“You make a good coat stand, My.”

Mycroft pursed his lips but didn’t complain, instead passing off the coat and jacket to a passing officer.

Sherlock’s sense of fashion was substantially different to her own. She often tended to wear skinny jeans, preferably black but any denim colour would do, and oversized band t-shirts. Today she was wearing an oversized Biffy Clyro t-shirt which all but swallowed up her small frame. Lexi liked it though so she wasn’t too fussed how it made her look to others. Sherlock always seemed to have tailor made suits at the ready, or at least a crisply pressed shirt with fitted trousers. She’d only once seen him in different clothes and those were pyjamas, well, not so much pyjamas as a pair of baggy joggers and a cracking six pack. But that was a different story.

The detective strapped on his vest before attending to the balaclava. His hair was a little shaggier now that he’d let the haircut grow out, it meant he didn’t quite look like Frizzbo the clown when he attached the balaclava and Lexi decided he made quite a good ninja.

“Ah Mr Miyagi-sama you are looking ready for combat,” she quipped making a small karate chop action with her hand.

Sherlock stared at her, puzzled.

Lexi blanched.

“Oh my god we need a tv - - “ she paused realising she’d said ‘we’ instead of ‘you’, Sherlock smiled slightly but said nothing, “so you can watch all the classics, you uncultured swine.”

“Alexandra this isn’t a laughing matter,” shouted a voice from across the makeshift command centre. Mycroft was watching the two like a hawk and Lexi leaned around Sherlock and gave a small salute.

“No sir, sorry sir, yes sir!” she responded with a purposely sarky tone.

Mycroft frowned but turned his head away instead of rising to the bait. Sherlock’s smile broke into a full on grin but he didn’t say anything. Lexi pulled on the balaclava over her wavy pink hair and then pulled her hair out so that it wouldn’t itch intensely while they worked. Sherlock pulled his balaclava over his mouth.

“Shall we?” he asked, holding out his hand to notion towards the door.
They left the tent and were ushered instantly into a black jeep with tinted out black windows and no licence plate.

As the jeep moved towards the bomb site Lexi could hear the mob of reporters before she could see them, but then as they went over the rise of the hill a black mass with flashing lights swirled slowly like a starry sky. There were at least two hundred reporters wanting into the bomb site. As the jeep approached they parted like the red sea but that didn’t stop them swarming the car when they entered the crowd. It reminded Lexi of a zombie hoard, wanting the precious food inside the car, they wanted the ‘scoop’ as it were. Lexi chuckled at her own pun which earned her a look from Sherlock. A few more minutes passed before they were allowed out of the jeep.

“What do you think we’ll find?” she asked, unclipping her seat belt.

“Your guess is as good as mine, and that’s saying something given my deduction skills are 99.97% right,” Sherlock responded unabashed by sounding like a show off. Lexi knew he wasn’t doing it purposely but that didn’t mean he didn’t sound like any less of an ass. She said nothing at the minor insult, knowing she usually beat him at his own game, and got out of the car. The pinkette was instantly assaulted with a plethora of cameras and recorders all looking for an official ‘statement’ from the NSY. Lexi said nothing to the crowd instead being escorted by the driver, a big bulk of a man, to the crime scene rope. Sherlock seemed to be less interesting to the crowd because he was able to make it through on his own, those that did stop he glided past like they didn’t exist and they stopped chasing him for a reply.

Now past the cordon Sherlock and Lexi were left to their own devices. Lexi led the way towards the debris of Windsor Castle, noting the medieval canons that had been melted beyond repair. Some of the old-style black metal had infused to the remains of some of the victims so that they had become part of the metal almost. It reminded her of images of Pompeii, where the victims had been left preserved by the pyroclastic cloud and ash instead of being incinerated. While her med student interest was off the charts, she couldn't see anything that warranted specific attention. The castle was even more destructive than Buckingham Palace, where some parts had been gutted by the fire but didn’t break apart by the explosion. Windsor Castle had been levelled. All that remained were giant piles of rubble that masked the hundreds of people who had been killed in the explosion. Lexi stopped and examined the area with critical eyes, trying to determine where the bomb had been placed. Sherlock followed her but said nothing as her eyes worked. The blast radius would have blown the rubble away from the bomb. In comparison to the rest of the site the bomb area would have been considerably clear. She wasn't sure if the NSY had actually done any work or whether they were purposely dragging their feet because it seemed to be a open and shut case on Irene Adler.

Her green eyes scanned the area with almost robotic-like precision until they came to a halt at an epicentre of rubble. The rest of the castle around it had practically piled up like a small volcano with the epicentre as a crater. Lexi was positive there would be dead bodies in the hill-style rubble but there wasn’t any time to be squeamish about the whole situation.

“There,” she mumbled through her balaclava pointing to the makeshift hill. Sherlock turned and looked at the hill before having a run through of the area himself. He seemed to realise the purpose of the hill and nodded to her.

“Keep up with the mental maths there, Sherlock,” Lexi remarked sarcastically.

“I was letting you keep up with me.”

Lexi snorted.

“Yeah. Right.”
They climbed up the rubble pile trying to avoid the occasional protruding limb or dead body from the remains of the castle. A few times Lexi grappled up the hill using rocks as a perch only after realising that she had had her hands on a body part. It didn’t bother her too much - cadavers (be they bloody or dry as tinder) were a fact of life and Lexi was very used to dealing with them. She just wished the occasional snapping of bones and bodies underneath her as the rubble broke under her weight didn’t happen, it almost felt like she was dancing on someone’s grave. When they reached the top of the hill it was an easier descent since all they had to do was teeter cautiously. They made their way across the field of brick and bones until they stopped at the small mountain; the scene was much the same as Buckingham, if one could accept the same level of destruction, but there was one distinct difference - on the top of the pile was a crown. Not the Queen’s crown, this one was much less… real. From the bottom of the 6ft rubble pile it was easy to see the cheap sheen of plastic that glistened in the sunlight, it was most peculiar because it was virtually untouched by the flames or ash, save for the droplets of blood and the coinciding dirt that smudged the bottom of the crown. Someone had been here after the explosion and placed it purposely on the top of the biggest pile, amid the bodies and burnt trappings of the castle. Had Moriarty been here recently? She doubted it very much, there was no way he was stupid enough to get his face caught on nearby CCTV - the game, for him at least, was much longer than that.

When bad things happened Lexi found that there was an eerie prelude of silence that came before the destruction, like the calm before the storm. Sherlock was scrabbling up the explosion-made hill when the feeling drenched itself over Lexi, in slow motion she watched as Sherlock grappled with gravity to get to the crown. Did it not seem so convenient that there had been two major leads for them to follow? They had been so ridiculously easy to find, like someone had put them there on purpose. The feeling in her stomach expanded.

“Sherlock I don’t thi—"

Lexi was cut off by a deafening, all too familiar, sound. It crackled in her ears enough to make them ring and her entire body to flinch. It was a gunshot. From her standpoint she watched Sherlock fly backwards off the rubble and onto his back where he had initially been standing. His vest was smoking ever so slightly from the heat and speed of the bullet. Lexi dove across to the detective, her hands searching for any bleeding. She checked for a pulse, it was strong. Sherlock opened his eyes and took in a sharp, rattling breath and let it out jaggedly.

Lexi didn’t spare any time checking him over. Another shot rang out and pinged off the floor just right of the giant pile. It seemed for the time being they were protected by the mound. She could hear sirens in the distance and shouting, but no one was near enough to save them. The problem with Windsor Castle was it was surrounded by the idyllic shops and houses many of them two storeys or more and from where they were stood it was easy enough to hide a shooter on any of the roofs. The second gun shot Lexi had timed. From the noise to the bullet hitting the floor was roughly two seconds which, if her external ballistics knowledge was up to date, the shooter was on roof shooting from a distance, it had taken one second for the bullet to hit the floor which meant that the shooter was roughly three or four streets away beyond the rubble hill.

“Shit,” she hissed as all went quiet. There were noises from a distance behind them but she imagined the priority for the police was to clear out any civilians (and probably Mycroft) from the area. The last thing the government needed was another massacre caught on camera. For now, she and Sherlock were on their own. Lexi turned back to Sherlock, using her few spare seconds to check him. He writhed slightly as she pulled him over but then swore and sat himself up against the mound of dead bodies and debris. It seemed the dead were defending the living from the reaper. Lexi found some comfort in that thought.

What were they to do? They were sat in the middle of the cordoned off zone which, now Lexi
thought about it, was incredibly big. The police and forensics had been moving along the scene in an
organised manner which meant any one else on the scene had been at the beginning of the exclusion
zone. For now, they were alone with someone with a semi-decent shot hunting them.

“Are you alright?” Lexi asked Sherlock, checking him over.

“Just dandy,” Sherlock mumbled wincing.

“The bullet hit your vest, you’ll probably have a few bruises and broken ribs but you’ll survive,”
Lexi paused, smirking morbidly at her thoughts, “if we get out of here alive anyway.”

Sherlock chuckled but winced as he did so.

“Don’t make me laugh, Lex.”

Lexi turned her attention to the sound of another gun shot. Whoever was shooting them was trying to
flush them out. She was very aware that if they had wanted to kill Sherlock all the had to do was
point a little upwards. Where he’d been hit had been perfectly centred on his vest - the shooter wasn’t
trying to kill Sherlock. She wasn’t so sure she wasn’t up on the chopping block however.

If they ran, they’d be gunned down. If they stayed it wouldn’t take long for the shooter to reposition
themselves and gun them down. Lexi chewed on her lip, ignoring the utterances of the detective. She
turned back to him and kissed him on the lips quickly.

“Stay here.”

“What?”

Lexi didn’t reply as she took off away from the mound, zig zagging her way through the debris. Gunshots followed in her immediate wake but she was quick enough to keep ahead of the shooters
aim and made it to the shell of a wall before the next gunshot. The shots were not intended to be a
warning as it had been with Sherlock, whoever was shooting wanted her dead. Her running about
though kept the shooter busy, it meant that the police had time to locate whoever it was.

The sound of a helicopter in the distance alleviated some of her stress. They couldn’t leave without
the crown. Trap or not - she was sure that the blood on it wasn’t from any of the dead. It would be a
cue they couldn’t leave behind.

“Sherlock,” she called across to him, “when I start running grab the crown from the top of the
rubble.”

He nodded, heaving himself up.

In her head she counted down.

*Three. Two. Oh fuck I’m so stupid. One!*

Her converse threw up dust as she ran, or was it ashes? They sent up a small cloud in her wake that
was exacerbated as she ran, picking her way through the husks of buildings carefully. Lexi felt
something graze the back of her vest but she didn’t stop to check what it was. She felt something else
singe the back of her leg but if she stumbled it would be the end of her. Instead she dove behind the
side of a castle wall, well out of the way of the bullets. Lexi pulled down her balaclava, letting her
breath steady itself in her burning lungs. She was sat against the wall, with her legs close to her chest.
A bright light flashed somewhere in the distance but the pinkette couldn’t place the source.
In that moment a helicopter flew over her head, she could see three police snipers positioned on the helicopter before it flew over her. A round of shots fired closer to her and then a single shot fired further away before everything went quiet. Lexi didn’t want to move under the eerie silence but she was compelled to find Sherlock, to make sure he was alright.

As she was thinking a head popped around the corner, kitted fully in head gear and a balaclava.

“Are you okay Lexi?” asked a familiar voice.

Lexi frowned, looking at the head. John pulled down the balaclava, Lexi almost didn’t recognise him with the fully kitted out tactical gear.

“John?”

“Where’s Sherlock?”

Lexi blinked shocked at John’s sudden appearance.

“He’s that way,” she replied, pointing towards the rubble mound.

John looked over and nodded at her.

“Are you okay? Can you walk?”

“Yeah, yeah.”

John turned to jog towards the mound.

“John,” she called, he turned to look at her, “why are you in that gear?”

“Mycroft had me flown in - when we heard the first gunshot I insisted on coming here.”

Lexi nodded, supposing that was as reasonable a response as any.

Sherlock had grabbed the crown as he watched Lexi run off being shot at. It didn’t take him much to grab it, but it meant having to dislodge dismembered body parts from the mound all the while his ribs telling him to go and get a cup of tea. It was quite distasteful for the dead but who was he to complain on their behalf?

He watched as Lexi ran and slid into cover before looking at the crown in his hands. It was covered in blood, too fresh to be any of the dead here. He wondered if the blood here and the card they had found at Buckingham had a correlation. The crown was a cheap plastic, corner store crown. It had been put there in order to take the piss, and it screamed ‘because I can.’

As he looked at the crown John appeared in front of him. His ribs were hurting him but he was able to turn off the thought process of pain somewhat, more startled at his best friends appearance than anything else.

“Fancy seeing you here, John,” Sherlock commented.
John smiled at him before leaning in to his radio.

“Mycroft. Sherlock is here, he’s okay.”

Sherlock listened to the radio crackle.

“Where’s Lexi?” he asked.

“She’s fine, she’s on the far side of that wall. I have to admit, Lex can run fast.”

Sherlock nodded in relief.

“You should see how fast she is when she punches you in the face,” Sherlock murmured, holding his side.

John tilted his head.

“Why would she… wait. No. I don’t want to know,” John said.

The doctor regarded Sherlock’s stature for a moment.

“Are you hurt?”

“No. Well, I got shot,” he quipped.

John seemed alarmed.

“You got shot?”

“You can tell Mycroft his jackets work.”

John holstered his gun, decidedly not allowed to carry the same rifles as the officers now pouring into the crater that was Windsor Castle. There were three or four helicopters in the air now, circling the area where they were and the area where the shooter had probably been. Sherlock looked towards where he last saw Lexi. For Sherlock, the moment was serene.

There were at least fifty or sixty armoured men securing the bomb site, searching for bombs or scanning rooftops. Talk about crime scene contaminants. Lexi was sat hunched over, her legs drawn into her chest, seemingly oblivious (or ignorant) to the world beyond her own headspace. He was reminded of her natural beauty, even if she was covered in the ashes and remains of Windsor Castle and its last inhabitants. A small part of him worried slightly, her unusual calmness and lack of interest in the rest of the world reminded him of when they first met when she was slightly detached with the world and just before she had her overdose.

A hand waved in front of Sherlock’s eyes, distracting his thoughts. From somewhere Mycroft had appeared, himself in his usual prim suit in comparison with Sherlock who was covered in grime and dirt after being thrown back from the gunshot. Mycroft, as always, looked unimpressed like he had smelled something rotten and it had gotten stuck in his airways.

“I see you managed to find something, brother,” said Mycroft, holding on to his umbrella even though the end was buried into the gravel.

“I don’t know yet. It might just be from the gift shop,” Sherlock lied looking back over to Lexi who had pulled herself up from the floor. Her jeans were slashed at the bottom of her leg and the black of the denim, from what he could see, was shaded slightly. Had she been shot? Sherlock decided probably not given how well she was walking towards them and the amount of medics she had
shooed away from her.

Mycroft was talking again. Sherlock frowned and looked at him.

“Can’t stop to chat, brother, things to do crimes to solve. We’ll be hopping on that helicopter back to London, toodlepip.”

“I’ll be needing a lift back to mine, too, Mycroft - if you wouldn’t mind,” John chipped in, ever the gentleman. Sherlock could never tell if he was slightly nervous of Mycroft’s constant irate demeanour, whenever he demanded something of Sherlock or Mycroft he always added a politeness on the end.

Sherlock snorted and set off towards Lexi, one hand holding his ribs the other holding the bloodied crown.
Of Men and Monsters

Chapter Notes

This chapter is posted with a massive amount of respect to the doctors, nurses, police officers and emergency responders of the London terrorist attack. Race and religion do not matter for the emergency services, regardless of innocence or guilt. They are and always will be a credit to England, for all the batshit crazy happenings in England, I'm proud of the men and women who dedicate so much of their time and lives to helping those they might not necessarily want to.

I Stand With London
I Pray For Europe
I Cry For The Far East
I Live Against Terrorism.

"When we blame all Muslims, all Syrians, or all members of any other group because of the actions of individuals, we fall into the trap of asserting collective guilt. We empower the narrow-minded ideology that we are trying to defeat.” - Samantha Power

The burning in Lexi’s lungs was an odd sensation. When she thought about what is was to drown she never expected it to feel like being burned. Her lungs told her she was out of air, the tissue forming her lungs was dying, writhing in cellular agony. She tried to breathe in, to give her lungs nourishment, to survive like her body told her to but instead she was only granted raw panic that made her heart feel like it was about to explode. Or was that the pressure from the water filling her chest? Her eyes looked around for something to help her swim to the surface, to the light above her but there was nothing and when she looked down she saw the deep darkness of the water, trying its best to suck her into the vortex of death. There was so much water, too much, and it pressed down on her monumentally. She couldn’t breathe.

She couldn’t breathe.

Oh god.

She was going to die.

Die alone and sucked into the void.

Her body convulsed and she could feel her eyes drawing on the blackness. No one would ever find her, Sherlock would have one mystery he could never solve, John would loom over him, his words soft and sympathetic but his demeanour screaming a big giant, ‘I told you she wasn’t reliable.’ No one would miss her, she had no parents who would grieve over her empty coffin, no friends who would lay flowers on her empty grave. Her body would be alone, rotting slowly in the water. The memory of her would fade and she would be a blip in the life of everyone who knew her. Sherlock would move on - heartbroken, maybe, for a little while before embracing the rest of his life.
Her eyes stopped working. She could feel her heart stopping.

She was dying.

Lexi sat up with a gasp, like her lungs could never get enough of the delicious, rich oxygen inhabiting Sherlock’s bedroom. The pinkette let out a jagged breath, allowing the oxygen to leave her lungs, albeit fearfully. A nightmare. It had all been a nightmare.

Lexi didn’t get nightmares. Never. They were just projections of the imagination allowed to run awry while her brain went into a REM cycle. Her brain was capable of shutting off such silly thoughts, they were illogical and inconvenient. Tonight, it seemed, she hadn’t been able to shut off the dreams. Nightmares. She hadn’t been able to shut off the nightmares.

Lexi leaned forward and ran her fingers through her messy, curly hair trying to process the information running amok in her head. She needed a cigarette. Lexi looked over to Sherlock who hadn’t stirred even though she probably had jumped awake. He was sleeping peacefully on his front, his face pushed into a pillow and most of his shaggy brown hair covering his face. She could see his back rising and falling slowly as he slept. Lexi couldn’t wake him when he looked so peaceful.

It crossed her mind she should probably put on a dressing gown since all she was wearing was a top and a thong. Then again, there was no one else in the flat. She turned her body to the door letting her bare feet feel the cushion of the floor. It felt good to be on a solid surface and not floating in nothingness.

Lexi padded through to the living room silently, noting that everything was still wrapped in darkness and only illuminated by the glow of the moon. She checked the microwave: 3:10AM. Still early. Lexi reached into the skull on the mantelpiece and pulled out a pack of cigarette’s and a lighter. She sat on John’s chair (was it still even John’s?) and drew her legs up to her chest. After she’d lit the cigarette she took a deep inhalation, appreciating the wisping of the smoke in her throat. It should have made her feel worse. The smoke clogging her lungs should have sent her into a panic but her brain was kicking into gear now, systematically shutting down the irrational and irrelevant. The murky depths of that water still plagued her thoughts though. Did dreams having meanings? What about nightmares? She’d never read a scholarly article on the relevance of dreams and nightmares and she certainly didn’t believe in the hullabaloo about dreams being about the subconscious and nightmares being omens of things to come.

Lexi had been sitting so long she hadn’t realised the cigarette had finished until the embers singed the tips of her fingers. She looked at the cigarette curiously, trying to understand the reactions of her nerves. Putting the cigarette out, she lit another one without thought and continued her own internal conversation.

The events of the past few days had played over in her mind. They had never caught the shooter who had broken Sherlock’s ribs. It had been a miracle (were there such things?) that he’d been wearing his bullet proof vest. He hadn’t wanted to. He’d been insistent that, like every other crime scene, he didn’t wear containment gear. He could’ve been dead, lying on a slab in the morgue with Molly standing over him in some freaky morbid examination. John’s appearance had surprised her too. Wrapped in full tactical gear like some Navy SEAL. Had he seen the news and tried to leave? Had he gotten into the outskirts of London from his little house and been stopped by the police? His appearance had been fortuitous to say the least. She’d been stuck between a rock and a hard place quite literally. John still disapproved of her - his main focus had been on finding Sherlock once his doctor’s oath had been fulfilled, even in the aftermath she’d been left to her own devices until Sherlock had met her in the oh-so-fresh killing grounds.
So her nightmares had awoken her, at 3:10 in the morning, and there she sat puffing upon a cigarette like it was a life line of oxygen. A noise behind her made her ears prick, but she didn’t move - her mind was too far into itself to notice her outside surroundings. Sherlock appeared beside her, hunkered on the balls of his feet and staring up at Lexi with concern written across his face.

Dead

‘Lexi.’

drowning

‘Lex?’

am I alive?

‘Alexandra?’

the void is so vast

‘Don’t listen to the Always, Lex.’

but utterly fascinating

alone

in the dark

Dead.

‘Alex!’

Her eyes snapped to and she noticed for the first time Sherlock squatted next to her, his hand upon her leg and eyes boring into hers.

“Why are you up, Sherlock?” she asked, her brow furrowing.

Sherlock stared at her quizzically for a moment but breathed out and smiled slightly at her.

“You weren’t there when I woke up,” he replied with a surprisingly soft voice, “I wanted to make sure you’re alright.”

A puff of cigarette slowly ebbed its way out of Lexi’s mouth.

“Bad dreams,” she mumbled.

The quizzical look increased on Sherlock. He knew as well as she did that there was a way of ‘disconnecting’ the brain from its REM cycle - a system reboot as it were. All computers began to run slower if they were left on long enough, shutting down when not required saved overworking. The same went for the brain. Lexi’s bad dreams weren’t optional, her brain struggled with something that not even she knew. The Always was rearing its ugly head, and it usually had grave consequences.

“Coffee?” Sherlock queried.

There would be no sleeping tonight.
Foreshadow

Chapter Notes

The next few chapters are going to get really dark, and I mean superbly dark. There may be trigger warnings on some chapters which I will post before the chapter begins.

I'm also sorry that it's taken me so long to write a chapter for you guys, I lost some inspiration because I've been working constantly on my thesis. However after listening to Bring Me The Horizon's newest album 'That's the Spirit' I got a little inspiration back.

The next few chapters will be written from a plethora of perspectives and maybe a cheeky one from Moriarty himself.

It isn't all going to be rainbow and roses folks. Shit is gonna get real.

The unicorn of main character death is acomin'.

You've been warned.

Thanks for sticking with me, you crazy bunch.

xo

“You must've made some kind of mistake
I asked for death, but instead I'm awake
The devil told me no room for cheats
I thought I sold my soul, but he kept the receipt
So leave the lights on I'm coming home
It's getting darker but I carry on
The sun won't shine here, it never did
And when it rains, it fucking pours
But I think I like it
And you know that I'm love with the pain
I think I like it
So come rain on my parade
’Cause I want to feel it
Come shove me over the edge
'Cause my head is in overdrive

I'm sorry but it's too late

And it's not worth saving

So come rain on my parade

I think we're doomed”

“Why did you do it, Alexandra?” asked a voice, cold and clinical.

“What made you shoot the gun?” asked a second voice.

Pink hair was strained with dark blonde as the roots reclaimed their natural colour, it was matted with blood here and there and there and the blood had spattered across the pale woman’s face like a complex piece of artwork.

There were track marks on her arms, intermingled with bruises and blood. It wasn’t her blood, at least some of it wasn’t. Her arms were cuffed to the metal table, the silver almost hid the fresh scars across her wrists but the ugly red still caught the light now and then.

Eyes trailed across her, and she decided she probably looked like some kind of patchwork toy that had been stitched up so many times because it had been ripped apart by clumsy hands.

Was that her life now?

Sherlock Holmes had done this to her.

Not the damage.

The action.

Sherlock Holmes had opened the door on the Always and turned it into a dark mass that had consumed everything in its wake. It fed on fear, sadness and anger.

Those were the things Lexi had in her arsenal.

It was why she had shot the gun.

And now he was dead.
Skull Osteology

‘And just when it hit me somebody turned around and shouted

Play that funky music white boy

Play that funky music right

Play that funky music white boy

Lay down that boogie and play that funky music till you die

Till you die, oh till you die …’

Moriarty had always liked 70s music, it appealed to his inner soul and helped him put things in motion. The dark, slick haired man was stood in the pristine uptown house in Mayfair where he’d had his first contact with Lexi. Moriarty watched out the window with a half smile glued to his face as he thought about the pink haired woman. She really was quite the catch, even with her vices. It didn’t take him much to push her over the edge - but it really was those who were the most intellectual who were the most broken. The good ones anyway.

It had been a long time since he had felt that way and had embraced the inner pzazz instead of being mired in his own thoughts as Sherlock and Lexi were. Sherlock was more wound than Lexi, he had - more than he’d cared to admit - watched them both extensively. They both had weaknesses ready to exploit but he had found Lexi far more attuned to the wild card. An orphan, passed through the system and mostly forgotten, beaten and abused for her intellect. Counting cards for foster families, illicit substances forced on her to keep her incapacitated while foster-daddy had his fun.

Sherlock was not the only one who had the ‘eye’. His skills were quite trivial to the keen eye and he was so overwhelmed by Lexi’s fuse that he saw less than he should have. Perception shermeption, it didn’t take that much of a genius to keep up with Sherlock Holmes. The bombing of London and of Windsor had gone off without a hitch. Moriarty had watched from the top of the Shard as the explosions had kicked off as part of a tourist group. He had been in the thick of the crowd as the fireworks had gone off and he had had to fight the urge to giggle with glee as the crowd screamed and panicked. They were like ants. Once the nest began to burn the horde began to scatter in utter panic. Moriarty had savoured the moment as he watched London burn. He’d even ignored an attendant who had been trying to usher him out of the building, his dark chocolate eyes taking in the spectacular view from his vantage point.

His American accent was rusty, but he’d freaked out enough to an appropriate level that meant he could still drop some good one liners at the younger attendant while they stood waiting for evacuation from the fire evacuation points. He guessed the twenty-something year olds attending tours had no clue what to do in case of a terrorist attack, taken up more with social media rather than helping the panicking tourists. The young brunette he’d had his eye on had been crying. Easy enough to comfort and the best person to pity screw.

Every guy needed release. He was, unlike most, happy about being upfront about his desires. The girl wasn’t when he’d told her to get out. She had expected something far more than pity sex, she’d valued his ‘emotional’ connection and had wanted to treat him like a boyfriend.
Not his style. Emotions - except thriving in chaos - were not his thing. He didn’t do sad, or pain, or any of the above. Time had long since passed since he’d been able to learn how to deal with nerve endings telling him he was in pain.

The door creaked and Moriarty was drawn from his thoughts, his visitor had arrived. Moriarty waited for his visitor to sit before he got to the point of his meeting. He still didn’t turn or acknowledge the visitor’s presence. That was more his style.

He should have been a psychiatrist. He could only imagine the fun he would have had mindfucking fragile people.

“Well?” he asked, as the song ended.

“Well what?” replied the visitor.

“Did you help them or not?”

A sigh. His visitor didn’t like being spoken down to. Military would do that to a person.

“Yep - yes - they don’t expect a thing.”

“I trust their relationship is nice and cosy?”

“As far as I can tell.”

“What about our dead end?”

“I haven’t been able to get to her. She’s kept under constant security. The NSY don’t want her slipping through the net. They need someone to punish to make retribution for the British.”

Moriarty turned on his heel, staring at his visitor.

“I don’t give a shit what kind of retribution people want. She gives more away with her body language than just with what she says. If you were… smart enough to understand how weak people were… well, I guess you know all about that, don’t you?” his voice was condescending. It pained him to see someone so utterly incapable of ascending to his own thought process.

The visitor shifted slightly in their chair.

“I want Irene Adler out of the picture. If I have to tell you again I’ll pull your eyes out with your own fingers.”

Moriarty didn’t do veiled threats. There was no fun in implying something when you could outright warn them. It made carrying out the threat so much more ironic. And fun.

The visitor shifted again. It began to frustrate him but he needed the visitor alive for his big finale.

“Shoo now, my little ant,” Moriarty mumbled, turning back towards the window.

“What about Sherlock and Lexi?”

“What about them?”

“What if they get too involved?”

Moriarty snorted, putting his hands in his trouser pockets.
“I’ll take care of those two. I need them alive too. Keep playing your little charade with them, it’s fun to watch them build up a little life just so I can burn it down.”

The visitor said nothing. Moriarty heard the door click shut.

He clicked his neck, stretching the muscles before turning and pouring himself a whisky on the rocks. Red vines were stored in a jar on the table, he pulled one out and ripped off a piece before shuffling into a dance to *I Will Survive* by Gloria Gayner.

70s music was fucking fantastic.

_________________________________________________________________________

There had been a time when Lexi had gone through a pack of cigarette’s a day. She’d worked out once that a pack a day cost around £3300 a year. Other people bought cars, houses, that kind of thing. For Lexi she was content with a pack of cigarettes (Marlboro was the best) and a place to put her head. Now she was up to three packs a day, more than Sherlock’s occasional cheeky puff here or there. The weight she’d gained from becoming clean had been lost thanks to her lack of appetite because of the cigarette’s. Lexi didn’t mind so much. The nightmare still haunted her. It had been almost a week before the dream had subsided into her sub-conscious, locked away in a tidy Filofax for whenever she needed it. Hopefully that need was few and far between. Every so often though the dream, in her mind on a piece of paper, floated to the forefront and forced out her other thoughts. She'd physically started shaking her head to get rid of the thoughts like she had when she’d first met Sherlock.

He had noticed, but had said nothing. Sherlock was a man of practicality and he had sensed there was little to be done about something he couldn’t understand. Lexi was his only unsolvable puzzle, she knew enough about him yet he knew nothing about her. Lexi was painfully aware of how unfair that was on the detective’s part but he hadn’t pushed her and she hadn’t forced herself.

As a result of the dream Lexi had become withdrawn. Their usual tea meetings at Mrs Hudson’s had regressed into chit chat about the weather and minor things in the news. The lead they had picked up on at the bomb-site had been a dud, left to a locker in Hull Paragon Interchange that had a note in it saying “ah-ah-ah”. They had been no further forward than before the investigation, aside a few extra scars from being shot at. The shooter had been another dud, he was a vagrant paid a substantial amount to shoot at whatever and whoever. No obvious connection to Moriarty, no trace of anything. It had frustrated Sherlock considerably. He’d started throwing knives at the wall again. She spent more time smoking and looking out the window as life continued in London. The Royal’s had been buried in what was probably the most expensive joint funeral ever and the Government had taken over the total leadership of Britain and it’s sovereign countries. Whoever was plonked on the throne of PM would be laughing. (Keeping up to date with names of leaders was of no use to Lexi. She had more awareness than Sherlock, but that didn’t mean she stored all the information about politics.)

John had been about too. With her ghost like attitude Sherlock and John had picked up numerous cases, biding their time until Moriarty reared his head again. Murders, theft, fraud - whatever had been given to them. Lexi was sure Sherlock had solved more cases in the past week than ever before. Mycroft had withdrawn to his little fortress now he was, essentially, the ruler of Britain. Neither Lexi nor Sherlock had time to bother with Mycroft’s power trip but they were absolutely certain he was having one. His ego certainly didn’t need any more inflation.
Lexi listened to the seminar on skull osteology. It was something she had already done before, except she’d had a cigarette at the time and a nameless cadaver to experiment on. Now the class was using John Doe resin dummies to practice on. She had decided to return to University after the week, the Student Finance letters were enough to irritate her back into study. Not that she needed to do anything, but it was a useful distraction from her thoughts.

The pink-going-blonde Lexi watched lazily as her lab partner, a 22-something-or-other, butchered the dissection of the neural cranium. He cracked into both the temporal bones and the parietal bones the wrong way, meaning he’d halved down the middle rather than along. The resin cracked slightly as he hit into the fake brain in the inside the skull. Lexi stared.

“Well done, genius, you’ve effectively given your patient a lobotomy. Or a stroke. Or you killed them,” Lexi muttered, dripping with sarcasm. Her lab partner looked down as the supposed-to-be-brain jelly trickled out of the skull, “scratch that - you definitely killed him.”

The lecturer had passed briefly to make sure each team was working correctly. When she passed their table she paused, slack jawed. As her partner tried to explain their method, Lexi pulled out her phone.

Since moving in with Sherlock (at least unofficially) he had deigned it essential for Lexi to have a phone that wasn’t from the 90s. The new iPhone 6s + had so many features on it she wasn’t sure what to do with it. She could work the messenger though. Lexi checked the screen.

“14:02PM: Up for a case? - S”

Lexi looked up from her phone at her lab partner. She decided it was better than sticking around waiting for yet another hour long lecture about doing the reading before class so you didn’t end up sticking the hacksaw into the patients brain.

“14:04PM: Sure. Baker Street?”

“14:04PM: Meet us at Covent Garden Grind. - S”

Lexi shrugged off her lab coat and turned on her heel out of the door. She heard the lecturer asking her where she was going. She held up a cigarette as she walked, not bothering to reply to her. Lexi traipsed slowly down the ramp and out into the fresh air.

The dark water gripped her chest and pushed down, pulling her further into the empty. Dead. Dead. Dead.

Lexi lit her cigarette and took in a deep breath, banishing the thoughts with the cigarette smoke before taking off towards the Euston Square Metro.

“14:08PM: Why the Grind?”

“14:08PM: They do good panini’s. - S”

“14:09PM: Why do you still sign off? You’re the only person I text.”

“14:09PM: Sorry, it’s habit. Please don’t give me a shitty pet name.”

Lexi smirked but didn’t take the bait. She cantered down the stairs and hopped on a conveniently timed train, holding onto the central bar. It was busy for a Tuesday lunch time, but she was used to the sardined feeling, it was London after all.
“14:10PM: What’s the case? It better be something interesting.”

“14:10PM: Anything’s better than osteology lectures, Lex. Wait and see.”

“14:10PM: I don’t like surprises.”

“14:10PM: See you soon. Tea?”

Lexi grimaced. Fucking tea.

“14:11PM: Strawberry milkshake.”

“14:11PM: Heathen.”

It took ten or so minutes to get to Convent Garden from UCL, Lexi had the time to watch the crowd as they got on and off the train.

A man with a newspaper. (Cheating husband, no ring but tan marks. Expensive clothing but dishevelled. Getting the metro, not too rich but rich enough to have a PA.)

A pregnant woman. (Resentful pregnancy. Not holding her stomach protectively on a busy train. Christian, wears a cross ring under her top, outline visible. Not entirely comfortable with faith, family strictly religious. Abortion is a sin.)

An old man. (Age means likely a World War Two Veteran. Holds himself with military composure. Looks at teenagers with disdain. Old world values.)

Lexi stopped dead in her perusal of passengers.


Moriarty stared at her with a smile on his face from across the carriage. He held onto a pole directly adjacent to her as the train moved with one hand in his pocket. The train stopped at Tottenham Court Road. It jolted to a halt. Lexi caught herself against the pole as the train stopped. She had been so startled by his appearance that she’d not braced herself for the jolt of the train. Moriarty was there. Right there. In front of her.

She felt anger, it rose in her like a dark mass ready to spill from her throat like tar. With her anger came fear, making the bile in her throat rise. Lexi swallowed and watched him from across the carriage.

Moriarty smiled but said nothing. He turned and got off the train after the crowd had passed. Lexi was compelled to follow, after all he had done to her, was now not the best time to get revenge? To confront him?

Stay on the train and then run as fast as you can. Find safe harbour in Sherlock and John. Run.

Lexi got off the train.

She followed him but she knew he’d be fully aware of her presence. He was too smart to think otherwise. Lexi lit a cigarette out of anxiousness, her hands were shaking enough that she needed to concentrate in order to find her lighter. She rounded the sharp corner Moriarty had taken, half expecting him to have disappeared into thin air. What if she had imagined him? It wasn’t unconceivable.
Lexi stopped short. She had turned the corner and he had been right there. Leaning against the wall, just out of sight of her coming around the corner. He had a beguiling smile on his face that Lexi wanted to hate but couldn’t. She raised a fist and went to punch him in the face. Moriarty caught her hand with ease and pushed it away from his face like swatting a fly. He didn’t let go, as if he were greeting an old friend. His hands were surprisingly soft - she hated him for it. There was nothing she could do, if she pulled her hand away his hand would come with it because his grip was too strong. She knew it, he knew it.

Lexi took a long drag of the cigarette, uneasily trying to decide whether to slam the cigarette into his face or run. Neither were a good option given her circumstance. He would be faster than she was, but he was more likely to have a car on standby like last time. Violence would only provoke repercussions for her. The same things had gone through his mind and he knew she was, again, at his mercy.

“Alexandra, so lovely to see you again,” his voice was soft. (Danger, danger, danger.) It was hard to ignore it.

“Fuck you!” she spat with venom, cigarette smoke billowing out as she did.

Moriarty looked no less bothered. His eyes washed over her.

“You are still as fucking gorgeous as last time,” he paused and looked at her in the eye, Lexi averted her gaze almost immediately, “sorry for the gun shot by the way, it totally wasn’t meant to kill you.”

Lexi was unnerved that he seemed almost sincere. The man was quite literally the definition of a psychopath. She hated herself for finding it alluring. Given what he’d done to her; the rape, the cocaine, the shooting. She should have wanted to scream and kick and claw her way away, but she was overpowered by both his grip and his voice.

“What do you want?” she asked, her voice barely more than a whisper. Lexi turned her head away, unable to look at him. His other, equally soft, hand pulled her face back towards his - he was insistent on maintaining eye contact.

“Ah honey, don’t turn your face away from me - did no one tell you it’s rude?” he said sarcastically, “am I not allowed to ask my favourite person how she is?”

Lexi recoiled.

“Are you kidding me? You’ve tried to kill me. You -“ she paused, her brain shutting down her emotions one by one as she tried to regain composure, “you are the definition of vile.”

Moriarty gave a toothy smile.

“We both know that isn’t true.”

His hand cusped her face with a soft but firm grip. She knew if she turned her face away he’d pull it back.

“I have to admit, Alexandra, I am disappointed you’ve gotten clean. You’re so much more in touch with your fun side when you’re high.”

Lexi said nothing. The pit in her stomach deepened at the water of her nightmares threatened to pull her under. Heroin or cocaine would be good right now, so much stress, her mind racing. She could go to the UCL, lift some morphine, take some time away from the Always. Lexi stiffened and closed her eyes. She felt Moriarty’s thumb caress her cheek slightly. Was it raining? No, he had wiped away
a single tear that had escaped her eye. (Stupid.)

“I see it’s still on your mind,” Moriarty smiled with white teeth at her, “did you not like my distractions?”

Lexi looked into his brown eyes again with a frown.

“You call mass murder a distraction?”

Moriarty straightened himself, moving his hands away from her. He looked even more disappointed in her. He knew she wouldn’t run, her feet were rooted to the floor. Her blue eyes stuck in his brown ones.

“No, no, no, no. Alexandra, don’t try to pretend you are actually bothered. We both know that’s bullshit. The case. The puzzle. That’s far more entertaining. How are you going to free Irene Adler?”

Moriarty pouted as if he too was thinking about it.

“I mean, do you even want to free Sherly’s ex? We both know they had more than a professional relationship. I’m surprised really, I didn’t take Sherly for a BDSM/dominatrix kind of guy, but hey-ho we all make mistakes,” he chatted as if he was regaling gossip to a friend.

“Don’t try to compare me to you, you bastard,” Lexi replied.

Moriarty grabbed her hand again, as if he was making sure she wasn’t going to run.

“I don’t need to compare you to me, you already know how alike we are. We work like clockwork together.”

Lexi turned her face away again, disgusted with him and at herself for understanding what he was saying.

It was then she felt the needle pierce her skin. Lexi tried to pull her arm away but Moriarty had it under a firm grip.

She gasped as the liquid entered her blood stream.

“What did you do? What is that?” she panicked.

It was a lie to say she didn’t know. Lexi had felt her endorphins explode as the liquid spread into her body. It was like coming up for air in the ocean.

“The purest heroin I could get my fantastic little hands on,” Moriarty said jovially, his eyes expanding at the word ‘heroin’.

He let go of her hand and she stumbled slightly, the euphoria spreading over her brain. Lexi felt hands push her gently against the wall and she fell against it, her legs not wanting to work as her entire body, her brain process, her motor skills became overwhelmed with the heroin.

“What did you —“ she slurred, feeling her legs falter slightly.

Her vision swam minutely but she saw those doe-y brown eyes as he cusped her face gently.

“I told you Lexi, enjoy your fun side. The shit that’s going to hit the fan in the coming months - you are going to need oblivion.”
Somewhere in her brain, she agreed with him.
Lexi’s mind swam back into focus, she sat up with a jolt hyper aware of her surroundings. She was in a dark room, hazy and barren. Filled with a few other people who were oblivious to her presence. A drug den.

Sniffing the air, she smelled salt. Unless she’d been transported in a plane (which wasn’t altogether impossible) it was likely she was by the Thames. Lexi sat up, wobbling slightly, it was dark and she couldn’t see much except for the dim lit lanterns keeping the room from being in total darkness. Was it even a room? Lexi looked around her eyes adjusting to the dim light, it was damp and hollow - a warehouse? At least an abandoned warehouse probably long since used for anything legal. She heard the sound of a plane in the close background, it screeched in her ears as the drugs leaving her system writhed in protest. The pinky-blonde haired woman winced physically at the noise and scrunched up her eyes to deal with the stinging pain behind her eyes. Her brain formulated she was probably in a warehouse around London Airport, by the Thames. At least she wasn’t far from home.

“He said you’d be awake around now,” mumbled a voice.

Lexi jumped, she’d taken to long to adjust to her situation that she hadn’t noticed the skinny man hunched over her.

He had a strong cockney accent and he had few teeth left. They called it meth mouth. He was likely a resident drug addict around to make sure that their clients didn’t die in the warehouse.

“Who?” she croaked, rubbing her neck with her hand.

The man sniffed, he shifted slightly and Lexi noted that his clothes were hanging off him loosely, she could see the track marks on his arms. The track arms reminded her of Moriarty jamming the needle into her arm. She raised her arm and traced over the ugly mark, it was bruised and very noticeable. Lexi doubted that Moriarty had a shoddy aim. If he was worth his salt, which Lexi assumed he was, he could have easily have injected her without leaving so much as a pin prick. Moriarty had done it to her arm purposefully. *(To remind you.)*

She shook her head.

“Jim. He paid me to make sure you didn't die or, you know, get mugged,” replied the vagrant.

Lexi frowned and pulled herself away from the man. She used the wall to stand and held onto it as the world righted itself in her mind. He stood with her holding out his hands protectively incase she fell over.
“Why would he do that?” she asked, nipping the bridge of her nose as she fought the nausea.

“Don’t know. Didn’t ask. He just said to make sure to get you over the next 5 hours alive.”

“That’s - wait - what?!” she felt her pockets for her phone. She didn’t feel it. The man held out her iPhone, it had been pristinely looked after. Obviously Moriarty had been clear that she wasn’t to be messed up in any sense. She wasn’t sure why. *(Yes you do. Yes you do. Yes you do.*)

She shook her head again and snatched the phone off the man who held up his hands as if to show his good intentions. Fucking drug addicts and their code of conduct.

Lexi clicked on the home button. The screen lit up.

“19:46PM. PHONE: 10 MISSED CALLS. 5 MESSAGES: 3H AGO, SHERLOCK.”

Lexi took in a breathe, biting her lip.

“Shit,” she snapped, shoving the phone in her pocket, “shit, shit, shit, shit, SHIT.”

Those around her didn’t stir. Five hours? Five fucking hours. Never mind the heroin. *(Which you missed.*) She shook her head again. Sherlock’s pouty face was likely to be more dangerous than any drug could be.

The man stepped back slightly as she swore before pulling her satchel from an alcove. It too was pristine. Lexi snatched it off him. She should have been thankful that he had been paid to watch her and not steal all her things, but then that would have been admitting that Moriarty had done her a favour, if anything could have been taken from the whole encounter. He’d done it on purpose, leaving her to come to perfectly fine, knowing she’d enjoy the ride.

It was even more bitter that she’d enjoyed it. It was dangerous, it could kill her, it was wrong. But it had been so right. Her breathing stifled itself and she felt her nightmare trying to claw its way up her throat.

Lexi left the warehouse by kicking the door open. Her mind shook as much as the door did but she was too determined to get away from the warehouse to care. She walked out onto the street and stopped to breathe in the night air amongst the public. The air felt good against her skin after being in the dank warehouse but she still felt dirty. She needed to go back to Baker Street and shower until the dirt was gone. Her phone vibrated again and this time she caught Sherlock’s call.

“Sherlock. Hey.”

“Lexi. Are you alright?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m - I’m fine,” she hailed a cab as she spoke trying to keep her voice level.

“Where have you been?” Sherlock asked, worry obvious in his voice.

“I, uh, I got caught up on a surgery. It was a craniotomy, couldn’t miss out on that, right?” she mumbled jumping into a cab.

“Baker Street, please.”

“Oh, I thought you were on the metro over to meet John and I?” Sherlock said over the phone.

“I was,” she said, feeling her lie run thin. There was no way she could tell him that she’d had a run in with Moriarty, Sherlock would have been beside himself. And telling him she had spent the best part
of the afternoon high as a kite was even more of a bad idea. “I got a phone call as I got on the metro at Euston, saying some grad student had dropped out. It was too good of an opportunity to miss,” she paused feeling awful, “sorry.” (Empty apology. Liar, Liar.)

She tilted her head slightly to get rid of the thought, placing her head in her hand on the window. It would take at least twenty minutes from where she was to get even remotely close to Baker Street, London really was a big place.

“Ah,” responded Sherlock, voice cautious but easing away from the worry, “I understand that your medical training comes before anything else.”

Lexi felt even worse at his acceptance and understanding. It seemed lying to Sherlock was done easier over a phone.

“Did you and John deal with your case?” she asked, trying to change the subject.

“Yes. Yes. The Ship Captain killed the Knight in the living room with a fire poker.”

“I’m sorry?”

“Just another case of ‘accidental’ murder. I just thought you would’ve appreciated the crime scene examination and clues.”

Lexi smiled to herself while the guilt in her stomach increased.

She looked out the window into the night, sighing to herself. Sherlock waited for her reply.

“I’ll be at Baker Street soon. I caught a cab so I shouldn’t be too long, traffic permitting.”

“No proble - -“

Lexi cut off the phone before she could say goodbye. Her head span slightly and she shoved her phone into her bag. The clink of glass in her bag made her raise an eyebrow. She had nothing glass in her bag but the sound had been unmistakably her phone bouncing off something made of glass. Lexi pulled the bag open.

Purse.

Money.

Student ID.

Pen.

Lexi stared.

Three syringes of white liquid. The same thing Moriarty had injected her with. She stared at them for what felt like the longest of moments. Lexi didn’t dare get them out of her bag, but she looked at them long enough to realise that the cab was nearing the centre of London.
When Lexi hadn’t turned up at the Grind, Sherlock had insisted that he and John could wait until she turned up. They waited twenty-five minutes before John started to complain.

Sherlock hadn’t responded to him, instead choosing to text Lexi periodically while finishing his tea. Even after that he lit a cigarette and listened to twenty minutes of John citing all the things wrong with smoking. In the end they had decided to go to Chislehurst without Lexi. He knew there would be a reason for her delay, it was unlike her to not text though. The case had been rudimentary - a fake burglary turned murder in order to hide a secret tryst between the wife and a Captain. The Captain had insisted from the get-go to be called Captain. Sherlock had identified him as a fish monger who just happened to have good enough looks to meet Lady Carmichael at a gala for the fishing company he worked for. John had been massively irritated that he still couldn’t work out how Sherlock did his (to quote John) ‘thing’.

Sherlock had to explain three times to John, each time slower, how he had worked out the case in less that ten minutes of looking at the corpse of Sir Carmichael.

Stabbed with a poker through the chest away from the window. The attacker wasn’t confronted stealing something, he was already by the window. If he had what he needed (which according to the family silverware had been stolen) he wouldn’t have stopped to fight with Sir Carmichael. The lack of struggle on Sir Carmichael’s body likely meant he was acquainted with his killer. The fire poker had been picked up in someone else’s self defence yet no one in the house recalled Carmichael getting into a fight, more so that he would have had more than just brushing on his knuckles and a stab wound through the chest. There had been a confrontation and someone else had been attacked, taken up the poker in defence and Carmichael had likely impaled himself.

“So why cover it up?” John had asked.

Whoever had been involved had been in the house at the time and not as a burglar. If he had been confronted by Carmichael it was because he had caught them mid-act of something else. An affair perhaps? Something enough to send Carmichael over the edge. Though apparently that hadn’t been an issue because he was already an abusive drunk.

“Well then if it is a murder, where’s the silverware?” asked Lestrade, scoffing.

Sherlock had lit another cigarette pondering the question. He went outside to finish the cigarette after being shooed from the house with it. He had been watching the police shuffle around the garden before stopping at a pond. The rocks and soil had been disturbed recently. He had turned banged on the window and pointed at the pond. A quick DNA test and comparison with wounds on the household had quickly pinpointed the Captain as the murderer. His arrest prompted Lady Carmichael to burst into a tirade about how he had done it out of love for her and defence for their relationship.

Sherlock didn’t do mushy-gushy. He had solved the case so he turned and left, John following pondering about how he had managed to solve the case so quickly. Sherlock mostly ignored him.

On the way back to Baker Street in the cab Sherlock sent Lexi another message and a call. When she didn’t respond he shoved his phone in his coat pocket irritatedly.

He had been drumming his fingers silently when John had piped up.

“Why did you need Lexi to solve that case?”

Why indeed. In truth, something he would never reveal to John, he had wanted to spend more time with her. Lexi had become somewhat more distant of late, plagued by nightmares, smoking like a chimney, eating less and staring out the window more. He had tried to keep his distance because
emotional conflict wasn’t something he had much experience with and he knew she was only become enraged if he tried to involve himself.

The bombing of London had proved more of a distraction for Sherlock rather than the penultimate chase to bring down Moriarty. He had machinated it in order to screw with Sherlock. Irene was behind bars and they were no further forward to catching him.

*Because I Can.* Had been the motto. And it truly was because he could.

Sherlock had been stumped and there was nothing he could do. No link, no trace or clue that could be solved in order to lead him to Moriarty. Instead he threw himself into trying to free Irene, something else that had more red tape around it than he had ever seen.

Mycroft wanted her to be punished, Lestrade wanted her punished, the public wanted her punished. There was no denying she had been the one to set up the explosives at Windsor and Buckingham Palace, there were so many recordings of the bombngs, both before and after, which placed her at the scene.

Irene Adler had blown up Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle. There was no getting around that. Sherlock had hoped to free her by figuring out a way to implicate Moriarty for his crimes. There was no way.

He had instead encouraged himself into throwing knives at Moriarty’s spray painted head on his living room wall in frustration.

But he couldn’t tell John that.

“I thought it would have been good for her medical skills,” Sherlock mumbled, looking out the window.

“Right…” John said, “tell me again why she couldn’t have just stayed in her class?”

Sherlock said nothing as they pulled up at Baker Street.

“See you later, John. Give my love to Mary,” he had said finitely.

John had nodded and turned his attention towards his phone.

As Sherlock let himself in he called Lexi again. Still no response. Sherlock bit his lip in thought, trudging up the stairs and into his flat. He shed his coat, placing it on the coat stand and picked up his violin before throwing himself down in his chair.

There he had sat mulling over Lexi, Irene Adler, the day’s events and Moriarty until Lexi had called to say she had been in a craniotomy. He supposed that wasn’t implausible, but her voice had seemed off. Not that he had wanted to say anything to her. He was about to say goodbye when Lexi hung up on him. Sherlock had stared at the phone for the longest of moments. She hung up on him. That had never happened before. From anyone.

Sherlock plucked absent mindedly at his violin, continuing to sift and organise his thoughts.

Then he heard the door go.
The knife pierced the wall again. By now the smilie face that Sherlock had spray painted onto the wall a handful of years ago looked sad and bitter rather than light and full of joy. There were that many pierces in the wall that the wallpaper was starting to give way. John had watched Mrs Hudson shout at Sherlock time and time again about it but he had always told her irritatedly to get back to her tea making duties. Today had, as had the past few days, been no different, when he had turned up at 221B Sherlock had been throwing a curved scimitar-style dagger at the wall. It had missed his nose by a few breathes and he was sure if there had been a camera watching the fine hairs on his nose they would have been shaven off. It made no difference to John Watson, he had seen Sherlock throw a knife that had “accidentally” found its way into the side of his arm before. It didn't seem to register that these accidents always occurred when John had either A) foregone his companion duties to be with Mary or B) he’d taken away Sherlock’s stash of cigarette’s. Since meeting Lexi Sherlock had been blissfully gentle on John’s appendages but of recent his irritation (and knife throwing) had been getting worse. John presupposed it wasn’t going to be too far off in the future when his leg, foot or arm was in the throwing line.

Lexi had been surprisingly distant from Sherlock since the bombings in London. John had been momentarily cut off from the pair when London had been placed on lockdown and his saving grace had been Mycroft deeming his military expertise vital to his younger siblings’ survival. For once John accepted Mycroft had been right. No sooner had he arrived at one of the bomb sites had Sherlock been shot off the top of a pile of rubble and Lexi chased across ground zero by persistent gunfire. Of course John wasn’t allowed a rifle even though he had adequate training in the army, but the pistol he had been given clearance for made him at least feel like he could help out - even if he hadn’t fired it.

That had been the last time he’d really seen Lexi who had looked at him like she’d seen a ghost. Her reaction to everything had worried him, he knew she had seen worse and that being shot at, rather than literally being shot, wouldn’t have affected her as seeing his face had. Whatever she had seen when she looked at his face had worried him. Like his secrets, and hers, were baring themselves to each other. Her reaction had made him uneasy and now Sherlock’s temperament was equally as worrying.

John supped on his tea watching silently with his legs crossed as Sherlock threw the knife and ran through every piece of evidence he had collated out loud. They had made such little progress since the bombings that, asides from the manor case, Sherlock had rejected any and all investigations that would bring him in any money.

“I don’t get it John, why have we no leads?” asked Sherlock, pacing backwards and forwards biting his thumb.

John gaped slightly and shrugged his shoulders. Sherlock reacted exactly as a child would, he hissed slightly and continued pacing.

“The metal, the crown - there is no link, no piece of information that could lead us to Moriarty. He put them there for absolutely no reason.”

John sniffed, wishing he could have helped his friend find an answer that would alleviate his stress. There was no answer, shy of handing Moriarty on a plate. How he wished he could.

“How is Irene, Sherlock?” John asked, trying to change subject.
Sherlock threw him shade as he continued to pace.

“Why does it matter? She’s locked up and no one can touch her - not even Moriarty,” he responded suddenly changing tact and lifting up the skull on the mantelpiece. John sighed.

“Where are they John?”

“You don’t need them,” John replied shifting position on the seat as he predicted the course of the conversation.

“Where are they?”

“Really, Sherlock?”

Sherlock passed his chair, giving him a scowl before passing into the kitchen and opening the bread bin.

“Have you even taken my lighter? “ the detective asked, his hands skimming his dressing gown pocket and then the drawers.

“You don’t need to smoke, Sherlock. Where did you even get those? Who let you get those?” John demanded, frowning at the appearance of new cigarette’s.

Sherlock inclined his head.

“Just because you got every shop in a ten mile radius not to sell me cigarette’s doesn’t mean Lexi can’t get them.”

Yet another bad habit Lexi enabled. Sherlock lit the hob and lit his cigarette. He took in a long inhale before closing his eyes and letting the smoke out slowly. It was clearly a matter that today, John wasn’t going to win.

“Where’s Lexi?” he asked, hoping the change of topic would alleviate the angst in the room.

This only seemed to make matters worse, Sherlock took another drag and said nothing, instead choosing to look down at the bench. John bit his lip and leaned forward in thought, his elbows resting on top of his knees. He looked away from Sherlock in his moment of fragility, it was almost awkward to look at the detective when his own situation was harder than any case.

Sherlock sniffed before turning and leaning against the counter.

“Alexandra is … busy,” he muttered, not meeting John’s eye contact.

John looked up at Sherlock through his naturally furrowed face.

“University? The hospital?”

“Something like that.”

John twisted his lips, he knew she wasn’t at the hospital because he had been there himself filling in on some locum work. Perhaps she had lectures, but given Lexi’s intelligence and lack of being bothered to pay attention to someone less qualified as her, it was highly likely she’d skip them. The good doctor had watched his friend’s face as he considered his response, his face looked rigid as always; cold, clinical, professional. His eyes were lost. He didn’t know where Lexi was, what she was up to or why she had become so distant of recent. Then again perhaps they were overthinking it, she was a young woman after all - maybe she wanted a sense of normalcy amidst the madness that
was London.

John could hope. But he didn’t hold his breath.

A second thought crossed his mind as John watched Sherlock pace the room again, looking more slender and bedraggled than usual: Sherlock had a TV. It wasn’t one of the fancy 3D curve screen ones that Mary had eyed up but it was a decent size and allowed a novice film goer to appreciate the magic of the screen in the comfort of their own home. The DVDs nestled around the dvd player weren’t exactly what John had thought Sherlock would watch. Doctor Who, Star Wars, Harry Potter, The Godfather, The Green Mile, Alexander (1956). All of them were iconic DVDs in their own right and some of them hadn’t even had the cellophane removed.

“You watching these, Sherlock?” John asked, picking up the remote and turning on the TV. He was surprised they had access to freeview. BBC 1 popped up and highlights from the ongoing government investigation into the bombings was being reeled over and over.

“Hmm, Lexi makes me. She say’s it will help in my cultural understanding…” he mumbled, a bittersweet smile crossed his face, “I’m not allowed to talk while they’re on. I predicted the entire of The Green Mile before it had gotten 10 minutes in.”

John chuckled, watching the TV.

“That doesn’t surprise me, you should watch —“ John stopped mid sentence as the news changed from its prerecorded reel to a live address, “Sherlock - look.”

The Prime Minister was approaching her podium with a solemn face outside of Downing Street. Sherlock had stopped pacing and his attention had fixed to the screen.

“UNSCHEDULED ANNOUNCEMENT FROM DOWNING STREET:

The terrorist attack on London and on Windsor has dealt a great blow to the lives of the nation. We mourn the loss of those who were caught in the bombings and at the loss of the Royal Family. In a time such as this we ask for you all to think of one another and of the families going through the most unimaginable grief…”

“Boring,” scoffed Sherlock, “I don’t want to listen to this. Turn it off.”

John waved away Sherlock’s grumbling.

“It is today as a nation that we have decided that Britain will not be defeated by this senseless act of terrorism and the Government will be using the full extent of the law to prosecute those responsible …”

Sherlock rolled his eyes and tutted. It wasn’t anything they hadn’t heard of before.

“That is why today, at 11am, the Houses of Parliament, Common’s and Lord’s, voted unanimously
in favour of seeking the ultimate punishment for mass murder and high terrorism. The punishment, should the law deem it necessary, will grant the British Government and its peoples the power to practice capital punishment over the perpetrators of this heinous and senseless act of terrorism. This is not used lightly and …”

John stopped listening. The room had gone silent aside the sound of Sherlock’s tea cup falling from his hand, it shattered across the floor and skittered into a million tiny shards. It would take a long time to get all the shards out of the rug. John watched Sherlock intensely.

“Sherlock …” he began.

“I need to make a call,” responded Sherlock. If John hadn’t known Sherlock well enough, one could have mistaken his response for rudeness. John knew it was anything but, he supposed it was instead masking fear. Irene Adler would be sentenced to death and executed if they didn’t save her. But how could they save the woman who had committed mass murder and terrorism? A woman who had pressed the button and willingly destroyed the lives of so many? It conflicted Sherlock because he still loved her in some way, of this John was sure.

“I don’t understand Mycroft, you jabbering bastard, why — how could you let this happen? You of all people know she isn’t the one who …” Sherlock’s voice rose in and out of shouting as he argued with the elder Holmes, “I can’t, I don’t have that kind of evidence. I have no lead. You can’t kill her just because we can’t find the link straight away…”

There was silence in the hallway for what seemed the longest of moments.

“Fuck you, Mycroft, you spineless waste of space.”

John heard the sound of plastic being thrown across the hallway. He stood up, dusting down his clothes as he usually did (perhaps a habit from the army) and went into the hallway. Sherlock was leaned against the wall, looking down at his feet. His phone laid in pieces down the stairs and across the landing. It didn’t take a genius to know he’d thrown his phone in a rage. It also didn’t take a genius to work out that Sherlock was conflicted. Irene Adler was guilty. She had set the bombs and pressed the button. But she hadn’t done it willingly. Did it matter given her actions? Given her response to the police?

John didn’t know and neither did the detective.

He wondered where Lexi fit in with everything. Or if she had also picked up on the predicament the three of them were in. Was she even bothered? After all Sherlock was eclipsed by Lexi but he was also bound to his love for Irene. John hadn’t even realised Sherlock had such emotions.

You learn something new every day, John mused to himself.

John leaned against the wall next to Sherlock.

“What’s the plan, Sherlock?” he asked gently.

Sherlock didn’t look up from the floor, his face hidden by his longer shaggy curls. John waited, letting Sherlock level his feelings.

“We go to the source directly. I’m done waiting, of playing his games. We’re going for Moriarty.”

John sighed. He should have known the outcome, it wasn’t a hard guess.
“What about Lexi? Do you want to use my phone to call her?”

“What for?” Sherlock retorted, almost instantly, “She's busy. She has a life of her own to lead.”

John raised his eyebrows but said nothing of it.

“So, what next?”

“We find him. And we have a chat.”

“Where can we find him? How can we find him?”

Sherlock looked up at John for the first time since throwing his phone. His eyes were red, dark shadows made his eyes look even more fierce. John couldn’t tell if he’d been crying. His composure had reigned in the emotions and had shut them off at its core.

“Simple. Moriarty is in London, somewhere. It’s where the action is. I have my homeless network. We scour every inch until we find him.”

“And what if we don’t find him?” John asked.

Sherlock’s eyes grew darker, his face twitched slightly but otherwise his emotions remained concealed.

“Irene Adler is a dead woman.”
The locker clicked open as the combination opened the latch. Lexi threw her work trainers in the locker with a long sigh. She recalled the 12 hour surgery perfectly:

“Okay, Dr. Stuart, drill through the ear canal and into the tumour site.”

Lexi said nothing as she began to drill. The smell of friction as the drill bore through the bone was strong enough to come through her surgical mask. The bone resisted the drill so Lexi applied more pressure, white dust floated off of the drill but Lexi concentrated on the spinning. As the drill pushed into the skull Lexi’s brain remembered the feeling of the needle slip through her veins. It had hurt because it had been a shock but once it had pushed past the skin it was relieving, she supposed like acupuncture.

The drill pushed on through the skull but Lexi could only think about the feeling of the heroin pushing into her blood stream. She remembered breathing out sharply as the endorphins surged in her brain, the needle slipped off of her arm but she didn’t notice because all she could feel was the heroin taking grip of the

Always.

His dark brown eyes, his stupid, captivating dark brown eyes, watched her curiously as she was overcome with the sensation. The high came over her like a wave, crashing into her racing thoughts and drowning out the fury in her head. She could still remember those eyes, embracing her, holding her as the drugs overcame her system. His hands were soft on her skin and she felt her entire body bending to his will. She didn’t want to, to feel how she did, to like the way his hands felt on her body. He helped her against the wall and she felt right. But she felt wrong, sinful, guilty.

“ALEXANDRA!”

A voice snapped her back to the present. The drill had been turned off but she was still holding it like it was on, holding onto the trigger. Hands waved in front of her face, but she stared at the drill.

No.

She stared at his eyes.

She felt the drugs taking hold of her.

She felt the drill being ripped away from her hand and someone pushing her backwards out of the operating theatre.

She heard voices trying to get through to her but the Always had her locked in place.

James Moriarty’s eyes had captivated her entirely. He had captivated her entirely. The man who was a monster but the man she seemed captured by.

When she eventually surfaced from the Always she was sat in a side room of the ER. Lexi had a blood pressure band on her arm. The results showed her blood pressure was far too high.

“Alex?” asked the junior doctor. She recognised her from seminars and her rounds.

“Yeah?”
The doctor flinched at Lexi’s voice as if she hadn't been expecting her to speak.

“Are you, are you okay?”

“Yeah.”

“You blacked out in the operating theatre.”

“I did?”

“Yeah. You were catatonic. You BP is enough to get you admitted.”

Lexi looked at the monitor again and bit her lip.

“Take it again,” she said quietly.

“We’ve taken it twice already…” muttered the doctor with uncertainty.

Lexi looked at the doctor with sharp eyes.

“Do it again.”

A moment later and the band was constricting her arm again. She focussed on the band as it pressed against her arm. She felt her heart slow and her pulse evened out. The machine beeped. 119/78.

Lexi looked back at the doctor. She looked shocked.

“Oh. Well, uh, I guess it was a faulty reading?”

Lexi nodded thoughtlessly. She stood up, aware she was still in her scrubs.

“I’m going home,” she decided.

The woman opposite her stood at the same time, hands held out as if she thought she would fall over. Lexi pushed past her.

“Wait, Alex, you should stay a while. Let us run some more tests, a blood test might let us know if you have something wrong with you.”

Lexi kept walking. There was no way she'd submit to a blood test, not when she knew there would be heroin still in her veins.

The locker slammed shut as she dumped her clothes on the stand next to her. Her scrubs fell to the floor and she pulled on her jeans. The locker room was thankfully empty, no one could see the giant track mark on her arm. It looked ugly. As quick as she had been topless Lexi threw on her long sleeved Ghostbuster’s shirt. She checked her phone. 0 messages. Lexi let out a sigh. She hadn't heard from Sherlock in a while and she was too ashamed to return to Baker Street. Lexi pulled out her bobble and ruffled through her hair, she had no where to go since she’d given up her apartment. Money wasn't an issue, she had been compensated enough from the few investigations she and Sherlock had completed. Lexi went outside and lit a cigarette, appreciating the nicotine as it calmed her nerves. She had been on edge since that night and it had been nothing but jitters ever since, even if she tried to focus on the Always. Suddenly her phone vibrated.

1 new message. John Watson.
Lexi frowned, she never got a message from John. Lexi flicked open the screen.

“Sherlock needs you, Lexi. Where are you?”

Lexi froze. Did Sherlock need her? She needed him but she couldn’t face his eyes. He knew nothing about her, not really, and he couldn’t work her out because she was such an enigma to him. He was literally blinded by her presence. Her thumbs hesitated over the keyboard. What could she say that would make any difference? Her thumbs glazed over the keyboard.

“I’m busy. Sorry.”

John responded almost immediately.

“If you care about him you’ll come.”

Lexi sighed.

“What’s wrong?”

“He needs you.”

She grabbed her bag and left the hospital.

“I’ll be twenty minutes.”
Lexi was onto her second pack of cigarette’s of the day, she lit up the one held on her lips before climbing the pavement steps to 221B. Lexi stopped at the door, her eyes staring at the handle. It had been a long time since she had actually stopped and looked at the door, as she had the day she entered the insane world of Sherlock. Her heart filled with melancholy at the thought of that first day, how naive she had been and how much pain she had been in. How minute that pain was compared to now.

She inhaled on her cigarette and opened the door, banishing the melancholy thoughts from her mind. Her eyes became steely as she capped her emotions. As she went up the stairs her eyes clocked on little pieces of plastic littered across the stairs, she said nothing. John was stood facing out the window in the living room, Sherlock was leaned into his microscope. Lexi stopped still, cigarette in her hand and looked at the two of them curiously.

“Hey,” she said evenly.

Sherlock looked up at her bewildered, as if he hadn’t expected to see her for the rest of his days. They had only spoken a few days ago, since she had been catching up on hours at the hospital and floating around London when there were seminars she didn’t appreciate being talked down to in. Still, his look made her feel funny, she looked away. John turned to look at her with a smile on his face. He was unusually pleasant towards her today which she found unnerving.

“Lexi, long time no see,” replied John jovially, “tea?”

“No, thanks, I have Pepsi.”

“That supposedly gives you cancer you know, though, I’m not sure how founded that research is,” murmured Sherlock from the corner. Lexi turned and frowned at him - it seemed his social skills had dipped since she last saw him.

“Well, something’s gotta kill me eventually. May as well be that. Though I doubt it'll be the soda that gives me cancer,” she responded, waving her cigarette.

Sherlock looked at her melancholy before looking back down at his microscope. John cleared his throat and offered to the fireplace. Lexi assumed he meant the chairs. She sat down in Sherlock’s chair but was warily surprised when he didn’t even look up. The same thought obviously ran through John’s head as he dusted lint off of his trousers before sitting down but he only frowned slightly before sitting rather than saying anything. Lexi leaned forward with her elbows on her knees.

“Well,” she began, “what’s the big emergency?”

John sniffed and looked back at Sherlock, obviously hoping he would start the conversation. Sherlock didn’t look up from his microscope. Lexi made a mental note to investigate whatever it was he was working on, whatever made it so interesting he couldn't make eye contact she wanted to see.

“Did you see the news?” John asked, looking at her with suddenly serious eyes.

Lexi shook her head.

“I make a habit of avoiding the news, the propaganda and stupidity makes it hard to watch.”

John nodded slowly, another frown crossing his face. Lexi decided John was like Lestrade, always a
frown and another stress wrinkle on the forehead. He pursed his lips in thought, whatever he was about to say would be difficult for her to hear. She wondered if that was why Sherlock was hidden behind his microscope.

“The government announced this morning that they were going to bring back capital punishment for cases of mass murder facilitated by terrorism…” he trailed off slightly as Lexi stubbed out her cigarette and lit another one instantly.

“Okay, why does that affect me?” Lexi murmured.

Sherlock looked up sharply from his microscope.

“Well, uh, you know. We were working to vindicate Irene Adler from the charges?” John said slowly, his voice unsure of how to respond to her apparent iciness.

“Have you ever considered that perhaps she shouldn’t be vindicated?” snapped Lexi, her right leg beginning to shake up and down in irritation.

Sherlock stood up and walked over to her, pausing just in between her and John. He looked angry, his hands balled into fists. John leaned forward in nervous anticipation, suddenly on edge at the sudden flash of emotion from Sherlock. A man so usually restrained suddenly becoming emotional was dangerous. Lexi met Sherlock’s gaze with resilient eyes.

“How can you stand by and let an innocent woman take the blame?” Sherlock asked, voice unusually calm and quiet.

Lexi stood up, stubbing out her cigarette in the process, the accusation hitting a sore point.

“Seriously, Sherlock? You actually think she's innocent?” Lexi retorted, her small frame barely a shadow of Sherlock’s toned frame.

John stood up slowly trying to come between the two.

“What’s really important here… —” John was cut off by Sherlock angrily retorting to Lexi.

“Yes, I do Lexi, you of all people should know circumstance doesn’t equate to guilt.”

“What do you mean, me of all people?”

“Your idiotic overdose. Your involvement with bloody Moriarty. You being in those circumstances doesn’t mean you were guilty of them.”

Lexi took a step back, the wind taken out of her sails as Sherlock so mercilessly cut her down. He knew they would hurt her, her moments of weakness, yet he still pushed the buttons. Whatever his issue, the loaded gun was pointed at Lexi.

“Fuck. You.” Lexi spat in barely a whisper. “Irene Adler killed countless people, she knew exactly what she was doing. She could’ve come to you for help but she knows how fucking in love with her you are that you’d do anything to save her, even if it meant sacrificing everyone else.”

Sherlock flinched outwardly as Lexi called him out. But he didn’t say anything.

“You would see everyone else burn if it meant that Irene was still here.”

Lexi raised her head slightly as Sherlock remained silence, his eyes dropping to the floor. John had his mouth open slightly but he was too shocked to say anything. In the back of her mind John looked
like a fish with his chin periodically moving up and down. Lexi’s green eyes burned into Sherlock’s face but he couldn’t meet her gaze. She felt crestfallen as the gravity of Sherlock’s love for Irene was realised.

“Irene doesn’t need saving, Sherlock. You need to save yourself.”

Lexi shoved past Sherlock, who didn’t move an inch as she walked by him. She got to the door of the flat before he spoke again, this time quietly.

“What about Moriarty? He’s still guilty.”

Lexi stopped in the doorway.

“Is he? From where I stand Irene is the one who killed those people. You’re so desperate to see the good in her you’d never see her on the side of hell.”

Lexi didn’t wait for Sherlock to reply, she took off down the stairs with her mind whirling at the revelations in her head and the weight on her heart. She could hear footsteps behind her and Lexi’s heart lifted a little with the thought that Sherlock was chasing her to tell her how stupid he was and how wrong she had been, that he loved her unequivocally and that nothing and no one else mattered. The increasingly blonde haired Lexi turned, hope raising in her chest.

John came down the stairs to catch her

Lexi’s heart shattered a little more. She breathed out, feeling her eyes getting hot but she didn’t allow herself to cry. Her mind began to systematically shut down her empathy, to shut off the pain. Even though she knew the Always wouldn’t allow it for too long.

“Please don’t go Lexi, we need you. Sherlock needs you,” John pleaded.

Lexi sighed.

“I think he needs you more, John, I can’t and won’t help Irene.”

“What about Moriarty? You can’t just let him get away with shooting you!”

Lexi turned and opened the door, turning away from John.

“Moriarty is obsessed with Sherlock, not me. The further I am away from Sherlock, the safer I’ll be.”

It was a lie and they both knew it. Lexi walked out of the door and down towards the main street.

“Lexi! Please!” called John at the door, his hand in his coat.

She didn’t turn back.

_____________________

James Moriarty’s phone blinked to life. He picked it up from the passenger seat next to him in the back of his blacked out Mercedes.

1 New Message:

“15:16PM: Sherlock has shown his hand. Alexandra Stuart is no longer part of it. What do you
Moriarty’s mouth turned into a half-smile. The side of his finger ran across his lips in thought. He looked out the window as the car passed 221B Baker Street, he leaned forward as the Mercedes passed Lexi. Her face was dark and stormy, a sign that she was dealing with dangerous thoughts. As the car continued Moriarty sat back with a smile on his face.

“15:16:37PM: Irene Adler is still a problem for me. I won’t ask again, didn’t I already threaten you once? :-) .”

“15:17PM: I don’t know how you want me to deal with it and still stay in place.”

Moriarty shook his head slightly as he tried to negotiate to himself how irritating his texter was and how he’d deal with it. He tapped on his phone again. The car came to a pause at a traffic light at the end of Baker Street.

“15:17PM: There are contacts in place in the NSY. Deal with it.”

“15:17PM: What are you going to do?”

Moriarty looked back out the window as Lexi walked past the car and across the zebra crossing. He smirked again and typed into the phone.

“15:17PM: Continue playing the game, of course, we haven’t even gotten to the crescendo yet.”
The TCR Lounge Bar was one of the new and upcoming trendy bars, it had a chic homey style decor with a secret garden that boasted heated lamps so smokers could stay outside all year around. The only reason Lexi liked the place was because she got on well with the owner, who always gave her space in the busy bar. Tonight was no exception — Lexi had her own little snug in the garden, facing away from the main bar and heated by radiator lamps and a small fire pit in the centre of the table. The pink-blonde was onto her third whisky on the rocks but they failed to take the edge off of her emotions. Since the argument with Sherlock Lexi had gone straight to the bar, it wasn't like she had anywhere else to go — not that she couldn’t afford it since the payouts from the few investigations she had been part of — she didn’t feel like spending any more money on lodgings when she had a perfectly good bed at Baker Street. Or did she? Lexi sipped at her whisky to banish the thought. She leaned forward and lit a cigarette allowing the smoke to wisp its way into her mouth and then out through her nose in a controlled manner. Nicotine and alcohol was her remedy but the heroin in her bag called to her. She still hadn’t taken it out since she found it in there. Lexi took another drag off of her cigarette and concentrated on the fire as it crackled. She could have thrown the heroin into the fire, the glass vials would shatter eventually and she wouldn’t have to worry about picking the liquid out of the fire. Temptation removed.

Yet the very thought of getting the heroin out of her bag and getting rid of it paralysed her. She could only take another sip of her whisky and another drag on her cigarette. Lexi rubbed her temples with one hand, her head was pounding and there was nothing she could do to alleviate it.

(Excerpt the heroin…)

Lexi rubbed her temples even harder as the thought crossed her mind. She was walking on a dangerous edge and she wasn’t sure if she could keep on the right side. How she needed Sherlock, yet how little did Sherlock need her. Lexi breathed out, baffled with her own situation.

Another glass of straight whisky was placed just in front of her with gentleness. Lexi looked up lazily as she took in who had bought her a drink.

Moriarty stood with his own whisky, smiling at her.

(That fucking twisted smile.)

“May I sit?” he asked, clearly not bothered that Lexi could have run screaming or punched him in the face.

Lexi motioned to the settee opposite her. She had no energy to fight when her own mind rebelled against her. Moriarty sat, crossing his legs as he did so. Lexi quickly noted he, like Sherlock, was wearing a suit. Unlike Sherlock Moriarty was significantly more casual, his black suit was paired with a white shirt that was buttoned down. At the edges of his shirt Lexi could see the etchings of a tattoo but she couldn’t make it out because it disappeared into his shirt.

“I hope you aren’t here to attack me with needles,” she quipped with a melancholy voice.

Moriarty smiled at her, this time flashing white teeth.

“No, no. Don’t be silly,” he paused as he took a drink with his doe-y brown eyes piercing her own emerald greens, “you know as well as I do that I don’t need to force you to take drugs. Not anymore.”
Lexi said nothing in response but continued rubbing her temples to ease the thudding noise behind the bars of her mind.

“You should drink some more, Alexandra, it'll help with the rebellion in your head,” murmured Moriarty behind his own glass of whisky, Lexi looked at him suspiciously but he made no move as she took up her drink and finished it in one — at least she had the one he had bought her. She doubted that the drink was laced, Moriarty’s intentions seemed less… sinister than usual. Lexi found it surprisingly comforting. Her brain pulsed in her mind at the thought of James Moriarty being anything other than repulsive.

Lexi sat back into the rattan chair with another cigarette, she lit it and looked at Moriarty with indifferent eyes. She should have been horrified that a mass murderer, the man who had attempted to kill her and raped her was sat opposite her like some old friend.

(Was it rape?)

She shook her head to get rid of the thought, but the Always continued anyway.

(You remember far more than you pretend and you know you went there with the intent to self-destruct.)

Lexi closed her eyes briefly and took in another drag on her cigarette.

(And you know that you’re in love with the pain in your mind… Sherlock is just the start of your downward spiral. You’ll lose your job, your future, your mind. You’ll—)

“So what can I help you with Moriarty?” asked Lexi, interrupting the tempest in her mind.

Moriarty could see the struggle behind her eyes but he said nothing as he stared at her, as if he were mesmerised. As if he were looking at prey? No, his eyes were far too warm for hostility. Moriarty placed his glass gently down on the glass rattan table, he leaned forward and took the cigarette from Lexi’s mouth with a half smile and placed it in his own. As he did so his fingers brushed against hers, she could feel her entire body resonate at his touch. And she should have hated it. But she didn’t.

“Please, I think we’ve been close enough for you to call me James, or Jim. Whichever. A little birdie told my you and Sherly have had a falling out.”

Lexi shrugged, unsure of how he had received such information. She didn’t put it past him to have bugs in Sherlock’s house or even on her phone. With the mood she was in, it didn’t really matter.

“And?” she quipped, lighting another cigarette.

“Am I not allowed to be concerned?”

Lexi chuckled, the thought of Moriarty caring about her feelings when she barely did at that point was the epitome of ironic.

“No, you’re not. You tried to shoot me,” she retorted with sadistic humour.

Moriarty picked up on the sadism and grinned, he swilled his whisky slowly.

“You know it was all semantics. I wanted to prove a point to Sherlock and I think I proved it well.”

“And what point was that?”
“Simple,” Moriarty grinned even wider, “don’t fuck with my shit.”

Lexi picked up her whisky and sipped it thoughtfully.

“You know, that’s really fucking philosophical,” Lexi responded.

“I do try.”

“So what did you really come here for? I don’t imagine it’s anything to do with Sherlock.”

Moriarty raised his eyebrows and tilted his head in one motion as if physically dismissing her question.

“Oh the contrary, Alexandra, Sherlock is a hindrance for the both of us. Three times you’ve been shot at because of him —“

“Machinated by you,” Lexi interrupted.

“Inconsequential. You’re known to the world as an associate of Sherlock Holmes. It doesn’t matter how far you distance yourself from Sherly, you’ll always be targeted because of it.”

Lexi bit her lip. She knew he was right, it didn’t matter how far she went because Sherlock had world wide enemies and people willing to blackmail for his intelligence. Sherlock was like a skeleton key, if he put his mind to it nothing and no one was sacred.

“And why would you be bothered by that? If history proves anything that’s if something is of benefit to you you’ll take it. You could just use me to bring down Sherlock.”

Moriarty sat back shaking his head. He looked greatly aggrieved. From where she sat his dramatic reaction reminded her how unpredictable he was.

“No, no, no, no, no!” Moriarty said loudly, “that’s far too easy. If I’m to watch him fall from the side of the angels then he needs to do it on his own. You’re far too predictable of a reason. Keep up with me, Alexandra, I know you can. Your intelligence is superior to Sherlock’s, I keep telling you, you are so much more without him and I think it’s about time your ready to hear that.”

Lexi sniffed but she said nothing.

“I, and I find myself thinking that my character is slightly compromised because it, find you intriguing Alexandra. I can’t have just any two-bit opportunist killing you. I might be a tad… unpredictable but I don’t want you dead.”

Lexi finished off her whisky and turned slightly. She raised her glass to the barman and he nodded in understanding.

“So what do you think you can do to protect me? And, for the record, I wouldn’t want you to. You’ve proven how trustworthy you are.”

Moriarty grabbed his chest as if her words had been mortally wounding.

“Ouch,” he responded, “I thought we’d built more of a connection than that…”

Alexandra smiled at the sarcasm. She mumbled thanks to the barman as he placed the drinks on the table. Moriarty stubbed out his (or was it hers?) cigarette in the ash tray and held up his glass in a mini toast. He took a drink before placing his glass back down and leaning back. One arm fell back against the back of the chair, his fingers running along his lips, his thin yet oddly enticing lips, the
other hand sat across his lap. Lexi watched him carefully. He had yet shown his hand.

“There are people in the world who would do anything to hurt Sherly—” Moriarty began.

“Like you.”

“Yes, but unlike me they would use you to get to him. I’ve been there, seen that, done that. I only offer you a way of defending yourself, if you’ll accept my help.”

Lexi stubbed out her own cigarette, blowing the smoke to the side. She should have blown the smoke into Moriarty’s face but she found herself interested in his offer.

“I know how to defend myself.”

“Do you?” he asked, looking at her arm.

She rubbed it self-consciously.

“I don’t just mean in martial arts, I mean with guns. Do you even know how to shoot a gun?”

Lexi took a drink of her whisky instead of replying, Moriarty smiled at her lack of response taking a drink of his own whisky.

“If you’re interested I can teach you. There’s a shooting range not far from here.”

Lexi pulled a surprised face.

“What, now?” she exclaimed, she had been drinking after all. And he was, well, he was Moriarty. Every fibre in her body said he was dangerous but the Always writhed in an uncontrollable way that made her want to throw herself off the deep end. Moriarty watched her face carefully as if he could read her expression.

“Why not? A little bit of alcohol never hurt anyone.”

Lexi watched Moriarty in return, before polishing off her whisky.

“Fuck it. Why not,” she muttered.

Moriarty smiled toothily.

“Fuck it indeed. I have a car out front.”

Had he been expecting her to acquiesce? He was an intellectual genius and he could, like she could, predict things when he put his mind to it. Unfortunately the Always blocked her perceptions and made her falter, she was not at her peak. The surgery that morning proved her failures. It didn’t matter much anyway, Lexi was interested in what Moriarty had to offer. It sure beat sitting around drowning her sorrows until she was put in a taxi to a hotel by the owner of the bar. Moriarty stood up, motioning towards the doors. He waited for Lexi to pass him first, she was unsure if it was gentlemanly or to stop her running, and they left the bar together. The black Mercedes waited for them and Moriarty opened the car door for her, his brown eyes watching her intently.

They drove.
Mycroft Holmes always told people he had no time trifling in his younger siblings affairs, except when it concerned the security of the nation. Alexandra Stuart was not a matter of national importance, she was just as infuriating as Sherlock for getting into bother but she was definitely not a matter of national importance. Except when she got into a car with the world’s only consulting criminal. The photo’s spoke for themselves, Alexandra had not been forced into the car under duress nor had there been a gun at her back, she had quite willingly gotten into the car and didn't protest as it left.

Mycroft thumbed through the pictures before sighing and looking away for his phone in disappointment. The younger Holmes’ associations had gotten him into trouble more than once, and it would seem that this was yet one more incident that would eventually require Mycroft to sweep away. Placing his phone in his side pocket Mycroft reopened his paper and continued reading the spread, various exposés led the reader step by step through the London bombings and how the dominatrix known as Irene Adler was responsible. Mycroft knew this was only a half truth: he knew that Ms. Adler was only the puppet and that there was in fact someone far more sinister than the Woman pulling the strings. The Diogenes Club was the best place for Mycroft to get his affairs in order, the garçons were hired on their impeccable resumés that boasted skills such as mixology and sign language while being able to take care of, with the utmost care, anyone who breathed too loud. John Watson had discovered this not a few months previously. Mycroft had been enjoying his newspaper in one of the more exclusive rooms of The Diogenes Club when he heard John’s footsteps lumbering into the main reading room. He had spoken for a good two minutes before he had been escorted back outside and explained the rules, whoever had been manning the door that day had left that evening with no job. Such was the etiquette of The Diogenes Club.

Mycroft’s thick fingers leafed through the pages of his tabloid, he noted silently that his fingers also betrayed the signs of his appetite for sugary snacks, they were pinkish and tubby and not at all as eloquent as they could have been. Had the technology been in place Mycroft would have jumped ship into a far more superior vessel in which to transport his mind. According to the right sources in MI5 implanting intelligence was progressing quite well, but not quick enough to be seen in his own lifetime. A much mediocre, human measure would have to do instead: a diet.

A vibration from his breast pocket interrupted Mycroft’s thoughts, he pulled his Android from his Westwood jacket and checked the screen. Mycroft tutted at the message, he felt eyes scowl at him. Various ministers and older veterans frequented The Diogenes Club and some took the oath of silence much more seriously. Mycroft was far too taken with his phone to care to look up, however.

SHERLOCK: I need a location. SH

Mycroft pressed the buttons on the mini keyboard to reply, only frowning to delete unwanted letters his thick fingers hit accidentally.

MYCROFT: To what, brother dearest? MH

SHERLOCK: Moriarty. SH

Mycroft lowered the phone slightly as the realisation that Sherlock didn’t know about Alexandra being with Moriarty set in. How much could he reveal to his brother without knocking him off the deep end? Redbeard had been enough to traumatise Sherlock’s childhood and turn him into the sociopath he was today. Could he really cope with the idea of Moriarty being in contact with Alexandra? Was it even his place to say? As it stood Moriarty had been flawless in enacting his
plans, even with extraction methods Mycroft’s men hadn’t been able to prove a single crime carried out by Moriarty. Apart from judging Alexandra for her unsavoury socialising there was little Mycroft could do, and even less that his little brother could do. Mycroft hesitated over the phone.

**MYCROFT:** *I have nothing to give you.* MH

**SHERLOCK:** *Really? I know you’ve done some work at that thing you call a Government. Give me a place, Mycroft.* SH

The one thing Mycroft had learned about his baby brother was that once he had an idea in his head he wouldn’t let it go, even if Mycroft continued to deny Sherlock what he wanted, he knew that he’d just have a temper tantrum like the child he was. The tantrum would probably include making his own job significantly difficult, it usually did. With the Korean elections up and coming that was the last thing he needed. Mycroft typed into his phone.

**MYCROFT:** *Mayfair. Sources say he has a townhouse there. Don’t get caught.* MH

Mycroft didn’t expect a reply.

________________________________________________________

Sherlock checked his phone before shoving it back in his trench coat. He was stood outside a house on Mayfair, one of the more illustrious neighbourhoods in central London. It hadn’t taken long for his homeless network to work out where Moriarty had his property. Though it did look like a replica of any other house on the street, Sherlock knew that inside it would be different. It would scream ‘wrong’. At least that’s what he thought he’d find. John stood next to him, periodically checking the street and making it look significantly more weird that the duo were just stood staring at a house. Thankfully the kind of neighbourhood they were in meant a great deal of passersby paid them little attention, in part because of his own sense of dress. It turned out a tailored suit in this kind of neighbourhood allowed a person to blend in. John’s plaid shirt and tan trousers? Not so much. He received disapproving glances but otherwise no one said anything to him.

Sherlock wasn’t sure whether Moriarty was confident or ballsy enough to not bother hiring security or whether, just for added unpredictability, he would have hired his own security to keep his property safe. Did Moriarty even consider this house his own property? It was highly likely not, considering Moriarty’s grandeur allowed him to see the world as his own property and everything within it his toys. Sherlock pursed his lips slightly contemplating his next move. Was Moriarty here? He probably had more than one place in London and Sherlock didn’t see Moriarty having the same kind of life as, say, someone who worked a 9-5 job. The entire idea of Moriarty coming home, putting his pyjamas on and watching reruns of The Chase seemed implausible. Did someone that mentally detached watch TV? Sherlock countered that perhaps that was the wrong thing to think of considering he seldom watched television, still, he couldn’t imagine Moriarty for all his genius just sitting at home eating Pot Noodle and washing his own clothes.

John started to fidget as Sherlock stared at the house. He had been standing there for some time pondering their next move - did he just go in through the door? Break in through a window? It seemed more likely that they wouldn’t get caught if they entered off the street. Back door?
Sherlock walked up the street and away from the door, John followed him with quick steps. The funny thing about John was he was a good few inches shorter than him so when he walked with haste John sometimes had to jog to keep up. Sherlock’s coat billowed in the wind as he crossed the road and onto the side street. Mayfair was upper class but all back alleys were universal. Green and blue bins were put outside ready for collection but they had a distinctly cleaner sheen on the bins, the walls were maintained as compared to the rest of London where time had chipped away at the brick. He counted down to the house where he had stood on the other side and analysed the entrance. As Sherlock suspected it was gated, but when had that ever stopped him?

He scaled the gate with great ease and didn’t seem to falter as he jumped the 5ft to the floor on the other side. John clambered over the gate too but with significantly less finesse, Sherlock waited for him to fall-jump to the floor and stared at him with a smirk as he dusted off his coat.

“What?” asked John.

Sherlock smirked and then looked at the windows from the courtyard.

“Nothing,” he muttered amusedly.

The courtyard was as eloquent as Sherlock had expected: fine rattan furniture, a small fountain and a sundeck with elaborate loungers decorated the grassed area. It infuriated Sherlock that the house itself was as normal as it could be, Moriarty didn’t deserve normal. He supposed normal was a relative term. He moved towards the windows following the wall and debating whether to break the lock on the door or smash in through the window. The door would leave less of a trace but he was pretty sure Moriarty was perceptive enough to notice someone had entered his house. Sherlock decided on the door anyway. He was glad his coat had a lot of pockets, how else could he carry around all the things required to break into a house?

The lock was simple enough, it was a mortice lock with a five latch system. Easy enough with the right pressure. The door clicked open and revealed a downstairs pantry. It was empty. This clearly was not Moriarty’s home. He and John walked into the room, wary of anyone else who could be occupying the house. It was cold and dark even though outside was a pleasant 12c degrees, the house hadn’t been occupied properly in a long time. Sherlock walked into the hallway, it was deadly quiet.

“John,” he called, turning to his partner who was stood by the door.

John walked over to him, hands in his pockets, looking all too casual. Perhaps that was John’s reaction to his obvious nervousness.

“Check downstairs, I’ll check upstairs,” Sherlock instructed before moving towards the stairs. He looked at them before he heard John call.

“What should we be looking for?”

Sherlock started up the stairs, his shoes echoing on the floor.

“Anything,” he replied softly.

He reached the top of the stairs noting that the house itself was clean. For somewhere that had been unoccupied it was kept unusually clean. There was no dust on the furniture, everything was in its proper place and all the curtains had been drawn properly. Someone cleaned the place regularly but took great measures to make sure it was perfect. Sherlock continued down the hall, he opened the first door and paused at the sliver of room that the door revealed. It was a bedroom that was almost
palatial. The room was light and airy but smelled unused, almost stale. The air was stiff as if the windows hadn’t been opened in a long time. The bed had an ornate canopy draped over it, it looked original rather than a replica of 18th century canopies. The bed had cream sheets and a plush looking quilt, the bed had been ironed recently. Someone spent great care ensuring the house was perfect and ready to move into, obviously Moriarty used the place unexpectedly from time to time. He moved onto the next room, a bathroom — grand, but nothing of importance. The final door Sherlock paused in front of. This was the last door on the upper floor and he was sure that this was where he’d find whatever it was he was looking for. He twisted the handle and entered the room. This was where everything happened. Sherlock could smell the life in the room, less stale and more … drug induced. He remembered the smell well.

The heroin danced through his veins setting his nerve endings on fire. His body slowed and so did his brain, he was relaxed. He was whole. Irene moved on top of him as she took out the needle in his arm. He was hard and she made it her top priority to rub her ass on his crotch. It made him harder. She smiled at him as his mind tried to fight the drugs. But the drugs overcame his brain like a wave, sending him into an almost catatonic state. All that mattered was the feeling of the heroin purging his mind and Irene Adler, the Woman, unbuttoning his trousers.

He shook the thought from his head, focussing on the room around him. It was as clean as the rest of the house but had a distinct ‘lived in’ feeling. Sherlock traced his fingers over the kitchen counter top, clean but not clean enough. He took out his mini magnifying glass and leaned towards the counter. Small white granules stuck to the countertop, seemingly missed by whoever cleaned the house. He didn’t need to be a genius to know that it wasn’t sugar.

Irene slid down him, the feeling was almost as good as the heroin. Almost as good. That didn’t stop a groan escaping his lips. Irene smiled, her red lipstick framing her lips perfectly. She knew what she was doing. So did he, he knew exactly where to put his fingers and how to do it. He’d just never done it before. His hands slowly found their way to her hips, in his euphoric state even lifting his hands was a challenge. Her soft hands guided him, but she forced his hands upwards towards her pert breasts. Her nipples were stiff and she moaned slightly as he rolled them between his fingers. His hands caressed her breasts as she gyrated on his dick.

Sherlock sniffed his nose and put away his magnifying glass. He waved his hand to push away the memory. Something about the house reminded him of his time spent with Irene Adler. He had saved her from being executed that night and she had shown her gratitude by taking his virginity. Except he’d spent the entire time as high as a kite. She’d disappeared by the morning leaving a note saying: ‘thanks for the dinner’. Sherlock had been left in a state of melancholy. The Woman had left as quickly as she had appeared, seemingly no different for his affection towards her. He had spent that summer in a crack house off of the East side of London. John had spent the next six weeks purging Sherlock of the drugs, completely unaware of his time spent with Irene. That had been the last time he’d seen her until today when she was facing death for another time. This time he wasn’t so sure he’d be able to help her, but that didn’t mean he could at least try. Sherlock left the kitchen and entered the living room adjacent to the kitchen, it was perhaps the most used room in the house. Everything was in place except for a singular item: a phone. It was an iPhone 6, an older version and just a little bit cracked. Sherlock circled the coffee table that it was on, his hands in his pockets. It reminded him of Lexi’s, the one he had given to her and the one she had dropped on the floor almost immediately. He remembered her getting huffy about it and he had found it perplexing as her cheeks puffed out in protest. She’d kissed him after that, her lips had been sweet from the Pepsi she’d been drinking and he had felt complete. As complete as he had been with Irene and the heroin. The difference was he’d been with Alexandra and they had both been sober. Irene had offered him oblivion, a pact with the devil, and he had willingly accepted it. Alexandra offered … home, sweet bliss and safety. He hadn’t deserved that but he had greedily accepted it anyway.
Sherlock looked at the phone closely before picking it up. He examined the back of it first, looking down the phone vertically and then horizontally. He clicked the button and the phone lit up. The home screen was a picture of a kitten holding a teddy bear. Sherlock pulled his head back slowly in realisation. This was Alex’s phone. It was definitely not a replica. Sherlock swiped the phone and a lock screen popped up, he hesitated, did he know her password? He thumbed in her birthday. The phone did that annoying shaking thing as it rejected the code. Sherlock sighed and placed the phone in his pocket, it was something he could tinker with later. His blue eyes looked over the room but he could see nothing out of place. It then occurred to him that John had been gone for a long time and there was a great deal of silence from downstairs.

“John?” called Sherlock, turning towards the door.

The door slowly opened and John walked through, he had his hands up and looked disgruntled. There was a gun pointed to the back of his head as a man with a suit entered the room behind him. It certainly wasn’t Moriarty. Sherlock analysed him carefully: he held his gun with his left hand (the predominant one), his gait was slightly off (he had a walking problem, not massively prevalent but a weak spot), fine blonde hair (he’d had hair implants roughly 5 years ago, enough money to maintain them), a stern face but one with little concern in it (he was a professional). Sherlock held up his hands but otherwise made no move. The man with the gun pushed John into the room until they were a few inches from Sherlock.

“Are you all right, John?” he asked in an extraordinarily calm voice.

John nodded tersely. The man with the gun repositioned the gun in his hands but otherwise did nothing. Sherlock turned his attention to the man with the gun.

“Mr. Holmes, I was told to expect you,” started the man with the gun. An American accent. The gun wasn’t a standard issue, and his clothes (though he was wearing a suit) was not something any of the intelligence services would have worn. So he was a hitman, not affiliated with the American government.

“Mr. Moriarty sends his regards.”

Sherlock lowered his hands and nodded quickly in acknowledgement.

“I assume he’s busy?” Sherlock asked.

The man with the gun repositioned his hand again. (That isn’t his dominant hand, too many readjustments. Weak point.)

“Something like that.”

Sherlock smirked, of course Moriarty knew he would find this place, he knew Mycroft would tell him. Did Mycroft have a spy in his own intelligence force? It was likely they were too vetted to be a spy. Mycroft knew about Mayfair because Moriarty had told him. What for? What possible end could Mycroft or Moriarty have gained from speaking? He needed to have a little heart to heart with his big brother.

“So what do you plan to do with us?” muttered Sherlock his eyes piercing the man with the gun’s.

“Shoot us? Another unfortunate accident in London?”

The man with the gun smiled, he thought he had the upper hand.
“Something like that.”

Sherlock raised an eyebrow, the man with the gun was a man of few words. He gave little away.

Had he been told to expect him? Had he been advised what to do and what to say to give as little as possible away? Had he even met Moriarty or had he spoken to another shadow broker? That was the annoyance with Moriarty — he never met any of his clients but spoke through a broker. He placed his hands in his trouser pockets.

“Do we not get a rousing speech from the villain?” Sherlock quipped, watching the man adjust his gun once more.

The man shook his head,

“No, no I don’t think you do.”

Sherlock pushed a face of disappointment from his emotionless mind.

“Would you do me the honour of allowing us one final word to each other?” he asked solemnly.

The man with the gun frowned, taken aback by the question, but he absorbed it quick enough. That question made him smile, he thought he had all the power.

“Sure.”

Sherlock looked at John, their eyes meeting each other. John looked disgruntled but he wasn’t scared.

“Vatican cameo’s!”

John ducked and so did Sherlock, the man with the gun fired but it missed the both of them. Sherlock swung his coat back and pulled out the gun he had been carrying. Guns weren’t his style but that didn’t mean he’d enter the devil’s den without protection. Sherlock fired. The bullet went straight into the man’s chest and he dropped like a bag of potatoes. John kicked his gun out of the way just in case. He stood up properly, dusting down his coat as if there were lint on it and threw a shady look to Sherlock.

“What have I told you about stealing my gun?”

Sherlock smiled and shrugged.

“I’m sure you aren’t complaining.”

John shook his head in disbelief but his eyes looked relieved. He wasn’t mad, not really. The doctor crouched down and checked the man’s pulse, he shook his head slightly motioning that he was dead. Sherlock hadn’t been intending to wound, he was sick of people having the upper hand. The detective pulled out his phone and speed dialled Léstrade. He answered immediately.

“Sherlock, what is it?”

“Send an ambulance to my location in Mayfair. You’ll have to check your phone because I’m not sure which house I’m in.”

“Why? Is someone hurt? Are you okay?” Sherlock should have found it touching that Léstrade was worried about him, he should have found it touching. He didn’t.
“We’re fine. Someone else has been shot though.”

“Who? What?”

“Just a hitman, no one important.”

Sherlock hung up the phone and looked back towards John. John was rubbing his head in thought.

“Did you find anything?” he asked.

Sherlock paused. Should he tell him about Lexi’s phone? He trusted John with his life as he had done so many times before. Something about telling him about the phone made him uneasy, he pushed it further into his coat.

“Uh, no. Not really. The place is clean, apart from that counter,” Sherlock pointed, “it has residue’s probably cocaine.”

John nodded.

“Did you find anything downstairs?”

John went to say something and then changed his mind. Sherlock frowned but waited. John seemed off, uncomfortable and Sherlock didn’t think it was the dead body on the floor — they’d seen plenty of those.

“No, there was nothing. Just unusually clean.”

Sherlock ‘hmphed’ with a half-smile before leaving the room. There was nothing left for them here and Sherlock could already hear the sirens in the distance. The detective looked towards the counter once more as he left the room. The memory of Irene taking his virginity flashed into his head again, so did the drugs. He looked away from the counter and rearranged his scarf trying to ignore the temptation he felt.

There would be time to deal with his own demons, for now, he had to deal with the devil.
A volley of shots rang out as Lexi aimed the Beretta M9 at the paper targets on the far end of the room. Three shots hit the peripheral of the paper, but none actually managed to hit the target. A snort of humour next to her made her head twist in a frown, she still didn’t trust Moriarty but she had to admit that she found his sense of entertainment fun. His wicked grin was contagious and for the first time in days Lexi found herself smiling at her own inability.

“What?” asked Lexi with relative warmth in her voice.

Moriarty grinned and shook his head, chewing on the gum in his mouth with pronounced fashion.

“Nothing, nothing…” his Irish lilt came cut through the humour in his voice, “if you’re wanting to make confetti.”

Moriarty had his hands in his trouser pockets, leaned against the barrier. He didn’t seem to be too fussed about wearing the ear protectors but then again they were the only two in the range. It seemed Moriarty’s contacts knew no limits, as soon as they had entered the proprietor and the other patrons left without any argument. Lexi was too pissed off with her inner good to notice how there was a significant amount of fear projected towards Moriarty. She was already on a downward spiral and she didn’t need to allow her brain to think about current events too much. Lexi scowled playfully at Moriarty before looking back towards the gun in her hands. She aimed it at the target again, focussing on where her hands were to the gun. Just as she was concentrating she heard Moriarty’s voice in her ear, her skin vibrated in response.

“Think of the gun as someone else’s body, your fingers are the things caressing their arms,” he moved his hands down her arms until his fingers intertwined with hers, “your hands keeping the body steady,” his hands cusped her own, “your index finger in charge of everything.”

Lexi repositioned her hand in line with Moriarty’s so that the gun felt more comfortable and steady in her hands. Her attuned mind didn’t even need to think about the euphemisms the good consulting criminal was making. Moriarty turned his mouth towards her ear, he whispered into it while looking down the sight of the gun.

“Breathe out… its about the end result not how quick you get there,” he muttered as he gently pressed her finger against the trigger. The gun discharged its bullet and hit the centre target in the forehead. Lexi breathed out slightly as the adrenaline of shooting the gun on target rushed through her veins. Moriarty still hadn’t let her go but she could feel him smiling against her ear. The embrace felt a little different from when he had held a gun to the back of her head and St. Barts but she was still hyperaware of his attempt to kill her, or at least maim her. In the back of her mind the Always reminded her that Moriarty was the one who had injected her with heroin and pushed her on her downward spiral. Lexi’s eyes looked down the sight of the gun again but instead of firing the weapon she twisted in Moriarty’s embrace so that the gun was pointed towards his forehead. She stared at the Irishman fiercely, still unsure whether or not to pull the trigger and get rid of her worries. But would it even solve her troubles? After all her troubles had still been present even before Moriarty had encouraged them into fruition.

He had obviously been expecting her to turn the gun on him, he stared at her green orbs as she fought in her mind whether or not to kill him. His smile levelled out while he watched her debate in
her mind. When Lexi looked away another smile appeared on his lips, Moriarty placed his hands in his trouser pockets and waited for Lexi to lower the gun. When she did he took out his phone and sent a text, she wasn’t sure what he had written or who he had sent it to.

“Why’d you do it?” she asked with a quiet voice. Just because she had decided against shooting Moriarty where he stood didn’t mean she couldn’t question his actions up until that point. Moriarty frowned in confusion.

“Why did I do what?”

“Everything, shoot me, want to kill Sherlock, frame Irene Adler…”

Moriarty shook his head as if he didn't want to hear what she had to say.

“Ah Alexandra why d’you need to bring all that into this?” He grumbled, his voice simultaneously reaching both high and low peaks. Lexi blanched slightly at his incredulous counter question.

“Tell me. You went through all of this just ‘because you could’?” she countered.

Moriarty sniffed and rolled his neck as if to try and crack it.

“Why should there be a super-duper complicated answer?” Moriarty started, clearly disappointed in her determination to understand him. “Don’t start me on a conversation on trying to quantify morals, Alexandra, they bore me. This conversation bores me. Stop being boring.”

Moriarty took the gun out of her lowered hands and aimed it towards the targets as if irritated, he shot four times and each time hit the target in the same place with expert precision. Lexi had to admit that he knew what he was doing with the gun, even though he had said when they met in the hospital he tended not to use them because they made him feel dirty. She said nothing. Moriarty turned back to look at her with a frown on his face. Lexi obviously had disappointed him.

“If you want to rationalise this in your head fine, but I guarantee you it will not give you any better of an answer than what you have now,” he started, waving the gun about as if it wasn’t a fully loaded weapon.

“Don’t you ever think about how life is just so … boring. You watch these little ants fall into the same line, go to the same job every day, eat, fuck, sleep the same way every day. And my problem, your problem. The Final Problem. “Stayin’ Alive”. So boring, isn’t it? It’s just … staying. All my life I’ve been searching for distractions. Sherlock was the best distraction, stepping on my toes just when I thought I’d won. And you tagging along hopelessly with him. It was fun — thirty-million quids worth of fun — but now I really, really need to focus on another distraction that isn’t so … boring and predictable.”

Moriarty paused, allowing Lexi to absorb the information he was giving her.

“But don’t worry, Alexandra. You are not one of the ordinary people. I thought Sherlock was different too, I really did, but he’s just so ordinary and it’s a teensy bit disappointing because he keeps stumbling onto my plans like a child with a gun.”

“So you’re going to kill us?” Lexi interjected.

Moriarty snorted in response.

“Nah. There’s no need to kill you — you aren’t boring, you’re different and like me you’re sooooo changeable and it’s sooooo sexy. But eventually yeah, I’ll likely get around to killing Sherly but it
needs to be something special and something more entertaining than just ‘gun to the head’…” Lexi raised her eyebrows at Moriarty’s blasé-ness about openly wanting to kill Sherlock but she wasn’t overly surprised that he wanted him dead. “No, no. The whole reason I’m paying interest to you? To this whole little date, can we even call this a date? It’s because I want you to see life on the side of the Devil, Sherlock is so high and mighty as a paragon of righteousness but you’ve seen how bureaucracy works and how solving cases gets you no where. You’re still at the bottom of the pool, wrapped in bricks and held down by your own demons. Sherlock promised you a cure to the Always, right?”

Lexi didn’t say anything because she feared how much his words made sense.

“You don’t need a cure to the Always, Alexandra. You need to master it, solving crimes is so last century.”

Sherlock stared at Lexi’s phone on the coffee table. The med student had only had the phone a few months and already she had scuffed it beyond repair. Sherlock had managed to keep his phone remarkably clean, it irritated him immensely when cosmetic scratches appeared on the screen, so how Alexandra could cope with a screen so smashed it almost didn’t work surpassed even his own detective skills.

Sherlock looked at the smashed screen, he pressed the home button and it lit up. Surprisingly, the phone was on 65% battery which meant Lexi had had the phone that day but had been in a position where she hadn’t even realised it had gone. What was she up to?

The cracks and scuff marks on the phone indicated that the phone had been dropped several times over the course of, two? (He checked the side of the phone and tilted his head slightly) No, three days. Not every crack was as shallow and areas that already had cracks in had deepened as Lexi had dropped it. The headphone slot had also been reminiscent of Harry Watson’s phone when John had first been given it all those years ago, there were scuff marks around the charger point and the headphone point, as if the user had struggled to connect the headphones and charger to the phone. So Lexi’s hand dexterity had been compromised, given she was pretty much a doctor it was highly unlikely Lexi’s hands were naturally shakey.

Sherlock rubbed his eyes tiredly and rested his head in his hands thoughtfully. His thought process always went 300 mph ahead of his own awareness but he usually had the right case to keep him entertained long enough.

He wished Lexi was that complicated, he knew nothing of her but her actions were straightforward. John had called in to see her at work, to make sure she had been okay but she hadn’t been there. Upon Sherlock’s request John had enquired about Lexi’s whereabouts, the senior doctor had stared at John and told him that Lexi hadn’t been seen in weeks. That should have been all Sherlock needed to know she was in trouble, but he couldn’t admit it without admitting he was the root of the problem. His love for another woman was the root of the problem too.

Irene Adler had only crossed his mind a handful of times since seeing her and each time it did Sherlock had felt an insurmountable level of guilt that made him shut off his brain. This kind of emotional thinking was tiring and made him irritated beyond measure. He knew less about Lexi than he would have liked and he couldn’t help her without knowing her — the phone told him less than
he’d hoped. The fact it had been at the Mayfair apartment befuddled him, Lexi hadn’t seen Moriarty since he’d shot her at Barts.

Or had she?

The question irritated him immensely. The very idea of Lexi associating with Moriarty hurt enough for Sherlock to rub his head, trying to alleviate the headache that accompanied the pain. What benefit would Moriarty have associating with Lexi? What would Lexi even gain? How could she even touch him without recoiling in horror?

Sherlock stood up, not able to look at the phone. He paced the room in thought before picking up a steak knife from the kitchen. He threw it at the smilie face on the wall with impressive arm strength, his brow furrowing as he threw it. The knife bounced off the wall as it ricocheted off the smilie face.

Sherlock swore under his breath.

He never missed.

Sherlock needed to find a distraction, something to release his mind from the pain it felt.

_______________________

Thirty minutes later Sherlock stood at the front door of John and Mary. He knocked gently before placing his hands behind his back patiently. The sound of music danced from behind the door, as Sherlock listened he noticed the white noise in the background. John had already professed he hated the radio. Was he being held hostage and forced to listen to the radio? Sherlock got ready to kick down the door.

But then it opened.

Mary was wrapped in a quilt as if she had just fallen out from bed, her hair was a mess and Sherlock could see evidence of takeaway containers on the floor next to a bottle of wine. Sherlock’s appearance at the door had startled her, obviously she had been expecting someone else.

“Sherlock!” Mary exclaimed, self consciously rearranging her quilt to cover more of her body. It was evident she wasn’t wearing anything underneath. Brushing her hair behind her ear, Mary cleared her throat.

“Are you okay? What are you doing here? John,” she called, turning her head slightly towards the living room, “Sherlock’s here.”

John appeared next to Mary from the living room dressed in a dressing gown. It was painfully evident that John also wasn’t wearing any clothes under his dressing gown. Sherlock averted his gaze, suddenly feeling awkward about being on John’s doorstep.

“Hey Sherlock, what’s up?” John asked, placing his hand around Mary’s waist and frowning curiously.

“I - uh - I was actually coming to run through some case facts with you, but I can see you and Mary are busy. I can just come back tomorrow.”
Out of his peripheral Sherlock watched John and Mary give a look to each other and then a smaller more intimate smile appeared on their lips. Absent mindedly Sherlock pondered about how many tiles there were on John and Mary’s little house.

John let Mary disappear back into the living room, he hugged the door as more of his body revealed itself without Mary’s quilt being in front of him.

“That would be great, Sherlock, me and Mary are. Well, we’re in the middle of arranging some wedding stuff…”

“Clearly,” Sherlock muttered, reaching 57 on his tile count.

“Are you alright?” John asked, a frown crossing his face.

“Yes. Yes, it didn’t cross my mind you would be otherwise indisposed,” Sherlock turned on his feet and walked back towards the taxi, “I’ll talk to you later.”

He heard the door close behind him.

As he got into the car Sherlock pulled out his iPhone and typed a text to Léstrade.

Busy? SH

Immediately he got a reply.

Yes.

Sherlock pulled on his seatbelt and told the driver to head back towards Baker Street.

Doing what? SH

My job.

Need assistance? SH

No. You have enough on your plate. Take the night off Sherlock.

Sherlock sighed and pushed his phone into his coat. Where were his friends when he needed them? There was only one thing left for him to do when his friends couldn’t help him. He’d been putting it off for a while because he wasn’t sure he wanted to hear the answers as to why Moriarty knew the personal details of Mycroft’s security detail. But he needed to now all his friends were busy. His next task was simple.

Speak to big brother Mycroft.

Chapter End Notes

To all of you who are still reading and still feeling irritated at Lexi and Sherlock’s silly bickering, thank you so much! I am so touched so many of you enjoy my reading.

Things are beginning to build towards the climax and are gonna get real dark.

Strap yourselves in!
- Fury xo
Brotherly Compassion

Mycroft Holmes didn’t like it when his little brother smoked, although Mummy didn’t know either of the Holmes boys smoked she would be more disappointed to know Sherlock partook in the occasional cigarette. Mycroft had gone to great efforts to try and prevent Mummy knowing about Sherlock’s drug habits, he tried to avoid speaking with either of his parents in general but when they did she usually had the same perceptions as the brothers. Thus far he had been able to avoid Mummy knowing about the drugs. On nights when Sherlock took a cigarette from him Mycroft called them ‘danger nights’ when he was most sure his little brother was on the edge of oblivion. So when Sherlock had turned up on the doorstep to his manor house with that look in his eyes, Mycroft was put on edge.

The fire crackled and cast a dark shadow upon Sherlock, he looked even more careless than usual. The younger Holmes held onto his whiskey with perfect stillness. Mycroft held onto his too but he stared at Sherlock, who had his head lowered in contemplation. Sherlock hadn’t spoken at all since arriving ten minutes ago so Mycroft had made the small chit chat for the both of them, made them a drink and sat down across from his younger brother.

“Why are you here Sherlock? You aren’t one for spates of familial compassion.”

Sherlock tilted his glass to the side so the ice tinkled against the crystal whiskey glass, Mycroft could see where he was sat from Sherlock was slightly slack jawed and his eyes, though hidden mostly by shadow, were dull. If Mycroft didn’t know the indications of a high Sherlock he would have thought his brother was already chasing the dragon. No, he knew that his brother was hurting, as he had been with Irene Adler’s supposed death but this time it seemed much more … desperate. Was that why his brother was here? For help? Mycroft sipped his whiskey thoughtfully and crossed his leg over his opposite knee. Sherlock let out a long sigh and looked up at his brother. Mycroft decided Sherlock was not here for help. At least not compassionate help.

“Why does he know everything about me, Mycroft?” asked Sherlock, his voice quiet.

Mycroft licked his lips and looked away towards the fire.

“I don’t know who you’re referring to.”

Sherlock caught his eye again, this time cutting through his blasé façade. Mycroft took another drink.

“Why did he know I’d be at Mayfair?”

Mycroft loved his brother, he really did, more than he cared to admit. But even Sherlock Holmes, his baby brother, was not enough to stop him serving his country. That said he knew Sherlock could look after himself, he knew that the poster in his bedroom of baritsu wasn’t just for show. He recalled the last time Sherlock had been high perfectly.

_He wasn’t high enough to be catatonic, but he was high enough for Mycroft to find Sherlock topless and shoeless in a fighting den, as usual at the centre of attention. His skinny frame was the polar opposite to the giant man facing him. Sherlock had bruises across his taut six-pack where he had taken a fair few beatings. Mycroft knew Sherlock had accepted the punches rather than taken them. Sweat dripped down the younger Holmes’ frame and he was wholeheartedly invested in the man in front of him. The drugs had dulled his brain and he was more like a man now than ever before, only interested in the primal savageness backstreet fighting could accomplish. The surly man came towards Sherlock, one solid connection from the big mans fist would have broken more than a few_
bones of Sherlock’s. But Sherlock was quicker than the man. He blocked a rogue haymaker with a
defensive elbow and at the same time used his right fist to jab into the man’s sola plexus. The man
stumbled backwards but Sherlock didn’t relent. Both hands came into contact with the man’s ears
and Mycroft knew his ear drums had been obliterated. Still Sherlock didn’t relent. The man tried to
struggle back into the fight by throwing another rogue punch towards Sherlock, Sherlock let it
collide as if to encourage the man into continuing the fight. The punch connected with Sherlock’s
side and Sherlock spat out blood. His little brother was on a downward spiral, he allowed the man
to hit him again this time hard enough in the face to send Sherlock spinning around. The crowd
screamed in delight because all the bets had been on the big guy. Sherlock didn’t crumple to the
floor as Mycroft had expected however, he used the momentum of the spin to spin behind the big
man. Sherlock kicked at the man’s left ankle and everyone in the pit heard a snap and a scream from
the bigger man. Sherlock smiled with blood in his teeth as he brought the man to his knees. But then
he saw Mycroft watching him, leaning on his umbrella. The moment was enough for the other man
to swing about with the adrenaline from the broken ankle and land an upper cut to Sherlock’s chin.
Enough for the connection to take Sherlock off of his feet. The crowd surged in delight but didn’t
swallow the pit — the game was still afoot. Sherlock twisted himself around and pulled himself up off
the dusty floor. He shook out the dust from his hair and teetered back around. The high from his
drugs was beginning to affect his nervous system. But the man on the floor could only really hobble
on one leg. Sherlock stumbled slightly and Mycroft thought he was about to hit the floor but as he fell
to his knees his hand formed a fist and he smashed out the other mans patella in his last working leg.
There was no way the man could fight now. A chorus of boos rang out from the audience but
Sherlock got himself to his feet. He ignored Mycroft and stumbled over to the booke who passed him
a tin box. Mycroft knew it wasn’t money Sherlock had won. He moved towards Sherlock, stepping
over the wounded man. Sherlock turned to look at him before spitting out more blood on the floor
next to him. His eyes were so dilated, Mycroft was surprised he could still stand. They regarded each
other for a moment before Mycroft offered Sherlock a handkerchief. He took it to wipe off the blood
trickling from his mouth.

“Have you a list?” Mycroft asked, for the first time addressing his drug addled brother.

Sherlock handed him a bloodied piece of paper. For once Mycroft was glad he was wearing black
gloves. Only for Sherlock. Only for his baby brother would he stoop to the lowest levels of society.

Mycroft sighed.

“James Moriarty is one of the foremost criminals the British Government has ever encountered. We
know he is responsible for countless acts of terrorism, aiding and funding terrorist movements and
the culprit behind hundreds of murders. Yet we have never been able to get him to confess to any
one crime. You are the only reason he will talk and we have been able to prevent numerous terrorist
plots by trading … information.”

Sherlock looked at him with venom. His eyes never once leaving his but his hands irritatedly
fidgeting with the glass.

“So you traded in your brother for your patriotism to your country?” Sherlock asked, his voice
threateningly low.

Mycroft adopted a stiff upper jaw, resolute in his decision.

“Yes.”

In one fluid motion Sherlock threw the glass full of whiskey towards Mycroft, it only missed by a
few inches. Mycroft took out the same handkerchief he had given to Sherlock back then and blotted
whiskey spray off of his suit. Sherlock paced the room in fury, Mycroft still didn’t move. There was
nothing he could have done to alleviate how Sherlock felt, or justify his decisions. He watched Sherlock move back and forth, back and forth. He stopped at the window, his hands pressed firmly together against his lips. Sherlock turned slowly and looked at Mycroft, his hands lowering.

“And Alex?”

“What about her? Why was her phone at Mayfair?”

Mycroft frowned genuinely. He hadn’t expected that turn of events, he took a sip of his whiskey debating about how much he wanted to tell his brother. Sherlock picked up on his hesitation and walked towards him. He crouched down in front of him, a pleading look in his eyes.

“What about Alex?”

Mycroft averted his gaze from his desperate brother’s eyes. He couldn’t tell him. He may not have shown it but he did care for Sherlock. Incredibly so. It was why he couldn’t tell him about Lexi.

“You should go, Sherlock. I have a long day tomorrow.”

Sherlock looked at him before placing his forehead on the arm of Mycroft’s chair. He said nothing for a moment before getting up abruptly and leaving the room.

“Sherlock,” called Mycroft, he saw his brothers frame pause, “do I need to be concerned?”

Sherlock said nothing as he left the room. Mycroft sighed as the front door clicked shut.
The battered tin box had fit snugly for years in the floorboards of Baker Street. The hiding spot had been so perfect that even John in his years living at the flat had never seen it. Sherlock’s thin fingers ripped the box from its safe haven and placed it on the floor in front of him, his hands then wrapped themselves around his knees and he drew them up close to his face. This was his last stand. It had been a long time since he had sat on the floor staring at that tin box. It wasn’t a special box at all: four edges, a back and a lid. Dinted and rusted from where the silver painting had worn away from years under the floorboards. Sherlock chewed on his lip as he watched the box, his phone sat next to the box alongside Lexi’s smashed one. There was no light up of the phone from a text message, no jingle from a voicemail. He was alone and for once not because he chose to be. Sherlock brought his hands up to his face and rubbed it harshly.

*You can’t do this to them.*

Sherlock waved away the thought.

*Call someone.*

Sherlock pressed his face to his knees.

*Anyone.*

“Who?” he asked himself, his voice echoing around the empty flat.

*Molly?*

“No. New boyfriend. She was wearing lipstick and new earrings. Not something she’d buy for herself.”

*Call John again.*

Sherlock tapped his head off his knees. John was probably well and truly preoccupied and who was he to demand his friends attention when he was starting a new life?

*Lexi?*

Something wet touched his cheek, Sherlock frowned and looked up, his thin fingers brushed across his cheek. He found tears falling down his razor blade cheekbones. No, he was totally alone. His mind wouldn’t slow down and there was nothing that he could do that would stop it. No cases, no chemistry, no anyone.
His hands clutched the box and he crossed his legs so he could see his hands properly. A strange calmness came over him as he sat with the box in his hands. He clicked the box open and took a sharp breath at the contents. Just as he left them.

The syringe was stored in its original packet, sealed and sterile. Next to it sat a spoon which had seen better days, charred around the edges and brown burns into the metal. The silver flip lighter sat on top of a vial of white powder. Sherlock placed the box on the floor and lifted out the vial, the white powder slipped to one side as Sherlock rotated the vial in his hands. Of everything that surrounded drugs, Sherlock liked to prepare them the most; his PhD in chemistry wasn’t just for the fancy piece of paper, watching the heroin dissolve into the murky colour was almost as fun as getting high - almost. The detective reasoned with himself that there was nothing overly wrong with preparing the syringe, there was no reason he couldn’t just put it back into the box and pretend it wasn’t there, as he had done countless times before. But those times had always been because someone had been his saving grace. No one was here for him now.

He tapped the white powder out onto the spoon and, as old habits became reflexes, flipped the lighter on in one smooth motion. Ten-seconds later and the white powder began to turn a clear, yellowish colour. Sherlock couldn’t help but lick his lips. He placed the spoon down with delicate precision and unpacked the syringe. The liquid ran up the syringe so smoothly that it sent a shiver down the man’s spine. He placed the syringe next to the box and grabbed another syringe, doing the same as before. He then packed up all the constituent parts before sliding the rest besides the syringe back into the floor board. Sherlock picked up the syringe and himself off of the floor and shuffled to his chair. He sat down with a thunk, the needle resting gently in his hand.

“Is that really wise?” asked a male voice from across from him.

Sherlock looked up from the syringe, Moriarty sat opposite him with a grotesque smile on his face. Sherlock let out a sigh and looked back down at the syringe. It wasn’t the real Moriarty, just a projection of his own feelings. How he wished his mind would stop reasoning with him.

“Is anything wise?”

Moriarty stood up and walked behind Sherlock’s arm chair, his white, thin hands trailed the chair behind him.

“Tsk, tsk, Sherlock. What will your friends think?”

Sherlock didn’t follow Moriarty as he slowly moved around his chair. In his mind he knew that it was his brain trying to warn him. Moriarty often appeared when Sherlock’s brain was on the edge.

“Does it matter?” he replied, holding the syringe up in the light.

Moriarty’s hands came down around his shoulders, gripping him tightly. The Irishman’s cheek brushed against Sherlock’s as he stared at the syringe.

“Oh oh oh oh, you know everyone will be disappointed with you. It’ll be this whoooolle big thing and John will be sad, your brother will be sad, the Woman will be sad. Hey, maybe even Lexi will be sad,” Moriarty chimed, his lips brushing against Sherlock’s cheek. Sherlock’s pseudo-fears had moved around to his side so that Moriarty was quite literally kneeled into his face, lips brushing his seat and brown eyes tearing into Sherlock’s.

“But who cares, am I right?” Moriarty continued, “I mean, think of Alexandra, she’s swanning about with who knows who and doing who knows what… John is too busy with Mary and your brother just doesn’t want to have to call your parents to say you are “ill” again - not that they know what he
means by ill.” Moriarty’s hands wrapped around his own.

“You should only inject some of that if you want to be productive though, Sherls,” the consulting criminal mumbled as Sherlock pushed the needle into his vein. He wasn’t sure when he had done it but his sleeve had been rolled up. Moriarty watched closely as Sherlock pushed the plunger, his grin increased as Sherlock pressed past the point of coherence until it the syringe was empty.

Sherlock pulled out the syringe, dropping it on the floor. He didn’t hesitate as he pushed the other syringe in to his vein. As his vision swam he realised Moriarty had disappeared. His brain began to muffle and his vision began to swirl, for the first time in a long time he couldn’t feel his brain.

Sherlock Holmes was totally alone.

Greg Léstrade didn’t like late nights. In fact they were one of the only things he really, truly hated. Well, that and his ex-wife. It was 2AM and he was still no closer to finishing the paperwork that came with the implementation of the death penalty. Léstrade knew that Irene Adler wasn’t all to blame for the bombings but she was the only one in reach of punishment. This illusive Moriarty, who he had only heard stories of, was probably also culpable but whether they’d be able to find him (let alone charge him) was slim. Unless Sherlock Holmes could prove evidence that Irene had been coerced into committing the bombings on his behalf, there was little they could do. It was why the Detective Inspector had dragged his feet on the paperwork. The longer he took to punch in the numbers the longer Sherlock would have to find his line of inquiry.

The prospect of Sherlock troubled Léstrade, his association with Lexi had been fortuitous for a number of people over the past few months - especially now she had gotten clean. Sherlock seemed unusually acceptable and he had been less of a dick when he communicated with everyone. The text he’d received that night had worried him slightly, but he hadn’t really thought about it much until he looked at the video attached to the email he’d received from some of the investigators from the Windsor site.

The CCTV showed Sherlock scrambling over the mound of rubble, dead and dirt to get to the top. In a way it looked as if he was rock climbing except the rocks were dead people whose rigor mortis had set in. When he got to the top he looked as if he had conquered the world, the detective’s hands clasped a crown, he stood and looked at it before a shot rang out. It was loud enough for the CCTV to vibrate. Sherlock was sent flying backwards off of the small hill as Alexandra recoiled in shock, her skinny frame almost disappeared when she turned on her side. Sherlock landed with a thud and Alexandra ran over to him, pulling down her mask in the process so she could see better. Sherlock rolled slightly on the floor but Alexandra still pandered over him to make sure the vest he’d been wearing had caught the bullet properly. There was a sort of desperation to the way Alexandra moved, she cared about him immensely. Then he moved and another shot rang out that went over their heads. They exchanged words before Alexandra took off towards a wall in the distance. She darted side to side as the floor around her burst upwards with dust as the bullets pattered around her feet. The CCTV camera changed to a different angle and it showed Alexandra having trouble breathing as she dealt with her own panic. A shadow moved just out of the frame of the camera but then the special forces team rappelled down the ropes attached to the helicopter and John Watson appeared on the CCTV. He stopped at first near to where Alexandra was hiding but he didn’t go to her straight away, he holstered his gun.
Léstrade frowned, biting the tip of his pen.

John took out another object … a phone … before leaning into it for a moment and then putting it away. He drew his gun again and came around to where Alexandra had been taking cover. She jumped as she saw John in full riot gear. They exchanged some words before John took off towards where Sherlock was. He disappeared from the camera but Alexandra didn’t.

Léstrade moved the camera in on Alexandra so that her face was reasonably clear in the video.

She was looking down at her feet, looking side swiped, her mouth was slightly agape as she breathed heavily. A bright flash momentarily blinded the camera before the camera readjusted itself and came back into view of Alexandra. She was frowning too and looking in the direction of the flash.

The Detective Inspector sat and furiously clicked his pen, thinking. He had found it extraordinarily strange John had sent a text message (he assumed) right before finding Alexandra, and then it had been stranger still when a flash had obscured the camera. Had someone taken a picture? If so, who? And who had John been in contact with?

Léstrade grabbed his coat as he stood up and left the room. He left the computer switched on as he rushed out.

Fifteen minutes later and Léstrade had turned up on the doorstep of 221B. It was pushing 2:30AM but he knew Sherlock wasn’t exactly someone who had set sleeping times. The lamp was still on in the window too, so Léstrade wasn’t too fussed about intruding on Sherlock. His plan had been to ask Sherlock if John and he had been up to anything else that day, running any experiments - that sort of thing. It seemed highly unlikely but it was worth a shot and he thought it would at least cheer up Sherlock if he was included. He had asked, after all. When no one answered, Léstrade tried to call Sherlock’s phone. As it rang out Léstrade heard the ring through the open window. Odd. Sherlock never had his windows left open when he wasn’t home and he most certainly didn’t go out without his phone. Léstrade tried the handle to the house, finding it locked. That wasn’t a surprise. Something in Léstrade’s mind worried for Sherlock, he very rarely left his house so easily accessible. Léstrade used the awning of Speedy’s Cafe to shimmy himself up onto the railings of the first floor of Baker Street. He was surprised, given his lack of exercise, that he managed to get up to the window of Sherlock’s house. He saw Sherlock’s silhouette sat in his chair. Léstrade smiled that Sherlock had been so complacent with his window locking (given how many people had tried to kill him).

“You need to lock your windows, Sherlock!” Léstrade chuckled with a grin on his face.

When Sherlock didn’t reply Léstrade frowned but his smile still remained. It wasn’t too far of a stretch for Sherlock to be knee deep in his mind palace, doing whatever it was he did there. He came around to face Sherlock, then his smile dropped.

Sherlock’s face was pressed to the side, his eyes were closed and his arms were limp over the side of his chair.

“Sherlock?” asked Léstrade, his voice suddenly growing with worry.

Sherlock didn’t reply vocally but his hands twitched slightly. Léstrade scanned Sherlock before noticing the two syringes on the floor. Léstrade rushed over to Sherlock, checking his pulse.
“Jesus Christ, Sherlock. What have you done?” he asked rhetorically knowing the detective was too far gone to respond.

Léstrade could feel his pulse but it was weak. He slapped Sherlock’s face lightly, who only managed to stir slightly. His eyes half flickered open but there’d be no way he’d have been able to look at Léstrade coherently. Sherlock’s eyes drooped shut again.

“No, no, no. Sherlock wake up. Look at me,” called Léstrade loudly, trying to cut through Sherlock’s sleepiness.

As Sherlock stirred again Léstrade pulled out his phone. He dialled 999 and asked for an ambulance before throwing his phone onto John’s old chair. Léstrade called Sherlock’s name again but this time Sherlock didn’t respond at all. His head slumped forwards onto his chest, in response Léstrade grabbed the detective by the chin and pulled up his head - it was like a lead weight. Sherlock’s curly brown locks fell into his face as Léstrade tried to call him back from oblivion. The Chief Detective Inspector heard the sirens in the distance but they were still too far away. Fate seemed to understand the irony as Sherlock’s head went completely dead in his hand.

Léstrade felt for a pulse again only to find nothing but a half-arsed beat every other second.

“Shit,” he grumbled. He pulled Sherlock off of his chair and onto the floor, pushing him into the recovery position. In response Sherlock’s body convulsed as the drugs ravaged his body, Léstrade swore again and held onto Sherlock so that he didn’t do anymore damage to himself.

“Mrs Hudson!” he yelled at the top of his voice.

Downstairs he heard the door click open as fists thudded at the door. The ambulance had arrived.

There would be no sleep for him tonight.
Lexi breathed out slowly to level her chest, it was 7AM and she’d not yet slept because of the drugs running through her. She’d stopped having as much heroin when she shot up purely because too much made her catatonic, just right made everything much more … streamlined. Her body dripped with sweat because of the workout she had been doing, for once the gunshot scar on her stomach was pale enough that Lexi didn’t feel uncomfortable wearing a sports bra. Unlike most her age, Lexi preferred to wear leggings rather than shorts for her work out, if only because a lot of her workouts required using her thighs in self defence — martial arts would do that to a girl, she supposed. Her curly hair was scraped back into a messy, loose bun with hues of pink and blonde falling around her cheekbones.

Lexi bowed slowly to the person in front of her — her trainer, Ash, was an ex-SEAL and Lexi guessed he was probably in his mid-to-late 30s with an early retirement because of the amount of years he served. The muscles in his arms were probably the same size as Lexi’s head, he was a big guy and he pressed training on Lexi like she was his own recruit. It was what she needed however since the incident with Moriarty on the street, she’d been all but helpless when he’d caught her fist without much difficulty. Ash was hired to teach her the exact opposite but in martial arts. Ash had, according to his stories, served in Israel for three years and trained alongside Israeli Special Forces in Krav Maga. She had thought when she first hired him that she’d be able to match his level, Lexi had even turned up early to her first session and ended up watching Ash wiping the floor with another poor sod who had limped out of the room. Her mind told her where to hit and when to defend and in fairness she had lasted about five minutes before he managed to kick her into the wall, almost reopening her gun shot wound. The fight had gotten heated because Ash didn’t like her inflated self-confidence and she didn’t like his condescending tones and they had both ended up with a bloody nose and bruises smattering their body. They’d also built up quite an audience but neither had noticed until Ash helped her out of the wall. Since then the gym had put up an elastic ring to stop the same incident happening and Ash had developed a training plan (which Lexi aggrievedly followed) to help her counter her very obvious lack of strength.

Today was no different. They had been working out since 6.30AM and Lexi was trying to get her head around the lesson of the day: speed versus weight. Lexi didn’t have the upper body strength to fight off more than her own weight, she could balance the weight on her body when she fought but she couldn’t go on the offensive on something heavier than her own weight. Ash had told her that she needed to focus on reaction times and quick counterattacks because she, unless she bulked out somehow, would never be able to overpower someone two or three times her weight. Lexi’s mind gave her a keen eye for weak points that Ash left open but the sheer toll Ash’s fists left on her strength and durability made it obvious more than ‘intelligence’ was required to defend herself. Ash had also told her how to disarm an opponent from behind, his first reaction to her body (with some of its previous scars from track marks) and to her gunshot scar which had been puckered and red at the time was that she needed to know how to offer enough pain to shoot the guy in the face with his own gun. Lexi liked the sound of that.

Her wired eyes watched Ash carefully, she was on the defensive again as if someone were attacking her so she watched and waited for Ash to make his move as he danced from foot to foot. Lexi’s hands balanced perfectly in front of her chest and she watched for which foot he’d lean on first because it generally kick started her brain into defence mode. He moved as quick as a flash with a straight jab to the stomach, Lexi slapped the hand away easily enough and she countered his second sideswipe to the side of her cheek with her wrist. Her moves matched his like for like; when he struck, she blocked, when he moved, she moved. Then a sly ankle kick shot out that Lexi didn’t foresee, she went over on her ass with a thud and a grunt. Above her somewhere she heard Ash
swear at her.

“C’mon Alex! What the hell you doing? You’ve gone from a decent fighter who could take out men three times her size to someone who couldn’t even defend herself from a fly. Sort yourself the fuck out, lass.”

A hand appeared in front of her face to help her back up off the floor. Lexi took it with a heaving breath before being pulled to her feet, she bent over and held her knees trying to catch her breath. A black towel was thrown at her head, Lexi grabbed it before it whipped across her back. She took it and wiped down the sweat from her face.

“Yeah. Yeah, sorry. Late night,” she grumbled as she threw the towel out of the ring. Lexi pulled up her hands into the start mode and watched her tutor do the same.

“Remember: quick not strong, you don’t need to be stronger than your opponent, you just need to outwit them,” Ash’s strong Western American accent seeped through his velvety voice.

Lexi nodded curtly before closing the gap between them. The same moves came towards her, Lexi blocked each of them and continued to do so as he worked her defences around her body. Mid-fight Lexi could hear Ash’s voice.

“That’s it, lass! Now press on the offensive! Use your speed!”

Lexi pushed forward countering Ash’s moves with her own set of jabs and dirty punches. Then suddenly Lexi’s mind soared and she launched herself underneath a full speed punch and wrapped her legs around Ash’s body, she used her momentum to spin around so that she almost piggybacked him but instead of holding on for dear life Lexi used the opportunity so that she planted heavy fists into his back. Ash faltered and stumbled forward as his spine gave out against the momentary barrage, Lexi did not falter as she moved her legs from around Ash’s waist, who was making a grab for them so that he could flip her off, instead, she threw herself off by propelling her legs around to take out Ash’s. He stumbled even further forward and Lexi backed off giving her tutor space. Ash stood upright and smiled at her.

“Now you have it! Speed is your strength, you need to know how to read body language in a fight. You’re too slow!”

Now that was something Lexi thought she’d never be — slow. But then again she hadn’t properly trained in a long time and never as aggressively. Her game was improving though.

Ash threw his training gloves on the floor, so Lexi let up readjusting her ponytail with irritation.

“Why are you stopping?” demanded Lexi, her face bunching up in irritation to match her tone.

Ash smiled at her, grabbing his towel from the gym bench before wiping the sweat off of his face. “Look at your face, you’re bleeding,” Ash observed.

Lexi brought her hand up to her face. ‘So I am bleeding. Huh. Fancy that.’

She grabbed her own hand towel and ran it over her face. The cotton feel felt good against her skin, it was like a swaddling cloth. Lexi sat down on the bench breathing heavily with the towel thrown over her shoulders. Ash stood over her.

“You’re almost too good for me, Alex, I’ll have to find you someone else soon…” Ash quipped, patting her on the back heavy handedly, “go get some breakfast, after that work out you need some fuel.”
Another heavy pat on the back, it irritated Lexi but she smiled anyway as Ash walked away into the changing rooms. She examined her arms, they were battered and bruised from the intense training she had thrown herself into and it would take a genius to work out that the bruises around the crease in her elbow were actually track marks. Lexi hoped Ash had been somewhat kinder on her face, it was substantially harder to hide bruises on a face than it was on the arms, and substantially less suspicious too. Not that Lexi was hiding anything, she just didn’t want anyone to know she had admitted she needed help in defending herself. She stood, taking her towel with her into the changing room. Ash had disappeared, he obviously had more training to do or he had been beaten by her so much he was nursing his wounds in the sports office. Lexi half smiled at the thought and went over to her locker. She opened it and grabbed her proper towel and shower bag before heading over to the showers. It was a mix sexed changing room but thankfully the showers were individual and frosted out for the most part, she didn’t need to worry about anyone stumbling into her butt naked. The clothes were kicked off and Lexi threw them back towards her locker, there was no one in the changing room so she didn’t have to worry about someone being assaulted with her dirty gym clothes.

Pushing on the water, Lexi stood under the shower as the water ran over her body. It felt good against her battered skin and it made her feel clean, like somehow the warm water was washing away her sins. The hotel she had crashed in wasn’t anything spectacular but it was cheap and one of the drawbacks of cheap was a shitty shower. At least here, with her uni membership, she could have a shower and spend as long as she wanted in it without the pressure dropping. Lexi allowed the water to run down the length of her body and soak her hair before she got out the shower gel. Honey and vanilla shower gel, she decided, was exquisite. The smell reminded her stomach that she hadn’t eaten properly since yesterday, it grumbled as she washed her body and then again as she stood under the water. After washing her hair Lexi grabbed the towel she had left hanging over the frosted door, wrapping the fluffy blue towel around her she walked out of the shower towards her clothes and locker. Then she stopped dead in her tracks.

Sitting on the bench next to her locker was Mycroft. He sat in his Westwood suit, his legs crossed and his hands resting on his umbrella. Lexi jumped before she stopped, not expecting Sherlock’s older brother to be waiting to ambush her.

“Jesus Mycroft, what the hell are you doing here? Outside of my locker?” Lexi paused and pulled a face, “I hope you weren’t perving on me.”

Mycroft tilted his head with a frown, he obviously hadn’t perved on her but it was unsettling that he appeared like an apparition.

“No, Miss Stuart, I did not ‘perv’ on you. I’m here to get you because I have a task for you,” he responded in his posh voice.

Lexi shook her head going to her locker, she began to get her clothes out of the locker as she spoke.

“No. I’m not interested in tasks from you, Mycroft.”

Mycroft checked his watch as if Lexi was wasting his time.

“I’m afraid you don’t have a choice in the matter,” he sighed.

Lexi went to complain but she noticed movement out of the corner of her eye. A man in a suit with muscles bigger than her head appeared, his hands crossing over each other. Mycroft continued.

“Don’t make me force you, Alexandra.”
Lexi looked back to Mycroft with a scowl on her face before shaking her head again.

“Five minutes, let me get dressed.”

Mycroft nodded tersely before standing and rearranging his tie to make sure it hadn’t moved from its still perfect position. His sense of dress and his determination to keep it perfect unnerved Lexi, OCD was a terrible illness to have. The man who had appeared out of the corner of her eye didn’t move, as Mycroft disappeared Lexi stared at him. He stared back at her.

“Are you going to stand and watch?” Lexi asked sarcastically.

The man didn’t move. Lexi twisted her lips as she realised he would literally watch her until she was ready. Being naked didn’t bother her. She called his bluff and dropped her towel on the floor so that she was completely naked. The guard looked shocked and surely enough he turned his head away so that he was facing the other way to Lexi. She smiled victoriously before turning back to her clothes on the bench.

It took her two minutes to actually put her clothes on but she took her sweet time getting her stuff together just to piss off Mycroft. Once she was completely ready she went out into the foyer and then out the door with the man in the suit following her closely. Was she in trouble? Lexi sighed before getting into the car. People really had to stop making her get into their cars, it was weird and a little bit irritating. The door was opened for her as she went to get in, she could see Mycroft’s overweight figure in the dark of the car. She sat down next to him as the door closed and dumped her bag on the floor by her side. The car took off back into central London.

“What do you want, Mycroft? I hardly think this is a social call,” she jibed, not bothering with the pleasantries that they both thought was pointless. Mycroft looked out the window rather than at her.

“I have a job for you and unfortunately you are the only one who is able to do it. Believe me, if there was anyone else I would’ve asked them,” Mycroft said with disdain.

Lexi snorted at the blatant dislike. At least he was honest.

“Go on then, tell me what magical task you want me to do for you. I hope it has nothing to do with the government because I can’t be bothered with the police and weasel-y politicians…”

Mycroft shot her a sour look but didn’t take the bait.

“Are you aware that Sherlock overdosed last night?”

Lexi looked at him, trying to gauge if he was being sarcastic. His face told her no. She felt panic rise in her throat but she didn’t say anything. Mycroft gripped his umbrella, shifting his hands slightly.

“By the look on your face I assume obviously not,” Mycroft paused as Lexi continued to look at him, “he’s alive, but barely, he’s at Bart’s.”

Lexi nodded slowly letting the information sink in.

“Is that where we’re going?” she responded, eventually managing to break out of her stunned silence.

“Yes.”

Lexi thought about the situation.
“Why do you need me? I won’t be able to do anything. You have doctors and he has John.”

Mycroft smiled half-heartedly at her logic.

“Sherlock Holmes doesn’t do suicide. He’s far too arrogant to get his … doses wrong. He finds suicide a waste. I do believe the words he used was ‘your life is not your own, keep your hands off it,’” Mycroft explained, shifting his weight on the chair.

Lexi didn’t want to ask who Sherlock had said that to, or if it was Mycroft who had been the one on the receiving end. She sniffed and listened to the rest of what he had to say.

“I’m sure you have deduced that Sherlock doesn’t do things just ‘because’, he always has a plan and he is always sure in his decisions. This was not a suicide attempt nor was it an accident. He intended to do it and I need to know why. I need to know what his plan is.”

Lexi raised her eyebrows in surprise.

“And why do you think he’ll talk to me? We’ve not spoken to each other in days,” she retorted.

“Because he won’t open up to anyone else like he does with you,” Mycroft said simply.

Lexi again didn’t want to ask how Mycroft knew that, she hoped it was all down to perception and not the fact that he might have placed cameras in the apartment to keep an eye on his little brother.

“What about John?” she countered.

“It has to be you. It will always be you.”

Lexi looked out the window in silence, her eyes watching the cars and people pass by as they pulled up outside Bart’s Hospital. Worry ate at her mind, she was not sure if she wanted to head down the path of helping someone with a drug problem when she couldn’t even help herself.

It seemed she didn’t have a choice.
Lexi disliked hospitals, extraordinarily so. It was where the weak and the dying were shoved when no one wanted to deal with them. She had been put there by force when she’d been shot and she’d left as soon as she could walk. Lexi followed Mycroft Holmes down the corridor of the ward, it was pristine and definitely meant for the upper echelons of society. There were no shared rooms, instead each patient had the dignity of their own stylised suites that were conveniently situated within arms reach of the nurses and doctors. It didn’t smell like a hospital either, as they passed the nurses station Lexi could smell chocolate and when she looked properly she could see through each slatted blind that it was obviously snack time. Her own stomach growled in hunger at the smell, Lexi sniffed as she passed almost as if she were in a huff. She hadn’t asked to be dragged into St. Bart’s’ private wing at ridiculous-o’clock in the morning, especially after she’d had an intense workout.

Lexi was dragged out of her thoughts when she walked squarely into Mycroft’s back who had stopped outside a door. She stumbled back slightly.

“Hey why are you —“

“Listen to me clearly, Alexandra, whatever is between you and Sherlock currently you must leave it here. He needs you, more than you realise,” interrupted Mycroft, his head swivelling to meet her eyes as he held the doorknob. Lexi stiffened slightly, before diverting her gaze. Could she do that? Could she forgive him for allowing her to lower her defences and then shatter them because he was in love with someone else too? Rage spread through Lexi but it was suddenly tempered by guilt. Would he not also feel betrayed if she revealed she had been dabbling in drugs again? Or that she semi-understood Moriarty’s madness? Would he ever forgive her?

Lexi looked back at Mycroft with firm eyes and nodded once. Mycroft seemed to evaluate her for a moment before opening the door and ushering her in. Lexi entered the room; it was ultra-luxe and didn’t look like a hospital room at all. Except for the hospital bed. And Sherlock.

Lexi heard the door click shut behind her, she turned to talk to Mycroft but he wasn’t there. He’d sent her in on her own. Lexi sighed at the predicament she found herself in, she was a stubborn woman and didn’t like showing either her affectionate side or her softer side. Sherlock was asleep, or, at least, he had his eyes shut. The room was silent except for the beeping of the machines and the sound of her own heartbeat roaring in her ears. Sherlock looked like shit, he was pale and had black bags under his eyes, he also had a tube running across his nose, she guessed oxygen. Lexi sat down on the chair opposite him but didn’t say anything, she watched him for a moment before looking at her shoes. Converse, for once she was stylish. Lexi redid her laces slowly but with expert precision, she heard movement so she looked up from her shoes.

Sherlock was watching her intently.

She said nothing.

He said nothing.

She continued to say nothing.

He sighed.

“I am sorry, Alexandra.”

Lexi looked back down at her shoes, suddenly feeling very self-conscious. Sherlock didn’t seem to
mind, he continued to talk.

“It wasn’t my intention to get so … fixated on Moriarty, I know I hurt you and I said things I didn’t mean because I didn’t know how else to deal with it.”

Lexi shifted her weight on the chair, what was she meant to say?

“What’s your game Sherlock?” she asked, going on the evasive instead of responding to his apology.

Sherlock looked at her properly, sitting up by pushing the button. His eyes changed to the glint he usually had when he was working. Lexi knew he was up to something.

“Come now, Sherlock, don’t tell me you’d give up the biggest case of your career because it got hard.”

Surprisingly, Sherlock grinned cheekily. Lexi frowned, completely taken aback by his sudden change in demeanour.

“I can’t find Moriarty on my own, you know it, I know it, Mycroft knows it,” Sherlock began, “what better way to lure out a monster than by leaving a welcome mat in front of the wardrobe door?”

Lexi still didn’t get it.

“You mean you overdosed on purpose to lure out Moriarty?”

“Our mutual friend can’t help but be attracted to destruction and chaos, you know he likes theatrics.”

Lexi didn’t know whether to feel incensed by Sherlock’s plan or impressed because it was quite unexpected. Who would expect someone to hit their own self-destruct button? Then again, Sherlock knew how much Lexi struggled, even if he didn’t like to admit it. His own thin line was crossed easily and Lexi wasn’t sure if Sherlock was able to balance his plan over his addiction. The time it took for Lexi’s tired, overworked brain to process her thoughts and emotions gave Sherlock ample time to realise she wasn’t as happy with his plan as he was. Sherlock shifted slightly in his bed obviously uncomfortable with the eye-to-eye contact Lexi was giving.

“It wasn’t that much of an overdose…” Sherlock began.

The words snapped Lexi out of her daze and her mind picked up into full throttle once more.

“Does your life mean that little to you?” she asked, her voice barely audible.

“Wha—?”

“Your life is not a game of Russian roulette, Sherlock. You don’t get to flirt with your demons and be fine with it, you overdosed Sherlock. You almost died.”

Sherlock was rendered speechless, he hadn’t expected Lexi to react so full of emotion given her usual clinical manner. He was stuck between retaliating to her anger or trying to calm her down, the latter being entirely unlike him because it involved human compassion. Instead the worst of words fell out instead.

“But I didn’t, did I?”

Lexi stared at him no further comforted by his response. Sherlock took the opportunity to continue his line of reasoning.
“I am not an addict, Alexandra, I know what I’m doing. I need to do this in order to stop Moriarty.”

Lexi continued to stare at Sherlock, her eyes filled with melancholy.

“I can’t watch you destroy yourself just to get him, Sherlock.”

Lexi stood and leaned into Sherlock. She kissed him softly on the cheek before looking into his baby blue eyes.

“I won’t stand by and watch you kill yourself. I’m sorry, but I’m not strong enough.”

Sherlock’s brow furrowed as she spoke.

“I love you, Sherlock, I love you so much that it hurts. If you walk down this path, I don’t think my heart could take it,” Sherlock searched her green orbs confused at her sudden sadness, “goodbye, Sherlock Holmes. Take care of yourself.”

Her eyes burned as she turned and left but she didn’t stop for a moment to allow herself time to think. If she did, she wasn’t sure if she’d be able to leave so many words unspoken. So Lexi walked as fast as she could from the room without looking back, she walked past the questioning Mycroft and out through the double doors. In fact, Lexi didn’t stop until she reached Baker Street with her heart and head heavy and broken. She passed Mrs Hudson on the stairs but didn’t say anything to her as she pushed her way into the flat.

The silence of the flat, of her old home, was deafening. There was no one there and the gravity of her decision less than an hour earlier came pummelling down on her. She slid down onto the floor with her knees brought up towards her chest. Lexi put her head on her knees trying to process the thoughts whizzing through her head.

After a small while Lexi could hear a buzzing noise in her ear, as she listened it began to turn into a whimpering noise. It suddenly dawned on her that she’d been sobbing to herself but being lost in the vastness of her mind she hadn’t even noticed. She wondered how loud she’d been or if Mrs Hudson was standing at the door trying to push tea through the keyhole in an effort to comfort Lexi. It was an amusing thought that seemed to push energy back into herself. Lexi wiped her eyes with the back of her hand before pushing herself up from the floor and shaking her hands out as if to shake off the bad vibes. She passed the kitchen and into Sherlock’s room, before picking up a black Vans bag she’d thrown in the corner some months ago when she and Sherlock had been otherwise distracted with each other. It seemed today it would be her saving grace. She zipped it open before opening each drawer one by one and taking out her clothes. They landed somewhat ungracefully into the bag but Lexi thought nothing of it. As she got onto the last drawer Lexi heard something move in the living room. She stopped what she was doing, frowning. She had locked the door when she had stood up yet someone had obviously entered with a key. Her light feet padded silently down the corridor and into living room, when she got into the room she stopped and frowned.

“John?”

John Watson was rooting through the bookshelf in the corner but taking great care so not to disturb anything that Sherlock had painstakingly organised. Lexi didn’t even know John still had a key. He jumped at her presence though he quickly recovered from her voice and righted his shirt. She noted that he seemed ruffled that she had disturbed him from whatever he was doing.

“Oh! Alex! I didn’t realise anyone was here.”

Lexi nodded slowly, putting down the t-shirt on the back of her armchair (Was it even hers anymore?
Or was it John’s again?) John smiled awkwardly at her as he pulled out his phone and sent a text message.

“Yeah, uh, what are you looking for?” she asked, not moving from her spot behind the armchair.

John stared for a few moments looking for an answer, Lexi felt increasingly more uncomfortable the longer he searched for a response to her question. Suddenly John’s face lit up and he regained his usual military stance, standing straight so that he was almost a foot taller than her.

“Drugs. You know, with Sherlock in the hospital, I thought I’d do it now than have to worry about it when he gets out,” it was John’s turn to frown, “what are you doing here?”

Lexi twisted her lips.

“I’m collecting some of my stuff together.”

John’s phone went off with a ‘bing’ he checked it and his demeanour changed, he sighed for a long moment and then he turned and began rifling through more of Sherlock’s things, this time with more irritation.

“Do you … want a hand?” Lexi asked. John jumped again at her voice and he half-smiled before starting to rummage. When he didn’t reply she turned on her feet and went back to the bedroom and continued to pack her belongings.

’I wonder what’s wrong with him,’ she thought to herself as she shoved more clothes into her bag, ‘he can suit himself if he wants to be rude. Doesn’t make much of a difference to usual.’

Lexi heard a noise behind her.

“I don’t think there’ll be anything in he—“ she was interrupted by a sharp prick into her neck. John stood just in front of her with a needle in his hand and a disappointed look on his face. Lexi stumbled back, pulling out the needle from her neck, she looked at the thin syringe with a confused look on her face before dropping it on the floor and looking at John. He hadn’t moved from where he had injected her, his phone was out against his ear.

“Yeah, no, it’s done. What do you want me to do with her?” he muttered into the phone.

Lexi couldn’t feel her legs anymore, whatever the Doctor had given her made her crumple against the side of the bed without any grace. The feeling in her fingers began to fade as she tried to wiggle them, her face was still slack-jawed in surprise.

“What didchuu…” her voice trailed off as her body began to succumb to whatever it was John had injected her with.

John hung up the phone without saying anything else and crouched down in front of her. His face seemed awfully emotionless given what he had done to her. He pulled her face up so that she could see his eyes properly.

“Sorry to do this Alex, really I am. But it’s just better this way,” John muttered cryptically. If Lexi could frown she would have instead she was sure that her face remained like putty in John’s hand. The feeling of numbness began to spread up her arms and onto her chest, it suddenly made her chest feel tight and she had to focus more on breathing than the situation she found herself in. An incoherent mumble escaped her lips as she tried to ask John again what he was doing, John shushed her.
“I’d really rather not drag this out, Alex. It is what it is and I would ask if you could forgive me for what I’m about to do but it doesn’t really matter.”

Lexi shifted her hand, trying to push John away. All she managed to do was haphazardly slap his shoulder. He grabbed her thin wrist and pushed it back down against her lap, she tried to speak again but John sighed over the top of her moan.

“Where’s your phone?” he asked her, scratching the side of his head.

Lexi managed to move her hand again, fumbling into her pocket trying to find it. In her semi-paralysed mind Lexi thought she could call Lestrade before John could grab her phone. She frowned, where exactly was her phone? John searched her pockets following the same line of thought but when he found nothing he frowned irritatedly.

“Where is it?” he asked with more irritation in his voice.

Lexi didn’t respond not only because she couldn’t but because she didn’t know. John let go of her chin and her head involuntarily fell to the side. He stood up, straightening his shirt again (she hated that) before he began going through the bedroom with substantially more urgency. His phone went off again, another message. Who was he messaging so urgently? Mary? Was she in on whatever this was too? John emptied out her bag onto the bed, throwing out her t-shirts and rifling through all her jeans. Her mind focused momentarily as she went through the facts in her head.

She was stood in Sherlock’s living room. Her living room. Sherlock stood in front of her. Lexi wiggled her fingers as the surprising feeling of motion flooded into her body. It felt nice to have feeling again.

“Focus, Lex, what do you need to do?”

Lexi snapped back to attention, her eyes resting on Sherlock. He was still unbelievably handsome, he was dressed how she liked him the most; his grey elastic ankled pyjama bottoms and no t-shirt. His chest still made her chest flutter, though she wasn’t sure if that was the feeling of the drugs working on her respiratory system.

“Time’s wasting Lex, what do you need to do?”

Lexi looked at her hands, thinking about the feelings in them.

“I need to survive. Live.”

“What makes you say that?” he asked, moving closer to her.

“My chest … if I don’t do something …”

“Respiratory failure. Your lungs will fail and you’ll asphyxiate. Look at your hands, it’s already starting.”

Lexi looked at the tips of her fingers, he was right: they were turning blue.

“What can you do?”

Sherlock cupped his soft hands around her face, he pulled it up so she could concentrate on his face.

“Nothing. There’s nothing I can do, there’s no way I can treat myself without the right medication and equipment.”
“So if you can’t help yourself, who else can?”

“Lestradé, Lestradé can help me.”

“How can you contact him?”

Lexi looked around the room, suddenly realising the key.

“My phone, I need my phone.”

Sherlock smiled at her.

“That’s my girl,” he beamed at her. Lexi looked at him with a smile, it was nice to feel this way with him again, to feel safe. But then she looked at her hands and noticed the blue was increasing. Sherlock stopped smiling.

“Hurry, Lex, where did you leave your phone?”

Lexi ran her fingers through her hair in thought, where had she left it? When did she last have it? When she learned how to fire a gun. When was that? Yesterday? Did Moriarty have her phone?

“I don’t - I can’t -” she felt her chest flare in panic.

Sherlock pushed her towards the bedroom gently.

“Why is John searching the room? Think about it. Who would he be talking to?”

Lexi came to a stop in the room, John wasn’t in it but the mess of his search was still there. She looked around slowly, trying to ignore the hard-to-breathe feeling in her chest.

“Mary?”

Sherlock shook his head.

“Too close to home.”

Lexi nodded.

“Ok, ok, ok,” she muttered pressing her hands to her lips, “so he’s looking for it in here, it means it has to be in here.”

She looked at the topless Sherlock.

“Is he talking to you?”

Sherlock didn’t respond for a moment.

“Do you think he is? Do you think I’d want you to be dying?” he asked softly.

Lexi looked at him for what felt like the longest of moments.

“No, I don’t think you would.”

Sherlock smiled softly at her, nodding.

“But John thinks it’s here and whoever he’s speaking to does too.”
“Ergo?”

“It must be here. Why do you have it?”

Sherlock shrugged. She reminded herself this wasn’t real. “Focus,” he repeated sharply.

“Somewhere John wouldn’t look, or somewhere he would miss.”

“In our bedroom?” he asked.

Lexi smiled at the possessive determiner. Sherlock tapped on his watch.

“Tick tock, Lex.”

Lexi looked back around the room. John would search everywhere she would, so where would he put her phone? There wasn’t a great deal of furniture in the room and by now John had probably tore the place apart. So it wasn’t anywhere in obvious hiding spots.

Lexi felt the tightness in her chest increase, her legs became numb again and she fell against the bed back where she had fallen before. Sherlock crouched in front of her holding up her face as the paralysis and shock began to hold her down.

“Hurry Lex.”

She felt around herself, her hands following the solid wood of the bed, she felt the emptiness of space as her hand went into the underside of the bed. Lexi had never noticed the bed had space underneath it before. It wasn’t a big gap, only large enough to push her fingers into but she felt it. Lying on the floor was her phone. Had Sherlock kicked it under the bed before he’d overdosed? She didn’t even know how he had a hold of it but it was obviously important to John, Sherlock and whoever was on the phone. Was it Moriarty? Had she really believed him when he said she wasn’t going to be hurt by him? Was she that naïve?

She pushed the phone under her leg with great effort before pulling the heavy limb up onto her leg. In the kitchen John made noises before thudding back towards the bedroom. A hand slapped her face as John pulled her out of her thoughts, her lips were cold and she was sure from John’s perspective her lips were as blue as her nails.

“Not yet, not yet, Alex, where is your phone?” John asked holding up her face again.

Lexi tried to hold John’s eye contact.

“I don’t … don’t,” she tried her best to reply. John tutted irately before standing up and heading back into the kitchen. He came back this time with a knife in his hand.

“I should’ve known someone as addicted to drug’s as you would last longer on ketamine. Shit though, Alex, it’s enough to kill a horse. I’m sorry though, I can’t let you leave the place, I can’t let you talk to Sherlock.”

John seemed apologetic enough but then in her mind Lexi thought that he wasn’t exactly sorry enough not to inject her with enough ketamine to kill her. Why was he doing this? She guessed at this point it didn’t matter.

She inhaled sharply as a faint burning sensation crossed her wrists. Lexi came back out from her thoughts and looked down at the distant pain. Blood trickled from her wrists though she wasn’t sure where the blood was coming from. John dropped the knife onto the floor by her side before standing
up and looking once more around the room. He didn’t say anything to her as the blood from her wrists spurted all over the cream carpet. Somewhere in her mind Lexi wondered if the blood would damage her phone like water. She supposed she was about to find out. She heard the door click shut as John left silently — almost an opposite to the way he had entered before. Would Mrs Hudson even hear him leave? She was probably neck deep in tequila by now given the way Lexi had passed her on the stairs.

The silence in the room was deafening again, though she was sure she could hear the sound of her own blood gushing onto the floor. Lexi had worked on cadavers and even patients before but she’d never seen blood gush the way her wrists were.

Sherlock appeared next to her, cupping her face softly again. She smiled weakly at him, if it wasn’t the ketamine stopping the feeling in her extremities it was definitely the blood loss.

“I don’t think I can make it from this one, my love.”

Sherlock looked at her with a sad smile.

“There’s only one way you can try. Lessen the blood.”

“Hold up my arms?”

“But first you need to get help.”

Lexi’s hand’s reached for her phone. She tried to ignore the blood trickling down over her legs and over the touch screen. The phone still had life, she was surprised. She opened her messages. Lestrade was one of the only other people who had texted her, mostly to tell her off for one thing or another.

‘Bsseer Street, ;eklp quiijk please’

The message would have to do because it was all her thumbs would allow her to type. She looked up for Sherlock’s warming smile. But he wasn’t there. Lexi looked back down at her hands, she pulled them up as far as she could, it was all she could do as she watched her phone light up with Lestrade’s name and number. She let out a humorous breath as the call went to voicemail.
Irony in Hope

Chapter Notes

Trigger Warning: Please do not read if you're struggling because of the graphic depictions. Even though Lexi didn't try to commit suicide and it was down to the dastardly deeds of our favourite doctor the depictions are incredibly graphic.

If you are struggling and need help please please reach out. You are not alone and your life is worth more than you know. For my American readers: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) [The National Suicide Prevention Hotline], for my English readers: 116 123 [Samaritans], for my international readers: http://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/Europe/ [The International Association of Suicide Prevention directory]

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On another note Agnes Cecile, one of my favourite artists, created a fantastic piece that I find portrays Lexi and Sherlock excellently, check it out here: http://agnes-cecile.deviantart.com/art/waiting-place-410642798

As always thanks for reading!

Much love,
Fury
xo

Lestrédé threw away his cigarette onto the pavement as he jogged up the steps of 221B Baker Street. He’d made a promise to himself to stay away from smoking but it seemed his unpredictable lifestyle made avoiding them a hopeless endeavour. The text message he’d received from Lexi had unnerved him Lexi, he had learned from their run in’s and co-working on cases, was exactly like Sherlock: she didn’t use emoticons or text speak so when he received the haphazard message and instant voicemail he had u-turned his car around and sped back into central London. Five minutes later (thanks to the police siren) and Lestrédé was banging heavily on the door to Sherlock’s flat. He hadn’t been back into the apartment since finding Sherlock and he was naturally apprehensive to what he was going to find. The door was locked. Mrs Hudson appeared at the top of the stairs.

“Oh Greg she was mighty upset when she got in, poor poppet,” explained Mrs Hudson, her hand on her chest.

“Have you heard anything?” Lestrédé asked his hand on the door knob. When Mrs Hudson shook her head silently with a questioning look on her face, the police inspector let out a long sigh. He sure hoped this wasn’t another waste of time … like the time Sherlock had messaged him asking for help and he had stupidly responded by sending the entire Greater London Police to the front doorstep of Sherlock Holmes. Something about this visit seemed more drastic, however, and given recent events Lestrédé decided it was probably better to ‘overreact’ than not react at all.

“Lexi?” Lestrédé called loudly hoping that she’d come to the door with a surprised look on her face.
When she didn’t reply Lestrade ran his thin fingers through his silver hair perplexed. The uneasy feeling in his chest didn’t dissipate.

“My, it isn’t normally locked…” mumbled Mrs Hudson she teetered back through her front door and came back seconds later with a key. She threw it up the stairs and he managed to catch it with one hand. At any other time Lestrade would have been semi-impressed with his hand-eye coordination but instead of making a remark he slid the key into the lock and opened the door. It creaked open and the interior of 221B made Mrs Hudson loudly inhale.

The living room was trashed, not in the sense of broken furniture but there were books and cushions littering the floor. Lestrade entered the room cautiously, he heard Mrs Hudson following him up the stairs so he turned and motioned for her to go back downstairs. She looked frightened but it seemed anything mildly surprising placed the good lady housekeeper in to a state of shock. He made a mental note to check in on her later, poor Mrs Hudson always got the short straw when it came to tenants. There wasn’t a noise to be heard from the apartment but the level of mess made Lestrade draw his gun just in case. He cautiously moved down the hallway checking his corners as he went. The only door slightly ajar was the bedroom door.

“Lexi?” Lestrade called softly.

No reply. He pushed the door open with the end of his gun before dropping it on the floor.

“Jesus Christ,” spat Lestrade as he rushed over to the end of the bed.

Slumped at the foot of the bed was Lexi, covered in blood. If he hadn’t been used to seeing blood (or walking through it) he was pretty sure the sheer volume would have made him slip over. Instead he managed to crouch down in front of Lexi, he looked at her properly.

On the floor next to her was a sharp syringe, from what he could tell it was empty but it was hard to tell given how much blood was spread across the floor. Lestrade quickly ascertained where the blood was coming from, the pinkette’s (or was it brunette now? It was hard to tell) wrists had deep slashes across them though she was making a remarkable effort to hold them up. Lestrade saw her body shaking, most likely with the blood loss rather than the cold, it was pointless then to take a pulse since she was very obviously alive — even if only just. Lestrade speed-dialed 999 and demanded an ambulance. He then threw his phone down across the bed before shrugging off his jacket and using it as a tourniquet for Lexi’s wrists.

“Lexi, Lexi, can you hear me?” Lestrade called urgently, she stirred ever so slightly but only enough to weakly raise her head.

“Hm?” she managed to utter, he wondered how drugged up she actually was. Part of him felt irritated that the woman had yet again been selfish enough to take up more of his precious time but then he chastised himself for being critical of a woman who obviously needed help. Lestrade debated whether or not Lexi had intended to try and kill herself. The first time Lestrade had met Lexi she had been bungled into the back of his car by Sherlock who had ominously told him not to mention anything ever. And he hadn’t, true to his word. Had she been trying to kill herself then? Was this a second attempt? The more he thought about it the more likely it seemed she had been determined to end her life. A certain melancholy spread across him, he had dealt with attempted suicides, and actual suicides, before but it had never been someone he considered a close acquaintance. Lestrade didn’t know anything about Lexi, the more he thought about it. Did Sherlock even know her background? Her parents? Her childhood? It didn’t strike him as something Sherlock would do or have the common sense to ask. What even was their relationship? They had kept their relationship pretty quiet from everyone but Lestrade had heard through the grape-vine that Sherlock had been somewhat preoccupied with Lexi since she had moved in. There had been some obvious fall out between the
two but Lestrade couldn’t fathom what could have happened to cause the apparent destruction of the both of them.

In the distance Lestrade could hear an ambulance, he placed his index and middle finger against Lexi’s neck to check for a pulse, he frowned as he felt the fine yet detectable trace of a needle mark. A strange place to inject oneself but then again Lestrade had noticed the track marks across Lexi’s arms… perhaps she had grown past the point of caring. At his touch Lexi stirred.

“Sherlock?” she asked trying to raise her head.

“It’s not — can you hear me Lexi? It’s Greg, you texted me remember?”

Lexi managed to raise her head enough for Lestrade to meet her strained green eyes, just looking at her face it was clear she was doped to hell, it surprised him that a woman with such a small frame was alive for so long after the extent of the damage inflicted on her.

“I need you to stay awake, okay? Don’t sleep, Lexi.”

She sat with her head lowered, she was so cold yet peculiarly she was so numb. Sherlock sat next to her silently, she knew it was in her head but his presence comforted her. He too seemed weak but she figured that was because she was dying and so was he. At least she had the small comfort knowing that the real Sherlock was safe and tucked up in his hospital bed.

“Will you miss me when I’m gone?” she asked.

Sherlock didn’t reply for a while, she knew it was her own mind but it still made sense to talk, to stay awake, if she had any hope of living past five minutes. Sherlock sensed this and ran his soft fingers through her hair.

“You know I will. I don’t think I’d be able to live without you, even if I’ve been a complete asshole about it.”

Lexi chuckled, remembering to hold up her arms against her chest.

“If only the real you could admit that.”

“I know.”

The sat in silence for what felt like hours before Sherlock spoke again.

“Do you ever wish you’d never met me? That you’d never found the website?”

“Sometimes. Times like this — yeah. I can’t help but think that my skillset has gone from sarky surgeon to a rape victim, a drug addict, a shooting victim and a woman who finds herself frequently on death’s door. But then I remember how much fun I’ve had with you and how much I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you.”

“Hey, you still could.”

Lexi shifted slightly in the pool of her own blood. It was beginning to thicken as it sat against her black skinny jeans.

“I wish that were possible.”
“Why wouldn’t it be?”

“If I don’t die? I’m pretty sure I’m going to die. And even if I live, we both know you’re in love with Irene. I’ve seen the way you look when you think no one is watching. I know you’re conflicted and I know it hurts you to try and comprehend your own emotions.”

Sherlock remained silent and Lexi let out a long sigh.

“I know your biggest weakness is yourself. You feel too much even if you don’t realise it. It’s the difference between you and I, you feel too much, I feel too little. And when I do feel, it’s so much more real and so much more intense than anything I’ve ever felt. It’s how I know I’ll forever be in love with you. Even if you break my heart.”

“So you think it’s better to die?”

Lexi thought about that question intensely. Was it better to die? It certainly would be the answer to so many problems. But that was selfish. Time and time again the actions which led to her being near death were never her own she was always manipulated by someone. Perhaps it was time to rise against the overwhelming tide of manipulation. Besides could she really leave this world and let John continue unchecked? Who even was John? She had no doubt that he was a veteran with fantastic surgical skills (he had managed to inject straight into her jugular artery efficiently with substantial accuracy in a hurry) but what else did she know about him? Sherlock couldn’t see beyond the love he felt for John, as his best friend and brother, and he certainly couldn’t see John’s ulterior motives. Neither did she, in fairness. Though John had been fairly standoffish with her since they had met, she wondered how much that had been because of his fear she would suspect he had another agenda. She couldn’t let John continue operating under Sherlock’s radar, she didn’t know if Sherlock was in danger from within his own little world. Sherlock was always in danger from someone but it was the one he would least expect that would be the most heartbreaking and deadly. Lexi couldn’t let herself die while Sherlock was in danger. She looked at Sherlock who was sat staring at the wall, his lips were blue and his eyes were half closed. Lexi knew she was looking at a reflection of herself.

“No, no I don’t think it’d be better to die. I think you need me too much.”

“Maybe.”

Sherlock let out a long sigh and Lexi looked back down at her phone. The screen was black, Lestrade hadn’t called back. Maybe her determination to live was too hopeful.

“You texted me remember?”

Lexi looked up and saw Lestrade leaning in front of her face. She looked back down at her wrists, the detective inspector’s jacket was wrapped tightly around them to stem the blood flow. In the distance she could hear a siren. Maybe she’d live after all.

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Three hours later:
A doctor sat in front of her, one she didn’t recognise. It didn’t take a genius to know he was a psychiatrist. Lexi was laid in A&E and she was barely conscious but she was aware of his presence and his prying questions.

Why did she cut her wrists?
Was it intentional?
What did she take?
Was anyone else there when she did it?
Did she want to be there?

Lexi knew what he was doing, his attempts to evaluate her would likely determine where they sent her. To a psychiatric ward (she had plenty experience of those) or to a general ward. She hoped it was the latter but she didn’t hold out much hope. Her drug addled brain refused to understand her commands to play the system. At least she was a little more coherent.

“I didn’t do this to myself. He did.”

Who was he?

“John. He did it to me.”

Why did he cut your wrists?

“He didn’t want me talking to Sherlock.”

Why not?

My phone. My phone. Something about my phone.”

Do you know where you are?

“Yes.”

Where?

“Bart’s.”

Do you think you are safe from yourself?

“I don’t understand.”

John wasn’t there.

“Yes he was, he wanted my phone.”

You were on your own. No one was there. You injected yourself and cut your wrists. Why?

“I didn’t do it. It was him.”

John?

“Yes. John. It was John. John did this to me. He wanted my phone.”
Why are you irate?

“Because you’re a useless twat.”

The questions stopped and things moved. When she managed to focus her eyes again she recognised the closed doors and soft furnishings. Obviously she had pissed off the psychiatrist and he had decided her responses were characteristic of someone on the edge. Had they given her something else? Lexi remembered trying to get out of bed, Lestrade had held onto her shoulders as she tried to make her limbs work. She had split her stitches because there had been more blood. Then a needle.

Sedated? Who knew. Sleep prevailed and in her dreams Sherlock held her.

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Lexi woke up a little while later, her mouth tasted like shit (metallic, definitely drugs in her system) and she hurt. Her wrists ached and burned and her neck throbbed. Lexi looked around blinking properly, her eyes taking in the chest restraints and cannula in her arm attached to a blood bag. A nurse moved into her peripheral checking her charts, she looked up at Lexi and smiled clinically.

“Would you like some water?”

“Can you take this restraint off?” Lexi countered sharply.

The woman shifted uncomfortably at the straight up remark.

“No, you need to see the doctor first,” replied the nurse, placing down her chart with a ‘clack’. She came around to the side of the bed and poured water into a plastic beige cup. A straw appeared at Lexi’s lips and she didn’t respond. The nurse pursed her lips in irritation (she was obviously used to patients resisting) and pressed the straw against her lips. Lexi continued to stare at the nurse but eventually acquiesced when she realised the nurse wouldn’t disappear which meant the doctor wouldn’t swan back in. The water was lukewarm and metallic, Lexi guessed it had been sitting for a few hours while she’d been sedated. They had redressed her wrists while she’d been unconscious and they were wrapped tightly in bandages and gauze. When the nurse was happy with how much water she’d drunk she placed the cup back down on the side table and disappeared with a false, condescending smile. It wouldn’t surprise Lexi if the blonde haired nurse took her sweet time getting the doctor, she knew hospital staff (herself included) took their sweet time with irritating patients if their lives weren’t in danger.

Lexi took the spare time to look around the room, another woman was opposite her in a bed and also restrained. She was sedated and didn’t move, Lexi’s eyes continued around the room. Another woman sat on the bed rocking back and forth with irritation, she was clearly waiting for the same doctor. The third woman sat reading a magazine but her wrists were also bound with bandages similar to her own, no one looked at her and she was quite content with isolation. Lexi closed her eyes again deciding it was probably better to sleep than stare at the white wash ceiling for god knows how long.

A sound drew her from her dreamless sleep. When she opened her eyes the same doctor as earlier stood over her with her clipboard. He also had a false smile on his face like the nurse. Lexi wasn’t sure how long she’d been asleep.

“How are you doing Alexandra?” he asked with an overwhelmingly cheery voice.

Lexi stared at the doctor with a distinctly unimpressed look on her face.

“What’s your clinical opinion, doc?” she retorted dryly.
“Call me Doctor Robert’s. I’ll be your psychiatrist for the foreseeable future.”

Lexi continued to stare unimpressed at Doctor Robert’s.

“I don’t think so.”

The doctor tilted his head and looked at her clipboard file. “You aren’t well Alexandra I don’t think you’re in any position to leave, don’t you think?”

“You only have 72 hours.”

“I had heard you were a med student.”

“Mhm.”

“Care to chat about what happened?”

“Nope.”

“Okay. Well how about we get some more medication to help you sleep?”

Lexi’s face twisted into disgust.

“Hell no, I don’t want any drugs.”

“Well, we’ll see how you feel about that in a few hours. I don’t want you to get too irritated.”

Lexi realised he had meant from earlier when she had gotten irritated with his silly questions. The drugs still in her system made her sleepy enough.

“Can you take off the restraint?” she asked with carefully guarded emotion.

The doctor smiled at her again, she didn’t like it.

“Maybe in a few hours.”

“Uh-huh. I’m done talking with you now. Bye.”

The doctor stiffened at her bluntness but didn’t retaliate. He nodded curtly and put her clipboard file back in her docket.

She was left to her own thoughts and the promising thought of sleep. Sherlock waited for her.
They removed the restraints across her chest a day later. Lexi had been greatly irritated that it had taken the nurses so long to pull out their fingers, but then she supposed it was because she had been incredibly sarcastic to everyone who had approached her. The release of the restraints had lifted a huge weight off of her chest and she felt more comfortable now that she could actually move. That still didn’t remove the discomfort of her wrists or the withdrawal from the heroin. She had been there enough to know the stages of withdrawal; for now she was only majorly irritated and feeling like shit. Soon it would progress to sickness, nausea and a killer headache and then crippling pain throughout her body. Lexi decided she wouldn’t be in the hospital long enough to allow that kind of progression ravage her body.

She had her eyes shut while the ward around her buzzed, she knew that if she tried to leave now the doctors would only clamp her back in the restraints. They had 48 more hours before she was allowed to discharge herself (unless the doctor decided she was a risk to herself and others) so she had decided to play the system now that the drugs had worn its way through her body. Twice they had been with drugs that would promise sedation and twice she had ‘taken’ them by hiding the drugs when they watched her take them. The girl next to them seemed happy enough to take the happy pills she didn’t want and Lexi was more than happy to provide. She should have felt bad that this poor woman was being fuelled by Lexi but then, life was a bitch and Lexi didn’t have the patience to feel bad. A noise drew her from her thoughts and she opened her eyes. Lestrade was stood by the side of her bed with a bunch of flowers, Mrs Hudson stood next to him with a sympathetic look on her face. Lexi watched them carefully, Greg seemed awkward — he was clearly not used to visiting people in hospital, let alone someone he had saved. He looked tired and drained but Lexi reckoned she didn’t look much better.

“Oh Lex, you silly goose, oh I hope you’re doing okay,” gushed Mrs Hudson. She pandered around Lexi’s face and kissed her on the forehead, Lexi (surprisingly) didn’t flinch — it felt nice to be loved for once, familial affection was alien to her. “We’re here for you poppet, don’t you worry.”

Lexi didn’t know how to respond, she felt strange looking so exposed to Lestrade and Mrs Hudson but at the same time she was too tired to pull herself away. Lexi rubbed her forehead with her hand as Mrs Hudson moved away, she remembered now why she didn’t like being kissed by family (not that she had any), the kind-of-wet slobber on her forehead made her skin crawl.

Lestrade shifted slightly as Mrs Hudson moved away, he held out the flowers to her (carnations) with a weird smile on his face. “I’m glad you look better, Alex,” he mumbled. Lexi looked at the flowers. Was she even a flower person? Lestrade sensed her hesitation and placed them on the sideboard. An awkward silence settled between the three of them, Lexi sat forward.

“Mrs Hudson, could we have a minute?” Lexi asked politely. Mrs Hudson smiled at her seeming chipper voice.

“Oh of course dear, I’ll go and get a coffee.” She tooted away into the corridor. Lestrade frowned as she left and crossed his arms.

“What’s up?”

“I didn’t do this, Greg.” Lexi began. Lestrade let out a sigh obviously unimpressed with her line of conversation. “I was attacked.”

Lestrade struggled to keep his face straight and Lexi looked at him darkly.
“Well who was it then?” he asked.

“John.”

“John Watson?” chuckled Lestrade, Lexi fidgeted when she realised he didn’t believe her.

“Yes. Do you know any other John that I also know? Keep up Lestrade. I’m not sure why, I don’t know who he was on the phone with but he attacked me with the needle,” Lestrade stared at her, “and when I didn’t react the way he thought I would, well, he did this.” She held up her hands as if to prove a point but Lestrade didn’t seem overly convinced.

“Let me get this straight, you’re telling me John attacked you with a needle and then cut your wrists and you don’t know why? Come on Lexi, we both know you have a problem with drugs.”

Lexi’s look grew darker — she went to protest but Lestrade talked over her.

“I don’t think your well, Lexi. It’s probably for the best you’re here, you know, to get some help.”

Lexi sat back into the bed with a slump, she ignored Lestrade as he talked deciding he wasn’t so convinced with what she was telling him. When he finished talking to her, Lexi sniffed and looked the other way. Lestrade stood for a few more minutes before deciding it was probably for the best that he left. Lexi sat chewing on her lip, massively irritated with the failure of their conversation.

As Lestrade left Lexi watched him go, he rubbed his head with his hands (a stress reliever that he often did when he was rubbed up the wrong way). As soon as he disappeared around the corner Lexi pulled herself to the edge of the bed. Her feet didn’t want to work straight away but after a few attempts of sitting forward the feeling came flooding back. A nurse was passing the bed when she caught sight of Lexi trying to stand up. She rushed over and helped her out of the bed before crossing her arms.

“And just where do you think you’re going?” she demanded.

Lexi held onto the edge of the bed.

“Toilet … but my legs are rather out of kilter with my body. I don’t suppose you could help me get there?” Lexi asked politely.

The nurse was taken aback by her politeness, she had obviously heard from the other staff nurses that Lexi was an angry drug addict. She smiled warmly at her, naïvely at her, before holding out her arm.

“Come on.”

Lexi smiled thankfully and took her arm. She hobbled down the corridor with the staff nurse who was clearly feeling that she had reached some kind of psychological breakthrough with Lexi. Lexi wondered if the nurse thought it was like some kind of drama film, the stand offish patient who got better by the dedication of a most unlikely individual. They got to the bathroom and the nurse helped her into the room. She closed the door behind them for privacies sake but that first meant leaving Lexi to hold onto the side of the sink. The nurse turned against the door to close it on the latch. Lexi pulled her hands around the nurses neck in a tight grip. She flailed against Lexi’s surprisingly strong grip and it took only a few moments for the nurse to slump entirely against Lexi. Lexi stumbled slightly against the heavy weight but she managed to hold her up with some grace. The drugs were wearing off of her system but that still didn’t mean she was entirely steady on her feet. Lexi laid down the woman on the floor gently she checked her pulse and was pleasantly pleased when the woman’s pulse was strong. Knocked unconscious by a ‘suicidal drug addict’. Not quite the textbook drama script.
Five minutes later and Lexi left the bathroom with her hair tied up into a tight bun and wearing the
dark blue nurses dress. She was so glad as a doctor she got to wear scrubs and a lab coat but for the
time being the dress would have to do. Lexi checked the watch on the front of the nurses dress —
she had roughly two minutes before the alarm was raised but it was long enough for her to slip out.
She picked up her own clipboard from her bed and grabbed her phone from the locker next to the
bed. Lexi made eye contact with the woman who had been in the bed next to her, the woman smiled
knowingly. Lexi pressed a finger to her lips.

“Shhh.”

The woman nodded and looked out the window, Lexi guessed sharing her drugs was the best choice
after all. She turned on her heel and left the room, she walked down the ward using the clipboard to
cover the bandages on her wrists. It was strange that no one batted an eyelid in the presence of
someone confident, she got to the end of the ward at the door. A security guard sat lazily at the
CCTV cameras reading a magazine. The door was a lanyard activated security door, Lexi patted her
dress feeling for a lanyard, there wasn’t one. She bit her lip in thought before trying the door far more
loudly than any other person sneaking out of a secured ward would have, the security guard looked
up and in turn his shirt shifted into the light so she could see the name tag. Jerry. Lexi pulled a
worried face leaning against the side of the door with her clipboard waving in the air.

“I’m so sorry, Jerry, I’ve gone and left my lanyard down the hall…”

The man looked back down at his magazine none surplussed. “No lanyard, no leave. You new or
something?”

“Something like that. Listen I don’t have time to go back, Doctor Robert’s said I need to run these
down to MRI and if I don’t I may as well not come back.”

She got flustered and forced out a tear from her eye. The guard caught her eye and threw down his
magazine. He sighed and stood up leaning around the corner. His eyes went straight down the
hallway, the way she had come, to ensure that no one was watching. When he was happy with the
view he turned and slammed his own lanyard off the door. It beeped open and he held open the door
for Lexi.

“Don’t tell anyone I did this … wouldn’t want any patients getting out.”

Lexi smiled sympathetically.

“No, we wouldn’t want that.”

She slipped out of the door and instantly dropped the smile. Playing the system was far too easy
when she knew the way in which human nature worked.

Five minutes later and Lexi found herself out of the hospital and on the street. She got to the kerbside
and held out her hand.

“TAXI!”

John Watson was in shit. He had been damned sure that when he had left 221B Baker Street Lexi
Stuart had been dead. John wasn’t a bad man, not necessarily, but he was a soldier and if he was given orders he would carry them out. Had he killed people? Yes. Had he done bad things? Yes. Did he feel bad about them? No.

“JM: Is it done?”

“JW: Yes.”

“JM: Are you sure?”

“JW: Yes.”

“JM: If it isn’t I will personally see to it your world burns.”

James Moriarty was always full of threats: most of them vague but a fair few were also serious. On more than one occasion he had come into the room at the tail-end of one of Moriarty’s angry fits. The most recent John had walked in on had been the violent downpour on a man, if it even was a man, there was nothing but left over mulch on the floor. The body zip locked to the chair was distorted at a funny angle because the weight of the sledgehammer brought down on its head had snapped the spine clean in two. There was no head, or rather, there was the kind of intact brain stem. That was about it. Moriarty had stood in amongst all the gore with a scarily serene look on his face, his brown eyes were completely emotionless. Who ever the poor bastard was on the chair had obviously pissed off Moriarty tremendously. John had stood silently before Moriarty turned towards him, running his fingers through his black hair seemingly not bothered about the brain matter left in his fingers wake. Moriarty’s pink tongue danced across the bottom of his lips, wiping away the blood spatter. John didn’t have big enough balls to speak first. Moriarty had watched him with predators eyes.

“Wrong soda.”

When Moriarty had sent the last threat John had been sure it was nothing but a vague threat. Then he had found out from Molly that Lexi was alive and in hospital. He couldn’t call Mary and tell her to run, he knew she wouldn’t partly because she would kill him first having known what he was an accomplice in and partly because she would be too loyal to him. There was no where he could have run to at any rate, no where that Moriarty couldn’t find him.

John shoved his phone back into his grey jacket transfixed with the floor as the lift moved onwards towards the third floor. After hearing about Lexi’s miraculous survival he had come to see if there was any possible way he could salvage his ‘death by decision’ plan. The door came to a stop on the lobby floor (he had come up from the car park underneath the hospital) and Lestradé walked in with a painfully thoughtful look etched on his tired face. John watched him cautiously.

“Hey John, I wondered when you would be visiting,” Greg said with a friendly tone. Good. He hadn’t spoken to Lexi yet.

“Yeah — have you spoken to her? Is she awake?”

Lestradé frowned at John.

“She … is, she’s fine, in psych. But I meant Sherlock, I thought you were here to see Sherlock,” Lestradé pushed his hands into his trouser pockets, throwing his recently replaced tan trench coat out of the way to do so, he always did that when his brain was thinking.

“Who told you Lexi was here?”
For once John didn’t have to worry about covering his own tracks. Molly had been straight on the
phone when she had heard about Lexi (though he was sure she was probably more disgruntled Lexi
hadn’t died because, well, Sherlock) and had been asking whether it was safe to tell Sherlock what
had happened. From a ‘friend’ perspective it was probably not a good idea to tell Sherlock given the
exorbitant amount of stress he was under mentally and physically but from someone with John’s
perspective it didn’t matter much either way. Molly was a good stop off point for information when
John wasn’t aware of transpired events.

“Molly called me.”

“Oh, that makes sense.”

A few moments silence passed in the lift, both men trying to work out what to say to the other. John
took the opportunity to pry further into Lexi’s admittance.

“Have you spoken to her then?”

Lestrade thought about his question for a few seconds, leaving John hanging.

“I did actually. Yeah.”

“And what did she say? Anything?”

The Detective Inspector let out a single gauging chuckle, obviously his question had hit a recent
memory.

“Funny you should say that actually, she mentioned you.”

John’s heart stopped in his chest, she had mentioned him? How resistant was her body to drugs?
He’d ensured she had been given enough to kill a small horse, yet she still managed to phone for
help. Another irritation of his; he’d turned the flat upside down and still hadn’t been able to find that
blasted phone. John had little knowledge of why Moriarty wanted it so much but he had made it
quite obvious that the phone was vital to whatever plan he had in mind.

“She was still as high as a kite though, she kept telling me you were the one who … well, who cut
her wrists,” Lestrade snorted in disbelief, “imagine that, eh?”

John half-heartedly laughed with a nervous twang. “Imagine that.”

The lift stopped at the third floor and he and Lestrade stepped out of the lift. The scene when they
got out of the lift was pure madness. Nurses ran around the front entrance of the ward with one of the
doctors Lestrade had recognised earlier attending to a shaken and bruised woman. Lestrade frowned
as his phone went off. John watched his tip his head in disbelief as he showed the doctor his phone.

‘Police Alert: Woman, 25, violently fled secure hospital ward. Believed dangerous, amber alert.’

“Well shit,” muttered John, Lexi was proving to be just as evasive as Sherlock. She clearly
remembered their encounter well but it seemed John had the saving grace of long term trust from
Lestrade. It was probably easier for Lestrade to think of Lexi as deranged than believe John, a man
with an impeccable background, had more insidious motives. Still - the problem of Lexi Stuart was
vast blowing up in his face. Lestrade rubbed his head anxiously.

“She isn’t well, we can’t let her run amok especially now she’s attacked someone.”

“Maybe Sherlock has seen her? Maybe she’s with him?” John asked idiomatically.
Lestrade clicked his fingers together, signs of hope lighting up his brown eyes.

They took the stairs instead of the lift.

Sherlock was standing at the side of his bed buttoning up his white shirt when they got there. Both John and Lestrade stopped, surprised at his miraculous recovery. John watched Sherlock carefully, for four years he had been at Sherlock’s side (for better or worse) and he knew when Sherlock was flagging dangerously low. A certain sense of anxiety oozed off the consulting detective but he didn’t let it stop him from throwing on his scarf and jacket.

“She can’t go anywhere …” John began.

Sherlock threw John a look that silenced him before he had a chance to continue his protest.

“Have you seen her?” Lestrade asked, breaking the defiant look Sherlock had given John.

Sherlock transferred the look to Lestrade but the detective inspector had known Sherlock long enough not to be intimidated by his look.

“No. But I will find her.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea Sherlock, she’s wired from the drugs and, well, she isn’t in a good place,” Lestrade continued, stepping in the way of the taller man. Sherlock stopped in front of Lestrade only inches away from being pushed out of the way.

“Move, Greg.”

John raised his eyebrows in surprise — for the first time ever, Sherlock had used Lestrade’s correct name. His voice was painfully void of emotion but it was ominously dark and it made Lestrade step back slightly. John knew that they had no reason to make him stay. Theoretically Sherlock could have walked out any time he had liked but he had stayed, whether it was because of his brother, John didn’t know. Lestrade sighed and looked at Sherlock with more sympathetic eyes.

“Let us help you, Sherlock.”

Sherlock moved around Lestrade and headed towards the stairs.

“I work better on my own.”

Sherlock left leaving John and Lestrade alone in front of the empty bed. John looked at the detective inspector and he looked back.

“Is it a danger night?” asked Lestrade, biting his lip.

John bit his lip too, frustrated that he didn’t have a quick resolve to his problem.

“Honestly, I don’t know.”

______________________

Lexi only had a short window of time to get into Baker Street and grab her only personal possessions in the world. She didn’t have time to grab everything so instead, climbing through the window, she
threw on a pair of jeans and a baggy grey cotton shirt. It was long enough to cover her arms and baggy enough to keep the irritation to a minimum. The pinkette turned brunette was fastening the her left lace of her Vans shoes when she heard the door go. She froze momentarily before moving to the side of the door out of eyeshot of the hallway.

“Lex?”

A familiar voice made her pause and she bit her lip in temptation. Sherlock had come to find her and how terribly she wanted to throw herself into his arms and cry. She couldn’t. Lexi had understood immediately that as long as she was in the picture Sherlock was in the gravest of danger. Even knowledge of her whereabouts was enough to have Sherlock in mortal peril. She pushed her iPhone into her back pocket and waited for Sherlock to move down the corridor. His skinny yet muscular frame came into the room, seemingly unaware of the thin woman standing behind him. Lexi moved swiftly behind him properly, remembering Ash’s advice: because she was smaller she had to be quicker. Sherlock was skilled in martial art and if he realised she was there for too long he would gain the upper hand. Unfortunately for the detective she was quicker. He turned and momentarily caught her melancholy gaze. Lexi’s hand moved like a snake strike, she planted a sharp punch that clipped the side of the unsuspecting Sherlock’s chin. His head snapped back in surprise and his entire body followed his head. Lexi moved quicker than Sherlock’s body so that she caught him from behind, she had hit him hard enough to make his entire brain move with his snapping head. A blow hard enough to make anyone pass out, even someone trained enough as Sherlock Holmes. Lexi caught Sherlock under his arms and took his weight; for a woman of light stature and a now bleeding wrist from the impact of her fist against Sherlock’s chin she struggled slightly against the weight of an unconscious Sherlock. Lexi used the momentum to lower the detective against his bloodstained bed where she left him on his side in the recovery position. It was unlikely that he’d throw up for the brief time he’d be out but every precaution needed to be taken. Lexi took the spare moment to run her soft hand against the rough of his cheek. She kissed his forehead lightly.

“I am sorry, Sherlock, but you are in more danger than you know and I would die before I see you hurt,” she said softly, her voice barely audible.

Lexi heard the front door downstairs and made towards the window. Her wrist was bleeding heavily again and she couldn’t help as a few droplets of blood escaped past the gauze. She tried her best not to wince at the rising pain but she was once again reminded that there were quick moving footsteps on the stairs. Lexi hopped over the window frame and used the emergency stairs above Speedy’s to scale quickly to the floor. She held pressure onto her wrist as she threw herself in front of a slow moving taxi, it slammed to a halt and Lexi threw herself in the back as John came back out of the front door with Lestradé not far behind. For a few split seconds Lexi met John’s calculating eyes. He pulled out his phone as the car moved away from the kerb.

“Drive.”
Lexi slumped into the passenger seat in the back of the black cab. She took a few moments to collect her thoughts by running her hands through her hair. The motion felt nice against her head because it gave her some feeling besides pain, a trickling feeling pulled Lexi from her raging mind and the Always. Her wrist was bleeding heavily again but it was mostly superficial. The taxi driver had moved off from Baker Street and was heading into central London, Lexi was thankful for the ignorance as she attended to her wrist. Yet again she’d spectacularly failed at gathering her belongings from Sherlock’s, she had next to nothing yet again and it irked her massively. Thankfully her phone had her card saved onto it (praise be to Apple) so she had some way of making her way through the city. Lexi pulled off the gauze from her wrist with a hiss and expertly flipped over the gauze to absorb and stem the blood flow, it wasn’t a perfect solution but it was the best she could do until she could get to a chemist.

How had she managed to get into this situation? She’d been absolute in her decision to leave Sherlock’s life, it had seemed the best course of action for both herself and for Sherlock. His love for Irene and Moriarty’s unhealthy obsession with him pulled her further down the rabbit hole and her attempt to leave had been an attempt to climb out of the deepening hole. It seemed even her distancing from Sherlock wasn’t enough, Lexi decided she was too far into the mayhem to withdraw herself now and Moriarty wouldn’t let her leave. A bitter taste enveloped her tongue at the thought of how naïve she had been under Moriarty’s captivating gaze, he had been able to play her broken mind perfectly because he knew exactly how it worked. Lexi had been a complete fool to think that he had been remotely interested in her, her time spent around Sherlock had (in her opinion) humanised her too much — she felt too much and reacted on it more than she had done six months previously.

In her mind Sherlock refused to appear and she was utterly alone sitting in Sherlock’s chair. The room was unfamiliar; large luminous white walls, floors and ceiling that hurt her eyes and made her brain writhe. The only comfortable thing in her mind was the chair, she pulled her feet up into her chest so as not to touch the floor. A noise from behind her caught her attention but she couldn’t turn her head, her mind wouldn’t allow it. A pair of grey elastic-ankled pyjamas came into her vision and she smiled knowingly that Sherlock had appeared. Her eyes followed the trace of the body, her body relaxing into the chair with the comfort and safety that her love offered.

She frowned.

The chest was almost, almost, identical to Sherlock’s taut frame — the abs were identical in that they were chiselled to perfection but across the lower abdomen was a tattoo that Lexi would have found enchanting if it wasn’t entirely out of place. It was a copy of the first line of Bach’s ‘Toccata and Fugue in D Minor’. Lexi raised her head to meet Sherlock’s face, ready to ask the significant of the tattoo but then when her eyes rose to meet the familiar face the bitter taste on her tongue spread.

Moriarty stood in front of her, a sick smile on his face, watching her intently.

“Miss me?”

“Why are you here?” she asked sharply.

“You tell me,” Moriarty retorted darkly, “I’m in your mind.”

“I don’t recognise this place.”

A light went off behind her, she was sure if she could turn she would see the light of the back wall. It
felt as if the black was seeping out of the wall and moving like smoke towards her chair. Moriarty let 
out a thin chuckle, amused with her confusion.

“Don’t make me repeat myself, Lexi. You do make it ever so boring when you simply don’t want to 
use that BEAUTIFUL brain of yours.”

Lexi was once again reminded of Moriarty’s madness as he sang his own words. She wanted to turn 
away but she was fixed to the chair. Another light went off, this time to the side of her, she could see 
out of her peripheral vision that as she had thought the darkness was ebbing off of the wall like 
smoke, consuming everything in its way.

“Oh, so we’re my brain but you still didn’t answer my question.”

Moriarty bunched down in front of her so he could see into his face without straining her neck. He 
looked so bemused with her in an almost condescending way.

“You’re letting yourself fall into the hole again, you silly little girl. I, and this is the kicker, am a 
manifestation of your fear and if you really didn’t get that then, well, you are in trouble.”

Lexi ignored the jibes. She tried to move her hands from the arm rests but all she could do was move 
her legs off of the floor — a good job too since she could see tendrils of empty black smoke curling 
around the base of her chair. Another light went off, this time in front of her. And then in quick 
succession the light to the left of her exploded into darkness too. There was only one light left in the 
room — the floor. Lexi was sure once it exploded she would be ejected rather unceremoniously from 
hers memory palace. The woman swallowed in pensive thought but tried to make her face remain 
unmoved. Moriarty again let out a manic little chuckle.

“No point acting, honey, I am all you.”

“Why my phone then? Why John?”

Moriarty moved slowly through the black smoke, it moved around him like a sea of snakes, dancing 
along the lines of his abs and around his unusually toned shoulders. He was able to move through 
the tendrils with ease, it dawned on Lexi that the smoke was a personification of Moriarty’s being.

“Obviously I want your phone, beats me why. You should really look at it properly. Funny thing, 
phones, people take them so for granted. You’ve been carrying it around for months and you never 
use it like you should,” Moriarty said as he shoved his hands in his pockets. A perverse part of Lexi’s 
mind traced the waist band of Moriarty’s joggers but she chastised herself for getting distracted. The 
tendrils pulsed as Moriarty smiled at her reaction.

“And John. Oh Johnny, Johnny-boooy. He has been a bad man hasn’t he, wanting to kill you for 
noo reason whatsoever.”

“There’s always a reason,” Lexi responded bluntly.

“I guess there probably is, Johnny-boy doesn’t strike me as the type of bloke-y who just does this shit 
for the giggles,” he paused dramatically pointing towards himself, “that’s our m.o., am I right?”

The blackness curled itself around her arms from below. The tendrils were cold and they made 
Lexi’s skin sting as if she’d been out in the wind and rain for too long.

“He’s being paid to do it then.”

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!” Moriarty shouted, mimicking a buzzer noise. The tendrils around her arms
Lexi felt her heart rate increase in panic. Moriarty grinned again this time with his pearly whites flashing. An epiphany hit Lexi like a punch in the face. The tendrils retracted viciously, shocked by her realisation.

“Mary.”

Moriarty stopped smiling and his predator-style blank face appeared on his face again. He was unimpressed that she had an answer worthy of thought.

“Mary is his weakness, if you have something of importance that could destroy Mary, you can own John,” Lexi moved her arms off of the chair and stood up. The tendrils around the chair squirmed away from her, she found it childishly cool that the blackness writhed at the light her footsteps left as she walked towards Moriarty. Moriarty turned to her, panic crossing his own face. She stopped just shy of pressing her lips against his — though it would have been a lie to say it didn’t tempt her — she looked him up and down with a smile on her face, feeling the life flowing back into her. Moriarty tried to step back but the light around her forced him to stand still as if she had him against a wall.

“Whatever you have on Mary means John is tied to do your every request, that’s why he attacked me because of you. You.”

Lexi let out her own manic chuckled as her thought process kicked back in. The black smoke pushed its way back into (at least it seemed to) Moriarty as she laughed. “You might be a madman, Moriarty, but sweetie, you ain’t seen nothing yet.”

Lexi pulled out her phone from her back pocket and thumbed in her passcode. It opened to the usual home screen. It took her a few moments to go through her phone before she looked out the window frustrated. Nothing, nothing that she could see at least. Lexi chewed on her lip, it crossed her mind that she needed to tell the cabbie where to go. For the past few minutes he had been patiently driving around London obviously aware of her anxiety and her sort-of runaway from John and Lestrade, but Lexi didn’t have an infinite amount of money to just sit in the back of a taxi. A thought crossed her mind. She was trained in martial arts and she was fairly confident she could take care of herself without the use of a weapon but the amount of times she’d been stabbed and shot because she was woefully underprepared was embarrassing. Lexi needed protection, even if it meant she had a means to stop someone in their tracks.

“Marylebone Road, please.”

The taxi pulled up outside the same place she and Moriarty had come a few days ago when Moriarty had taught her how to shoot a gun. Lexi pressed her phone against the contactless reader in the cab before jogging up the steps of the gun shop. The door was unlocked so Lexi let herself in to the sound of gunshots. The man behind the counter eyed her warily, he was the same person who had cleared the place the last time she had been here. He nodded slowly at her to which she followed unsure where it would lead her. The man moved from behind the counter and disappeared into the side room, the gunshots stopped and several burly men left the shop. The man from behind the
counter disappeared out back before pointing with his head towards the gun range. She walked into the backroom, feeling almost nervous given the response. Most places usually ignored her presence, obviously the association with Moriarty had stuck and she had a few brief moments to use that association to her advantage. The man (she assumed the owner) came out with a lock box, he opened it for her and she peered inside. A single handgun was kept in the box, again Lexi made the educated guess that this was Moriarty’s gun — or at least his favourite — she wondered how often he came here to vent his frustration. A man such as Moriarty probably had plenty of opportunity to shoot guns but perhaps it was the response of the patrons, of their fear, that made him return. Lexi pulled out the gun.

“I hope Mr Moriarty is happy with the condition, miss.”

He spoke to her in a semi-fearful manner — he definitely thought Lexi was on the side of Moriarty, perhaps a goon here to pick up his belongings. Lexi shoved the gun into her waist band and underneath her baggy jumper. If the timing wasn’t serious she would have felt like she was in a film. Lexi smiled thinly.

“I’ll be sure to pass on the quality,” she responded bemusedly before turning on her heel and leaving. Lexi left the shop and walked down the street hoping to see another taxi pass.

She had a little trip to make to a little house in Putney.
John’s house was cute by anyone’s standards: small hedge rows and rose bushes lined the pavement up to the house, it really had a picturesque look about it. Lexi stood staring on the pavement for a small while chewing on her lip. She had time because no one would expect her to be at the Watson’s home and she was sure that John wasn’t here. The telltale signs of someone being home was obvious to Lexi: the lights were on and the exhaust fan was expelling steam from the boiler. She wondered if Mary was putting on the kettle expecting her husband to be home from work, whether she was expecting him to come home put his doctor’s bag on a chair and for the two of them to exchange gossip while they cooked tea together. Lexi almost felt bad to be the one who would shatter Mary’s evening.

From what she had gleamed Mary had been the one to give Sherlock a few of his scars a year or so ago, she wasn’t sure under what circumstances but she had seen Sherlock naked enough times to know that the gun shot wound had been impeccably placed. Her mind wandered a little thinking about the time Sherlock had woken her with a questionable coloured bacon sandwich, her ambivalence to the sandwich had instead prompted Sherlock to place the bacon sandwich on the sideboard and offer her something — someone — else for breakfast.

She moved towards the front door expelling the thoughts from her head. Lexi wasn’t sure how she was meant to approach the situation — this wasn’t exactly an action film where she was capable of kicking down the door and go in guns blazing. Besides if Mary was as adept at defending herself as she assumed the last thing she needed to do was alert Mary to her intentions. Conversely knocking on the door and asking for a chat wasn’t exactly the most intelligent route either, Lexi highly doubted that Mary would believe her. If Greg Lestrade of all people didn’t believe her, then the wife of the man who had tried to kill her was hardly going to believe her. If everyone commonly thought of her as an unstable addict then she could at least act like one. Lexi tried the door. To her surprise it was open, she guessed Mary didn’t feel the need to keep her doors locked. She probably would after today.

The house was just as cosy on the inside as it was on the outside. The smell of cinnamon assaulted her overdriven senses as soon as she pushed the door open. The entranceway led straight into the living room which was warm but vacant, straight ahead of the room was another doorway that from what she could see led into a kitchen. Lexi pulled out the gun from her waistband and cautiously crossed the room into the kitchen. Mary was stood over the stove with a pair of oven mitts on, the steam from the oven poured out into the kitchen attacking Mary’s face. She responded with a flustered shake of the head and put the cinnamon loaf on the hob. Lexi went to move forward but the doorway, as with all older houses, creaked. Mary didn’t look away from the loaf of bread she’d pulled out the oven.

“Is that you John?” She called loudly, obviously assuming the noise was John coming in from work.

Lexi leaned against the doorway, her stealth tactics out the window. Mary had heard the noise, familiar as it may have been, and now she was sure that someone (she thought John) had come in there was no way Lexi could hide her way around the house without putting Mary on edge.

“I spoke with Jeanine, she said she can house sit for us …” Mary’s voice trailed off as she caught sight of Lexi. They had only met a handful of times and though those times had been pleasant enough but Lexi was not a familiar face, she was not Sherlock and she definitely wasn’t John. Her presence in Mary’s little house was alien and unwelcoming. Mary stared at her unsure of what to do.

“Lexi?” she queried putting the oven mitts down on the counter. Mary went to move over towards
Lexi her arms coming out towards her as if in worry.

Lexi raised the gun at her, her face strangely calm.

“Please Mary, don’t move.”

Mary stopped dead in her tracks a stunned look replacing the concerned one.

“I don’t understand, what are you doing?”

Lexi sighed but she stayed in the doorway.

“You would be surprised how much that thought has plagued my mind,” Mary went to move behind the counter, Lexi raised the gun again, “really Mary, don’t test me. Please, I have had one hell of a day and the last thing I need is you to be difficult. We can be civil about this.”

Mary stopped moving.

“If we can be civil … lower the gun,” Mary implored, Lexi’s face remained unmoved.

“I’m afraid I am far beyond being sane now.”

“Why aren’t you in the hospital? Your wrist, it’s bleeding.”

Lexi moved into the room properly, leaning against the wall instead of the doorway.

“I rather felt the fengshui didn’t suit me … too many crazies.”

Mary stifled a chuckle at the irony of what seemed to be the situation the two had found themselves in. Lexi didn’t share the chuckle. Mary’s smile died away.

“So — why are you here?”

Mary was regaining her composure as the conversation progressed. Lexi was aware of how dangerous she would become the longer the conversation continued. At this point Lexi didn’t really care, she was just as dangerous with how wired she was.

“I need to know about you, Mary dear, every dirty detail, every sin, every piece of … leverage someone might have on you.”

Mary frowned unsure of where she’d gotten her information from.

“I don’t know —“ Mary began, Lexi interrupted her by firing the gun against the counter top just next to Mary.

“Don’t bullshit me.”

Mary gulped and nodded slowly.

“Okay … okay. What do you want to know?”

“Two days ago John Watson attacked me with a needle at Sherlock’s flat. He injected me with enough ketamine to kill me, but — and here’s where I’m thankful for my after hour habits — it turns out my addiction has given me a certain resilience to drugs.”

Mary looked at Lexi the confusion on her face increasing, she was stuck between looking
incredulous at Lexi’s story and worried at the intricacies of her account.

“If that wasn’t enough, the good doctor had to go one more and cut my wrists. It really was quite genius, making it look like I’d doped up and done it to myself. I guess John wasn’t banking on me being able to send a text message to Lestrade.”

“This is absurd, Lexi.”

“No, no it bloody well isn’t,” Lexi snapped in response.

Mary closed her mouth wary of the seemingly deluded Lexi and her gun. A moment’s silence dropped between them as Lexi paced the room irately. Her eyes never left Mary’s face.

“So why would John want to attack you?”

“Why indeed, I have wracked my brain and I mean really wracked my brain and there is only one conclusion I can come up with, one conclusion that ties all this madness together.”

Mary came to the same conclusion she did and let out an unbelieving sigh.

“You think he’s working with Moriarty?”

“Yep,” Lexi popped the ‘p’ with effect coming to a halt away from Mary but still pointing the gun at her.

“But John’s a good man, he’s … he hates Moriarty.”

“Does he?”

“Wait — you think John is working for Moriarty because of me?”

“Yep.”

“That’s insane, Lexi, of course he wouldn’t.”

Lexi lowered the gun with melancholy eyes. Mary relaxed a little but Lexi still stood tense.

“My dear Mary, love is a vicious motivator.”

Mary let out an exasperated gasp.

“Please Lexi, you know John is a good man. You aren’t well, put the gun down and let’s call Sherlock.”

The pleading irritated Lexi. She nipped the bridge of her nose.

“SHERLOCK? He doesn’t know, he wouldn’t understand. You are all so blinded by emotions, useless fucking emotions, none of you see.”

Mary’s jaw moved up and down as she tried to form words that would defuse the situation.

“What would Moriarty have on you that would make John kill to protect you?” Lexi asked quietly, regaining her composure. “What are you hiding that makes you so enticing?”

Mary was still slack jawed as Lexi posed the question. She could see the mixed emotions spread across the blonde’s face like painting on a canvas. How could she believe the shite Lexi was coming
out with? This was her husband, her John, and a twenty-something druggie wasn’t going to change that anytime soon. But then wasn’t every happy ending too obvious? There was always going to be the big unanswered question over her head til’ the day she died: was there any truth in what Lexi was saying? The calculation was crossing Mary’s face and for a short moment Lexi allowed her to try to comprehend her own thoughts and how to process them. After a small while Mary brought her lips together in a tight, stressed line before sitting at the island counter. Lexi wasn’t too fussed about Mary sitting — in honesty her small frame was exhausted because she’d been on bedrest for the past two days, dying would do that to someone, and she wasn’t sure she would be able to stand for much longer unless she was driven to. Lexi sat opposite Mary, the counter separating the both of them but the tension still taut because Lexi held the gun on the table top. She still couldn’t trust that Mary wouldn’t make a grab for her, it would be true comedic irony for Lexi to be beaten down by an aggrieved wife after making it so far from the hospital. Mary didn’t seem in any hurry to rip the gun away from Lexi though she did seem aware of it because her eyes periodically glanced at it and the way Lexi was holding it. The brunette didn’t doubt that Mrs Watson wouldn’t hesitate to grab the gun if Lexi gave her opportunity to. For now, Lexi had Mary where she wanted her and Mary understood her situation.

“My name as you know me is Mary Morstan, or Mary Watson. That wasn’t always my name. About a year before I met John I stole the name of a stillborn baby and assumed her identity. I wanted to try and live a new life away from what my old job.”

Lexi listened.

“My old job was a … contractor of sorts. Whatever price was highest and to whomever had the most interesting job. I’ve killed emissaries and clerics, I’ve rescued diplomats and I’ve collected bounties on children. My job has taken me all across the world and it has gained me a surprising amount of people seeking revenge on me. About thirteen months ago I was made aware that there had been a memory stick created that had all my details on, what I’d done, all my boltholes, anything that could connect this life and my old life together. With that memory stick out there I wasn’t safe, John wasn’t safe. A few months ago, just before you appeared, I managed to get my hand on the memory stick from one Charles Augustus Magnussen.”

“The newspaper guy? Didn’t he fall down a flight of stairs?”

Mary sniffed, looking down at her hands.

“I broke into his high-rise office and broke his neck before pushing him down the stairs. An unfortunate end to an unfortunate man. I got the memory stick off of him, I thought I was fine because neither Sherlock nor John knew. I thought … I thought I was in the clear. But if what you say is true,” Mary swallowed, “it means there was more than one copy.”

Suddenly more than enough became clear.

“And Moriarty had it.”

“Assumedly.”

“And now he and John think I have it,” Lexi muttered looking at Mary with wide eyes. She repositioned the gun as she caught Mary eying it up calculatingly. It was obvious Mary still didn’t believe Lexi, she was bound to hope that there had only been one memory stick and that Lexi’s delusions coincidentally fed into her own fears. “Their can’t just be information about you on the memory stick, it isn’t important enough for Moriarty to go to war over, even if he is a crazy bastard.”

Mary laughed half-heartedly, “We can agree there.”
“And so long as I have it, whatever it is, I hold the cards. Tying up loose ends is what Moriarty does best.”

Mary stared at Lexi her eyes narrowing.

“I think, I still think you should get help, Lexi. You aren’t well and I don’t think you are thinking clearly. Maybe Moriarty has something else up his sleeve but I don’t think John is involved.”

Lexi stood up walking towards the door. Mary called her from where she was sat.

“Please Lexi, let us in. Let us help you.”

Lexi paused.

“I work better on my own.”

Mary sat and stared at her back as she left, exasperated and worried.

Sherlock Holmes was frustrated. For a woman who was so loud and obnoxious Lexi Stuart was proving difficult to find. Sherlock swung his violin bow in his hand irate at his lack of understanding. It had taken him all of five minutes to hack into Mycroft’s security account on his home laptop, he had an entire network of homeless out looking for Lexi and he now had his older brothers access to the CCTV network of London. His computer flicked past each camera as it tried to locate Lexi, there was nothing Sherlock could do but wait. John had left some time ago to search for Lexi in her usual haunts; the coffee shop, the local Tesco’s Express, even her old apartment but Sherlock knew none of the above would yield any results. Lexi was far too intelligent to be silly enough to return to any of them. She had even managed to duck past every CCTV camera Sherlock had at his disposal. He rubbed his chin gently, trying to soothe the throbbing feeling. He had to admit, Lexi’s obsessive level of training had paid off — she had a hell of a swing and she’d known precisely where and how to hit him in order to make him fall like a sack of potatoes. He remembered waking on the bed with droplets of blood on his white shirt — the angle and the amount indicated to him that Lexi had caught him from behind and had laid him down gently on the bed. She had stayed only briefly enough because there were no new stains of blood on the bed, just the ungodly amount on the floor from a few days prior. Mrs Hudson had tried to clean it out, the patriot that she was, but she had only succeeded in rubbing the blood, now caked and brown, into the carpet even more. He would have to replace the carpet and his mattress and bedding to get rid of the stains. There were no new stains or droplets on the bed which told Sherlock that after she had lain him down on the bed she had left swiftly. A few minutes later and Sherlock came back around with John leaned over his chest listening to his heart. John’s face was in clinical mode, Sherlock thought from seeing his friend rather unconscious. He seemed stressed out, more so than usual and his feathers seemed ruffled but Sherlock had learned the hard way not to pry into the Doctor’s head in certain circumstances. That had been one of those moments.

Of course the first thing Sherlock had done, after stumbling dizzily, was to check to see if Lexi’s phone was still in the lazy hiding spot he had kicked it in days prior. Unsurprisingly it wasn’t. He had tried calling the number in desperation but as he suspected there was no response. Sherlock was resigned to the fact that he’d have to search manually using his brother’s security clearance and his homeless network. So far it had all been fruitless. Lestrade was sat on the arm of John’s chair. Sherlock had asked him why he was hanging about because his thoughts were irritating him and in response he had received an exaggerated ‘fuck off’ in exchange.

“I’m here because you need to be watched. It’s a danger night for you Sherlock, even if you won’t
Sherlock had pursed his lips like a child but then let out a long breath.

“Ugh, fine, but stand in that corner and face the wall.”

Lestrade looked at him with the same stare.

“Nope.”

Sherlock hissed under his breath and began muttering to himself how he was almost thirty and didn’t need a babysitter. Instead of retaliating, by telling Sherlock that yes in fact he was a man child that needed constant surveillance, Lestrade used the time to call his police officers instructing them to keep an eye out for Lexi but not to engage because she was dangerous. And yes, a 5ft 5 woman was capable of taking out a task force and no, Anderson it wasn’t likely that he would get in a fist fight. Sherlock had irately stared at his computer as it flicked through different images growing more concerned by the minute and with concern came anger. He picked up his violin to try and take his mind off of the lack of progress but instead of playing soothingly he managed to snap a string which then pinged off of the window. His beloved violin was out of action until he could get a replacement string. Sherlock proceeded to walk around with his bow whipping things, occasionally Lestrade got in the way but after a few times he had threatened to snap the bow so he had started whipping the fridge door instead.

The freezing of his computer pulled Sherlock from his huff. It had stopped with a CCTV image that mostly had a covering of trees with a pavement in the middle. Sherlock narrowed his eyes leaning forwards. He recognised the street, but he couldn’t name it. He frequently removed unnecessary data from his mind to make room for the better, more important things. Suddenly a shape crossed down the camera. The detective felt his heart flutter as he saw Lexi’s grainy outline walk away from the camera.

“Gary.”

Lestrade didn’t even try to correct Sherlock.

“What?”

“Where is this? What street?”

Lestrade leaned over Sherlock’s shoulder, he looked quizzically back at Sherlock.

“Really? You don’t know where this is?”

Sherlock snapped his eyes back towards the inspector detective, “I wouldn’t be asking otherwise, would I? Your hubris will have to wait until later, we have a job to do.”

“Oh, we? I thought you went it alone because you worked faster? The CCTV image is Putney, Sherlock, its John’s Street.” Lestrade had made a poor attempt at Sherlock’s deep voice to try and defuse the tension. Sherlock’s face twitched in his telltale ‘that was kind of funny but if I laugh that’s a bit not good’ smile before it disappeared again under a mask of professionalism.

Sherlock pulled on his trench coat and scarf in his usual flair-y way, he poofed up the collar and swished the tail of the coat behind him. Lestrade threw on his tan jacket with less drama and stood waiting for Sherlock. Sherlock took off down the stairs with Lestrade in tow. They got into Lestrade’s police car and took off down Baker Street, bypassing the lights and oncoming traffic with an angry siren. As they drove a silence settled between them as both men pondered why Lexi had
shown up in Putney of all places. “You still never said why you needed me.”

Sherlock sniffed and looked out the window. “You have a car with a loud siren on it, that’s bound to make anyone move out the way.”

Lestrade nodded in understanding, trying his best not to think too much into Sherlock’s decision to use his car over his friendship. At the same time Lestrade was aware of how much Sherlock cared for Lexi, even if he denied all knowledge of such feelings. He wondered what hold Lexi had over Sherlock. Yet another question to ask.

“I feel I should tell you, I never had a chance to when you got out of the hospital…” Lestrade took the A308 towards Putney Bridge, eyes focussed on the road, “when Lexi woke up she told me that she wasn’t the one who had cut her wrists or injected herself.”

Sherlock looked at Lestrade and frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“She …” Lestrade paused as he tried to work out how to account for Lexi’s words, “she thinks John attacked her with a needle and then cut her wrists to make it look like a suicide.”

Sherlock pushed his elbow into the crook of the window on the door and chewed on his thumb nervously. When he didn’t reply Lestrade took the moment to glance over, he pulled a face and looked back at the road.

“Listen I’m sure she’s just strung out and hurting. She needs help, she’s sick.”

“She isn’t sick. There are many flaws in Lexi, it would take me a long time to list them but she is most definitely not suicidal. Drug dependant, which admittedly makes her sometimes tedious and hindering, maybe but she isn’t sick. If she believed someone else was there then I’m inclined to believe that she’s telling the truth.”

Lestrade blanched, “Are you telling me you believe her when she says John attacked her?”

Sherlock continued to chew on his finger.

“I think she believes she saw John. And I do believe her when she says she wasn’t alone.”

“So why is she running?” Lestrade asked, the car turned onto Holmbush Road and skidded to a stop outside John’s house.

“I don’t know yet.”

They both ran into the house, where Mary was sat with a tea at the kitchen counter. She looked up at them her eyes vacant. She had been expecting them it seemed. A chair on the opposite end of the counter was pulled back, Sherlock recognised Lexi’s trademark behaviour of not pushing her chair in — they had battled over it many a time when she resided in Baker Street.

“Where’s Lexi?” Sherlock demanded, not bothering with polite tones in his voice. He cared for Mary greatly, she was to him family. But Lexi eclipsed his thoughts.

Mary took a long sip of her tea. “She’s gone.”

Lestrade swore under his breath and Sherlock swung about on his feet back towards the door. She had been heading west down the street towards the train station. Sherlock closed his mind off to
Lestradé being filled in on the events. Anything he knew Sherlock would find later, for now he was cycling through which routes were most popular and fastest towards the train station. He pulled his hands up towards his head as his head twitched in time with each turn of a street.

“She’s heading to the station, she’ll be nearer Chartfield Avenue by now. Lestradé we need to go.”

Mary watched him with worried eyes, aware that he hadn’t heard the story she had just told Lestradé.

“Sherlock,” muttered Lestradé quietly.

“What, what is it? Let’s go,” Sherlock responded with rising urgency.

“It’s John, Sherlock.”

“I know but there’s more.”

Sherlock turned with irritation towards Lestradé and Mary, his neck sticking out as he exaggerated his impatience at waiting for an answer.

“Lexi thinks John is in Moriarty’s pocket. She thinks he has been for sometime.”

“Why would he even be? What leverage would there be to make him serve Moriarty?”

Sherlock didn’t need an answer, as he asked the question he answered it himself. His blue eyes locked onto the silent woman who was nursing her tea.

“Mary.”

Lestradé moved towards the door.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. Lexi is still strung out and she has no proper recollection of how she even got in the hospital. She was nearly dead when I got there and there were no signs of anyone else having been there. I think she was upset, got too high and trashed the house in the hope it would make her feel better. When it didn’t… well I think she took drastic measures.”

Sherlock chewed on his thumb again. Rising panic flared in his chest, he didn’t know anymore and that scared him most. Sherlock liked to be in control of situations, now he was totally dependant on the actions of others. Lestradé continued, “Let’s find her first. Come on.”

Tracing the likely route Lexi would have taken to the station took no time at all with the help of Lestradé’s police car, Lestradé didn’t even have the patience to stop for pedestrians, he instead skirted around them as he looked at each face. When they got to the Putney Station they pulled to a halt deflated because they hadn’t seen a sign of the pink-turning-brown woman. Sherlock by now had gnawed enough of his skin away on his thumb to close superficial bleeding, it didn’t stop him continuing, however. Lestradé let out a sigh.

“I’m sorry Sherlock but she isn’t here.”

“She has to be, no way could get to the station in the state she was in any quicker.”

Sherlock got out of the car and paced the pavement outside the station with anger. He was swearing under his breath at his assumptions that Lexi would take the direct route to the train station or that he had been desperate enough to overlook the possibility that Lexi had jumped into a taxi. But as he began to tug at his own hair out of anger Sherlock caught sight on the floor. A few droplets of blood littered the floor. His eyes followed the trail into the station. Sherlock decided there was no time to
wait for Lestrade to get out of the car, he took off into the station following the drops of blood.

He got to the outbound platform and looked around with wild eyes. She had to be here somewhere, he knew it. It was then that Sherlock caught sight of Lexi sitting in a chair, her head facing away from the window, on a train bound into London as it was pulling away. Lestrade ran past him and jumped onto the bar of the moving train, he slammed his hand against the emergency open door button and held out his hand to Sherlock.

“Hurry up!”

Sherlock ran towards Lestrade’s outstretched hand, as the train moved faster Sherlock barged people out the way. As they fell into the doors of the station terminal Sherlock noted the end of the station. He had to be quick. The detective jumped towards Lestrade’s outstretched hand and clasped the detective inspectors hand tightly. Lestrade pulled them both properly into the train and they stumbled to the floor in a tumble. They were one carriage away from Lexi so she had missed the commotion, Sherlock pulled himself off of Lestrade who had been winded in the action.

“Christ Sherlock, for a skinny bloke you sure weigh a lot.”

Sherlock stood up and dusted himself off before holding out a hand and pulling up Lestrade.

“Muscle mass is heavier than fat, Lestrade, if you worked out more maybe we wouldn’t have fallen over.”

Lestrade muttered something under his breath but Sherlock moved away from him, not interested in the comment. He moved slowly down the carriage, trying to walk casually after the ruckus they had caused getting on the train. Lestrade was busy showing his badge to the attendants after they had cornered him for being so reckless. Then Lestrade was pushing past them and following Sherlock down the carriage. They reached Lexi in no time who had her eyes closed and head down.

“Lexi.”

Lexi shot up pulling a gun from the back of her jeans. She aimed it at the two much to the horror of the passengers around her. Lestrade instinctively drew his and aimed it at Lexi.

“Ladies and gentleman, please vacate the carriage,” he called, his eyes not leaving Lexi.

Surprisingly the commuters were quick of leaving, it took less than thirty-seconds for the people to scramble into the other carriages. The train kept moving, Lestrade knew it would likely stop on lockdown at the next station. Lexi stood silently, her one bleeding wrist dripping blood sporadically. He couldn’t tell if it was the gauze dripping from saturation or if it was from her wound.

“Put the gun down, Alex,” Lestrade ordered.

Lexi’s eyes shifted to his, “No.”

“Why not?”

“If I do you might drug me, attack me, I’m good but I’m not capable of taking you both on in the state I’m in.”

“Alex, you need help, let us help.”

This seemed to piss off Lexi who let out an angry breath.
“It is rather tedious listening to people parrot the same thing over and over. I don’t need anyone else meddling in affairs they don’t understand or want to believe.”

“Then tell us,” retorted Lestradedé.

Lexi’s eyes narrowed. “I already did.”

Her voice began to become exasperated, Lestradedé knew her patience was beginning to wane.

“Lestradedé give us a moment,” uttered Sherlock, for the first time speaking.

Lestradedé gave Sherlock an incredulous stare.

“Are you kidding me? She has a gun aimed at us.”

“It’s okay, Greg. Go. I’ll be okay. I need you to stop anyone else entering the carriage.”

Lestradedé wasn’t sure if this was to protect other people from Lexi’s increasingly delicate state or whether it was to give them more time to talk without Lexi being scared off. He sighed and moved off down the corridor, Sherlock and Lexi stared at each other as he left. Lexi still had the gun pointed at the detective, he didn’t move but he didn’t hold up his hands either. He trusted Lexi not to shoot but he didn’t trust her enough not to use violence, as had already been evidenced in the flat.

“Do you think there’s a second memory stick?” Sherlock asked quietly. Lexi’s eyes were a mixture of relieved and scared. “Do you think that’s why John attacked you?”

A tear dripped down Lexi’s face.

“I’m not crazy Sherlock, please believe me. You are in more danger than you know.”

Sherlock stepped up to Lexi so that the gun was pressed to the top of his chest. If Lexi were to shatter entirely she could shoot him where he stood, but her eyes pleaded for help that only he could provide. Lexi lowered the gun decidedly unable to shoot him or defend herself. Similarly to her predicament, Sherlock could have neutralised Lexi from this position, she was vulnerable enough so close to him. He didn’t.

His hands cupped her razor blade cheeks and she looked at his icy blue eyes.

“Please believe me,” she whispered, her voice barely audible.

Sherlock pressed his lips against her chapped ones. It didn’t matter that her lips were rough, it felt right to kiss her. He broke the kiss and looked at her.

“I believe you when you say someone did attack you, Lex. Let me hear you out. Lestradedé can give us the time we need.”

Lexi breathed a shaky sigh of relief but the relief was tempered with apprehension.

“Sherlock, before we start I need to tell you — I haven’t been entirely open with you…”
The teabag swirled around in small circles as Lexi chased the lumps of dissolving sugar with a wooden stick. For once the tea was welcomed, she wasn’t one for the Great British institution that was a cup of tea but the warmth filled her empty stomach comfortably. Lexi leaned her shoulder against the wall, her hand cupping her chin as she watched the teabag swirl and distribute tea into the milky substance. Sherlock sat opposite her precisely measuring out his own spoon of sugar. Sherlock was peculiar in that, for a man of science, he enjoyed dashing the lines between diabetes and sugar overload when he made up his tea. They had been afforded some time alone while Lestrade dealt with the train delay, the detective and Lexi had decided instead to take the back exit off of the train and had found the modest sanctuary of a washed out café just outside the train station. The décor was awful, the service was awful and most importantly the tea was awful. It was a perfect place for the two of them to talk. Sherlock had sat and listened silently, non-judgmentally, at her story and when she had finished with a desperate look in her eyes Sherlock had pursed his lips as he thought through the scenarios in his head. Then he had discussed the ratio of sugar to tea: Lexi noted he didn’t have much of an answer for her. She took the brief respite in conversation to rest her eyes. It had been a long day and she had yet to sleep without the help of medication. Sherlock stirred his tea with a white plastic spoon slowly.

“We both seem to have a knack for getting into trouble, it seems,” muttered Sherlock eventually rousing Lexi from her mini-snooze, “I should have known you were never safe from Moriarty, even after you got out of the hospital and he went to ground. He played us both well, you with drugs and danger and me with … well, me with Irene.”

Lexi sighed at the thought. She had no reason to be so mad with him considering the things she had done (though none of them necessarily equated to love for another person). Lexi found their predicament tiring, even when she had tried to remove herself from the situation for the good of the both of them it had only ended in her near death. She was in this to the end, whether she liked it or not.

“Listen Lexi … I —”

“Let’s focus on the facts for now Sherlock,” interrupted Lexi, just because she couldn’t avoid it didn’t mean she had to talk about it, “why did Moriarty want my phone?”

Sherlock took a dainty sip of his tea.

“I think the correct question to ask is, ‘why did Moriarty have your phone in the first place’?”

Lexi frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“I didn’t just happen to stumble onto your phone, I found it. At Mayfair. In Moriarty’s house.”

Lexi stiffened at the thoughts that the Mayfair house brought back for her.

“Lex, did you give him your phone?” Sherlock asked.

“Don’t be stupid, of course I didn’t. I might have been high but I’m not stupid,” Lexi snapped in response.

“I have to rule out all possibilities.”
Lexi sipped her tea with a bitter face.

“Keep ruling then, you know me better.”

“So if Moriarty had your phone then he needed it for something. You have it with you, I take it?”

Lexi slid her phone across the table and stopped when it hit the middle of the table.

“I don’t know what’s on it, I’ve looked but I can’t see anything.”

Sherlock picked up her phone with his leathered hands gently. He held the phone up to eye level and used the light to scan the immediate features of the object. Lexi watched, knowing the outcome of his mini-deductions.

“There’s nothing obvious about the phone’s physical appearance. Except perhaps the atrocious level of care you give to it.”

Sherlock eyed her across the table accusingly, Lexi shifted slightly under his gaze. True enough the past few days when she’d been high the phone tended to land wherever she fell or threw it. Knowing what she did now it was perhaps good fortune that her phone had lasted this long under her careless ownership.

“Yes, yes, my caregiving skills are terrible, if I had a plant it would be dead. Let’s crack on, shall we? I don’t know how long we have until Lestrade’s superiors decide I need to be arrested for running around with a gun.”

Sherlock could not offer her safety and he knew it. Instead he looked back at the phone, tracing the outside lightly with his fingers. Sherlock tilted his head to the side as his eyes caught onto something. Sherlock placed the phone on the sticky counter with one hand and with the other he pulled at the base.

“An iPhone shouldn’t have a back that snaps off,” Sherlock explained.

He pulled again at the back of the phone and it snapped off. Lexi looked in surprise at its contents, Sherlock’s hands paused.

“Et voilà,” Sherlock muttered.

The interior of the phone was hollow, as if the phone itself had been extended beyond its natural size. In the empty space was a memory disc, a small square piece of plastic with Sandisk on it. Lexi couldn’t help but let out a chuckle of irony. Trust Moriarty to store valuable information on a memory card that was a tenner from Boots. Before Sherlock could pick up the chip Lexi pulled the phone away from him. Sherlock looked at her in surprise.

“Look properly,” she advised, pointing to the edge of the hollowed out phone. A small wire ran along the side of the disk with a miniature vial next to it, “I’m betting whatever’s in that will destroy the drive and everything on it. We can’t just pull it out.”

Sherlock leaned further into the table to get a better look, Lexi became hyperaware of his closeness and the feeling of his sugary breath on her face. It felt comforting but she kept her eyes on the phone.

“So we need to get rid of the security.”

“Nothing in that head of yours on electronics?” Lexi quipped. Hardware mechanics was not something Lexi had knowledge of, nor ever had had the patience to learn. Sherlock shot her a
sarcastic look.

“How the hell would I know?” Sherlock retorted defensively. Lexi shot him a disapproving look.

“Mind Palace, Sherlock, Mind Palace.”

Sherlock seemed surprised at the realisation that he had a Mind Palace.

“Oh yeah, well it’s worth a look.”

Sherlock seemed to withdraw into himself as he moved through his Mind Palace. Lexi waited taking in the moment to steal glances at his cheek bones and soft lips. She chewed on her lip trying to remember better days when she and Sherlock spent the day between the sheets either fucking or trying to play mental chess against each other. She usually won. Sherlock began to frown and shake his head with his eyes shut, the longer he took the more frustrated he got. Eventually he began to mutter to himself, Lexi remained silent. Sherlock let out a grumbling noise as he opened his eyes.

“Nope.”

Lexi blanched.

“Well isn’t that a disappointment.”

“Contrary to popular belief, Lexi, I do not know everything.”

“So who can help us?”

Sherlock sat back in his chair in thought, his thin fingers tracing his own lips. Lexi pressed more napkins down on the wrist that seemed persistent enough to break its sutures. Sherlock noticed her wrist for the first time and tutted.

“You are a terrible patient, by the way. But it’s a good job I know someone who can stitch you up and probably knows a thing or two about removing kill switches.”

Lexi looked up from her wrist frowning.

“Who?”

“Molly Hooper.”

Ten minutes later Lexi and Sherlock entered St Barts. They passed the desk and went down the stairs back to where Lexi had first been shot, they skirted that room and continued on. The furnishings became less friendly and more clinical as they followed the hallway. Eventually they came upon a set of double doors, Sherlock didn’t stop. He sauntered through at full speed not even stopping when Molly jumped with a bone saw in her hands. Molly was half way through cutting open a skull when they had entered, her startled jump had forced the bone saw further into the cranium, Molly swore and turned off the bone saw. She pulled it out and slammed it down on the table.

“Sherlock I’ve told you about bursting through the doors like that. Look what you made me do.”

Sherlock pulled off the identity tag on the corpses toe.
“Oh, don’t worry Molly, I don’t think Mr. Abernathy is going to be needing his skull any time soon.”

Molly pursed her lips unimpressed, Lexi wondered how many times she had pulled that face at Sherlock. Molly was pretty in a dainty sort of way, her long brown hair was a chestnut colour that hand limp down by her shoulders, she had red lipstick on her thin lips but otherwise had no makeup on. Her eyes caught sight of Lexi and her pursed lips turned to a downward smile so that her white teeth flashed in a disgruntled sort of way. Quick as a flash Molly looked back at Sherlock, her face levelling out with the telltale sign that she acted quite often to remain okay in the presence of Sherlock’s companions. Lexi debated how long Molly had been in love with Sherlock. Sherlock didn’t seem to notice.

“What do you want, Sherlock?” she asked with her eyes shifting back and forth between the two.

“We need use of your skills, Molly. My … friend here needs her sutures putting back in and we have a tiny favour to ask of you.”

Lexi tried hard not to feel hurt by the use of ‘friend’. Molly moved over to her and peeled back the bandage, she looked at the wound and then looked back up at Lexi her eyes wide and startled. Lexi decided she definitely looked like a doe.

“What happened?” Molly gasped.


Molly led her over to the table and placed her hand palm upwards on the countertop. She disappeared for a moment and came back with a tray filled with gauze and thread. She got to work straight away, Lexi let out a hiss as the needle bore its way into her skin. Molly looked up sympathetically but didn’t stop — better to go quickly than draw it out.

“So what do you need help with other than this?” Molly asked not looking up. Sherlock stopped peering into the corpses skull, he looked as if he had been caught doing something he shouldn’t have.

“We have a device that has a kill switch on it, a vial that will destroy its contents. We need you to remove the vial.”

Molly let out an exasperated but amused chuckle.

“Of course you do.”

Sherlock didn’t seem to find the matter typical, he maintained his usual lacklustre composure and waited patiently as Molly looked awkwardly down at the phone as Sherlock rebuffed her remark. Lexi watched silently as Molly looked at the chip and at the microscopic vial next to it.

“What’s in this?” she asked, looking back up at Sherlock and Lexi.

Lexi shrugged before Sherlock could answer, “Something corrosive, so please don’t destroy the chip.”

Molly nodded as a brief look of anxiety flitted across her face, it was quickly replaced with a clinical look as the doctor looked back at the phone. Molly took the phone to a microscope and leaned into it, pursing her lips at the complexity of the situation. It would take some time for Molly to make any progress. Lexi fidgeted for a moment, Sherlock looked at her out of the corner of his eye frowning.
“I need a smoke,” Lexi explained, “don’t suppose you’ve any change?”

Sherlock thought about her words for a moment and Lexi thought he was about to say no. Instead he motioned towards the door, opening it for her. She went through and heard Sherlock mumble something to Molly. Soon they would find themselves outside in the rain battered smoking shelter, having found cigarette’s in the hospital commissary. Sherlock lit a cigarette perching the cigarette’s between his lips and passed it to Lexi before lighting his own. A moment’s silence came over the pair as they both took a deep drag on their cigarette’s. Lexi took a guilty look towards Sherlock. She still hadn’t been entirely open with him and he was aware of that, Sherlock had been unusually withdrawn compared to normal.

“Funny that they should sell cigarette’s in a hospital, right?” Lexi quipped trying to break the awkward tension.

“The hospital probably earns more money from patients continuing their bad trends rather than trying to get them clean… it’s the textbook definition of avarice.”

Lexi fell silent before drawing in a long drag. She let it out slowly and turned to the detective.

“Listen, Sherlock, when I disappeared … Moriarty found me.”

Sherlock said nothing and, true to form, his face remained clinical.

“I mean, nothing happened, he just appeared … and I wanted to hurt him so much. And I feel so shitty for saying this because it’s wrong … it’s fucking wrong … but to some extent I understood his intentions,” Lexi looked at the floor because she feared the potentially repulsive look Sherlock would give her, “I understood his belief that this world is, for want of a better word, boring. People go about their business like clockwork — grow up, get a job, find a partner, buy a house, have kids and die. Then their kids do the same thing. It’s just so …”

“Mediocre?” Sherlock muttered before she could finish her sentence, “I know it is, Lexi, because I too have tried to understand Moriarty’s malevolence and I also see why he has gotten that way because it’s crossed my mind more than once.”

Lexi stared at Sherlock in surprise. Sherlock continued.

“The important thing to distinguish yourself from evil, if one believes in that sort of thing, is your humanity. You must understand that Moriarty is no more than a predator, he is devoid of any ability to see the light in life.”

Lexi was reminded of her mind palace, the odd place she had found herself in where Moriarty had threatened her own sanity with the tendrils of black smoke that burned her skin like holy fire. She was drawn back from her thoughts by Sherlock cupping her cheeks with his soft hands, somewhere along the way he had gotten rid of his cigarette.

“You are filled with more light than you know, Lexi Stuart. Moriarty is drawn to you like a moth to a flame because of your vibrance. His determination to consume all that is good in the world is the only thing that keeps him going, he thrives on chaos and we cannot allow him to achieve it.”

Lexi stood on her tiptoes, feeling the rain whipping her face slightly, and pressed her lips against Sherlock’s own. She felt him stifle a moan at the surprise kiss but it let her know that he had longed for her as she had for him. For a moment it didn’t matter that the world was slowly collapsing around them, their lips colliding eclipsed all else. Sherlock used his tongue to trace along her lips momentarily and as quick as it had happened, it was gone. Sherlock pulled away and Lexi was
suddenly hyperaware of their surroundings. Though many people were indifferent as they ran to their cars or bus stops in the increasingly heavy rain, it was perhaps not the best place to retrace the steps of their relationship. A thin smile played on Sherlock’s lips as he breathed in her smell.

But not everything could be an illusion, at least, not for long.

“Molly will want us back, come on.”

When they got back to the lab someone else was in the lab with Molly. Sherlock tutted irately.

“Why have you scuttled out of your hole, Mycroft?”

Mycroft, who had been leaning against his umbrella (which Lexi noted wasn’t wet even though it had been raining heavily) turned on his heel to face Sherlock and Lexi. His face drew utter distain as he noticed Lexi’s small frame behind Sherlock.

“Brother. This is not a social call,” began Mycroft, his overly upper-class voice unsettling the air around him. Before Mycroft could continue Sherlock interrupted him.

“So what is it you want? Unhappy with my extracurricular activities? Am I not eating properly? Or was it that you were upset that I found your cameras in my apartment?”

Mycroft pursed his lips, his disdain increasing.

“No, though I had noticed the cameras had gone dark. I must try to hide them better next time,” Mycroft rearranged his umbrella, “I came to give you a friendly warning, you cannot aid a fugitive of the law and expect me to be able to protect you. She —“

“Lexi.”

“…Lexi is a criminal. She is under the arrest of Her Majesty the Queen and you cannot expect me to stand by while you associate yourself with her and her corruption.”

Sherlock tilted his head to the side inquisitively.

“And what makes you think you’d be able to stop me, Mycroft?”

Mycroft gave a spectacular sneer.

“I could put you in the deepest darkest hole I can find. Perhaps a small stint in prison would change your perspective.”

“Puh-lease. We both know without me you’d be shit at your job.”

“Sherlock, you cannot help Lexi. She is sick and she cannot be helped by encouraging her fantasies. For Christ’s sake, she attacked a nurse.”

Lexi leaned out from behind Sherlock, though he still stood between Mycroft and Lexi.

“Actually I knocked her out, attack implies she was aware it was coming.”

Mycroft stifled a disgusted scoff. Sherlock stared darkly at his elder brother.

“Lexi is under my protection Mycroft and if you go against her you go against me and I guarantee you that I will inconvenience everything you hold dear.”
Mycroft seemed to take Sherlock’s threat seriously, Lexi wondered if Mycroft relied on Sherlock a little too much. In this case it worked in her favour.

“Well, Mycroft?”

“I see that your mind cannot be changed. A pity, I thought better of you Sherlock.”

Mycroft opened the door, righting his coat before he left. Sherlock didn’t watch him go but he called out before he was out of the room.

“Mycroft.”

Mycroft froze at the door.

“Tell your men to stand down.”

Mycroft said nothing and left. Lexi watched him leave with wide eyes as two men followed him, she recognised one from her first encounter with Mycroft. She pondered how they would have taken her, if they would have stormed the room or waited until she was alone. Molly distracted her from her thoughts.

“Um, I didn’t want to disturb you guys with, well, you know.”

Sherlock snapped to attention.

“Yes Molly?”

“I took off the killswitch. It wasn’t too hard with a scalpel and bunsen burner.”

Lexi raised an eyebrow in curiosity but decided the strategy was best left for another day. Sherlock seemed to think the same thing because he continued.

“Did you get the chip?”

“Well, um, no.”

Sherlock frowned, “What do you mean ‘no’?”

“It’s recessed into the phone, Sherlock. Removing the safety measure clicked it into place. You don’t need a computer because you only need the phone.”

An epiphany crossed Lexi’s mind, but Sherlock reached it first. She noted her distaste at Sherlock being mentally quicker than her of recent.

“That’s why everyone has been after your phone, not only is it the container but it is also the memory stick.”

Lexi held out her hand to Molly, the mortician placed the phone gently in her hand.

“Thank you Molly, I realise this isn’t exactly the normal way to meet someone properly.”

Molly shrugged, overwhelmed with Lexi’s words. The mortician’s cheeks flushed a little and she looked away.

“It’s alright, Lexi, I would do anything for Sh— a friend.”
Lexi pretended not to notice the stumble of words. Sherlock didn’t seem to even notice. At least she was still mentally superior in some ways.

“Let’s see what’s on here then.”

Molly smiled thinly. “I’ll leave you two to it then.”

She left the room silently with Lexi smiling at her as she left. Sherlock was mesmerised with the phone. The green-eyed girl hit the power button and the phone came to life.

Both Sherlock and Lexi remained silent as the chip in the back of the phone took over the iOS. Neither knew what to say.

On the phone was a single word.

A.G.R.A
Lexi and Sherlock both pursed their lips in thought. Sherlock was the first to break the silence.

“How perplexing.”

“A.G.R.A. — I wonder if this is what Mary mentioned to me earlier,” Lexi pondered out loud. Sherlock watched as Lexi clicked on the heading and it opened into a series of lists.

< A.G.R.A : DESIGNATION CONTRACT HIRE

HIRE TO: REDACTED. >

The first part of the link was broken, it irritated Lexi immensely — had they worked through all of this to find themselves scuppered by someone else's editing? Lexi refused to let her search be for nothing. She clicked on the next link.

<A.G.R.A : PERSONNEL

SQUAD: ALPHA . GOLF . ROMEO . ALPHA

HEIRARCHY: ROMEO . ALPHA . GOLF . ALPHA

LEADER: MJR. ROSAMUND X ; DESIGNATION A. G. R. A. COMMAND. 217 CONFIRMED, 320 BLACKLIGHTED, UNKNOWN QUANTITY KIA >

Lexi raised her eyebrow in surprise.

“Mary really wasn’t joking was she?”

The green eyed girl thought about the numbers for a moment, were they body counts? Had she killed more than 500 people in her career? More? Lexi thought back to her conversation with Mary, she had said herself that she had killed children in some circumstances. How many of those numbers were children? Lexi was a hardened woman but the thought of killing a child made her veins run dry. She looked towards Sherlock, his eyes were dark and Lexi decided he was probably thinking the same thing too. They had both been on both sides of death but not to the extent Mary had (Or was it Rosamund?), in comparison she practically bathed in it. Lexi decided to continue scrolling.

< OPERATION DENOUEMENT : PROJECTED END DATE: 2015

ACTUAL END DATE: 2014

STATUS: FAILURE

NOTES: OPERATION WAS ABANDONED DUE TO INTERNAL FRACTURING AND CATASTROPHIC PERSONNEL DAMAGE.

INIT.: INFILTRATE AND EXECUTE KNOWN KEY PERSONNEL OF UK REGIME. DETAILS IN ENVELOPE.

CONTRACTOR: US. GOV’T - REDACTED AT TIME OF PRINT >

“Well, shit.”
Sherlock muttered in agreement but continued to read. Lexi had had enough, it was clear that this evidence was more than just influential in terms of Mary’s livelihood — it had compromising data of the US and probably more. Giving the phone to Sherlock, Lexi sat down at the desk they had been leaning over and ran her fingers through her hair slowly, her fingers tingled slightly as they fought back the nerve damage from her wrists. She wondered in the future, if she wasn’t killed soon, if she’d ever be able to practice medicine again, after all, a doctor’s hands were their more valuable assets. Lexi examined them in front of her on the desk as they shook slightly because of the nerve damage. The feeling of anger curled in her chest at the thought that it was John who had done this to her. But would she do the same if it had been Sherlock? Sherlock placed the phone on the desk next to her and sat down, he had taken off his leather gloves so that he could swipe through the phone better. Lexi caught glimpse of his thumb where he had gnawed away the skin in stress. She guessed they had both been put through a few stressful situations of recent. They still hadn’t discussed the truth in Lexi’s allegations or whether the detective believed her. She knew it would be hard for him to comprehend the gravity of the situation: John was everything to him, his whole life and family. Sherlock seemed to pick up on her thoughts.

“I find myself in the increasingly precarious situation of thinking John may be involved in what’s going on.”

“I’m sorry, Sherlock.”

Sherlock didn’t reply. Lexi reached into her pocket trying to grapple with the cigarette’s in her pocket. Sherlock reached into his own quickly and pulled out a cigarette and offered it to Lexi, he must have noticed her shaking hands too because he lit the cigarette for her too. She took in a long drag before breathing it out slowly. The deep breathing relaxed Lexi slightly but the smoke still didn’t stop her whirring mind — why had Moriarty put the chip in her phone of all places? Then again Moriarty didn’t have a reason for half of the stunts he pulled, he just did it because he could. Perhaps putting the chip in her phone had been amusing for a while, to see both Sherlock and herself doddering about London with one of the most powerful pieces of information in the world unaware. It was perhaps also why he had decided it was time to take back her phone, yet he hadn’t banked on Sherlock picking up his trail so quickly and now the phone was tantamount to whatever move of his was next — and they had it. John was just one entertaining side of the coin for Moriarty but that didn’t take John one of Lexi and Sherlock’s bigger problems. At least… John was the most immediate issue, they would eventually have to tackle the final problem of Moriarty. Sherlock interrupted her thoughts.

“I think we need to speak to John, Lex.”

Lexi’s head snapped to attention and she twisted her lips in a disapproving gaze.

“I think that would be a very bad idea.”

“Why would it be a bad idea?”

“Because he will lie … or at least, he’ll talk you into confusion,” she muttered the last part almost embarrassed at how infantile she sounded.

Sherlock let out a short irritated sigh.

“So what would you have us do? Sit around and wait for Lestrade to come pick you up?”

Lexi shrugged.

“I don’t know, Sherlock. I really don’t know. Every time I try to remove myself from this situation I
A few moments later and Sherlock was stood on the rooftop to Bart’s with his hands in his long trench coat. He was able to see across most of London from here, such was the view. In another time he would have appreciated the view — from the foreboding presence of St. Mary’s Axe to the scholarly peaks of the British Museum, whoever owned the building opposite had obviously also had the same idea because they had installed green grass and plush furniture which complimented the buildings surroundings. The detective noted that next time he had a rooftop liaison he would have to swap locations to somewhere he could sit down. For now his mind was focussed on the unsure meeting with John, his blue eyes watched the people below him to try and distract himself.

They seemed to happy and oblivious to life, unlike Sherlock all they had to worry about was whether they had food in for that night or whether they would be late for work.

“Sherlock. Why are we meeting on the roof?”

John’s awkwardly jovial voice cut through the silence and Sherlock’s thoughts. Sherlock turned in place and watched John approaching him with a half smile on his face.

“John. I’m glad you got my message.”

“Well, of course, what are you doing up here though?”

“Thinking,” Sherlock muttered turning back around to the vista, “did you find her?”

“I tried all of her usual places, even that dodgy coffee place opposite her old place. Not a thing. You?”

Sherlock’s face remained a mask of mystery.

“No.”

“We need to get her Sherlock, she’s obviously a danger to herself and others. She already took you out with one blow.”

“Maybe.”

John reached next to Sherlock and came to a stop. He had his hands tucked into his grey jacket to keep them warm, even though it was quite a mild day. A moments silence came between the two as they both fished for ways to speak to each other. Sherlock had treachery on his mind, John likely had uncertainty on his. John began to fidget after a few minutes, obviously irate at the lack of progression.

“So have you tried to call her?”

“Yes.”

“And?”

“… No answer.”
“She must have her phone. Right?”

“Perhaps.”

“Why aren’t you more concerned, Sherlock?” John demanded, beginning to pace.

“Because getting upset about everything won’t resolve it.”

“But you just said you tried to call her, that she won’t answer and that she’s running around London with a gun.”

“Who told you about the gun?” Sherlock asked, turning on John.

John paused and looked at Sherlock with an awkward frown.

“Well. Lestrade.”

John’s demeanour and the way he shifted ever so slightly made Sherlock’s stare increase. It was entirely plausible that Lestrade had contacted John after the incident on the train but then he would have known that Sherlock had come into contact with Lexi. So he obviously hadn’t spoken to Lestrade.

“So you spoke to Lestrade after seeing me at Baker Street?”

John dipped his head, nodding before checking his phone again.

“Not long ago actually. He was concerned about where you went after Baker Street.”

Sherlock turned away frowning. John was lying — Sherlock had been with Lestrade as soon as they had had their run in with Lexi. The detective wondered about what else he was lying about.

“How’s Mary, John?”

The doctor seemed surprised by the change in conversation but, given his credit, he responded quick enough.

“She’s fine. Why? Sherlock, what’s going on?”

“No skeletons come out of the closet?”

John tilted his head to the side.

“Uh, no?”

“Nothing to do with Mary’s sideline proclivities of assassination and mercenary work?”

John’s awkward smile faltered slightly. He didn’t know how to respond to Sherlock and he couldn’t play dumb because they both knew of Mary’s past (at least somewhat). John pulled his lips into a thin line, the detective had known John for long enough now to know the doctor was irritated with his line of questioning. Sherlock turned to John, his eyes filled with sadness.

“How long have you been in contact with Moriarty, John?” he asked, his voice carefully level. If one listened hard and beyond the gravelly tones of Sherlock’s voice a certain sense of melancholy lined Sherlock’s words.

“What are you talking about?” John asked sticking his head forward in irritation.
“The phone, John, I know you’re after the phone —“

“Stop it now Sherlock, just, stop. I don’t know what you’re talking about,” John interrupted, licking his lips nervously. Suddenly John squinted suspiciously at Sherlock.

“You’ve been speaking with Lexi, haven’t you?” John snorted with a dismissive look plastered on his face, “whatever she’s said Sherlock is a lie, of course I haven’t spoken to Moriarty — are you mad?”

Sherlock watched John carefully. He still hadn’t moved.

“Have you seen what’s on the phone?” Sherlock queried.

John paced in anger, his hands running through his hair as he rejected Sherlock’s questioning. The doctor stopped suddenly and put his hands on his hips with his lips puckering out. For a long moment John didn’t say anything, Sherlock waited. The two men stood opposite each other on the rooftop, both were an oddity in the loud mass that was London.

“… Of course not, of course I haven’t seen what’s on the phone,” John muttered his voice quieter this time.

“John. Please. If you’re in trouble let me help you, you can trust me, you know that.”

Sherlock’s voice had been soft but for whatever reason John became incensed by his words. He began to pace again, his hands still on his hips.

“No Sherlock I can’t trust you.”

Sherlock raised his hands slightly to try and calm John but John batted his hands away like someone would when swatting a fly. Again John stopped but this time, just in front of Sherlock, John pushed back his grey jacket and produced a gun. He pointed the barrel at Sherlock. Sherlock looked at the gun in surprise, his eyes filled with hurt yet he didn’t say anything. Sherlock raised his hands slowly out to the side (as anyone would when being threatened with a Beretta).

“I can help you John, you just need to tell me what’s going on.”

John tutted, pointing the gun at Sherlock’s head. He seemed totally comfortable with the gun in his hand, his grip was strong and one could tell he was a former military man, though irritated his posture was extraordinarily calm. There was no doubt John would shoot if he needed to.

“God would you just. shut. up. For the love of all that is holy, for once you can’t help Sherlock. You are the problem,” Sherlock frowned for once in total confusion, “Moriarty wants you. He wants to make you hurt and watch you burn and the only way he’ll do that is if the people you love the most break first. And I am sorry Sherlock but I will not allow Mary to go down just because you’re an arrogant son of a bitch that steps on everyone else’s toes.”

Sherlock opened his mouth slightly to say something, his eyes a mere shadow as he took in the information, instead he decided to say nothing.

“Well done, Sherlock, for once you can actually do what you’re told.”

Sherlock’s eyes darkened in anger. The gravity of the situation was slowly revealing itself — and the detective didn’t like it at all.

“It’s hard not to when you have a gun pointed at your face.”
John looked at the gun and then back at Sherlock.

“Yeah, well, I need that phone Sherlock. Do you have it?” John asked, again with a degree of quietness that indicated a man with determination.

Sherlock took the moment to probe into John’s dilemma.

“Why does he want this phone so much?” Sherlock asked.

“Can we not do this? If you have the phone get it out of your pocket, slowly.”

Sherlock didn’t move, his hands stayed in the air.

“I’m sorry John but I’m afraid I am of no assistance to you. I don’t have the phone.”

John pulled back the slide of the gun so it clicked. Sherlock realised John had no qualms with shooting him.

“So who does, Sherlock?”

“I do.”

Sherlock closed his eyes in disappointment.

Lexi was stood with a gun pointed at John. Her face a level of frustration that could only be described as anxiety. She was stressed and everyone knew it. John turned but he didn’t move the gun from Sherlock, instead he faced her with his gun out to the side.

“Lexi, I should’ve known you were here somewhere. How much did you hear?” John asked, again the same kind of look crossed John’s face that had crossed Mycroft’s face not half an hour before. For some reason the friends of Sherlock Holmes viewed Lexi with contempt.

“Enough to know I didn’t imagine you trying to kill me.”

John sighed.

“Yeah, I should’ve just shot you. It would’ve been much quicker.”

A small gasp came from Sherlock, the full realisation that Lexi had been totally right all along was a heavy blow. Somewhere within him he had hoped Lexi had been mistaken and that it had been Moriarty all along manipulating everyone. To some extent that was true, Moriarty had been manipulating everyone, unfortunately John was just as involved as Moriarty. Lexi’s green eyes looked briefly at Sherlock with sadness, she too had wished that the drugs had made her hallucinate.

“I’m sorry, Sherlock,” she whispered looking back at John.

John seemed to be getting more irate by the second.

“Sorry doesn’t get us anywhere. Where’s the phone, Lexi?” he demanded moving his finger to the trigger of the gun.

Lexi moved her finger to the trigger too, her hands shook slightly with the exertion but she managed to stay on point.

“In my pocket.”
She didn’t move to get it but John looked at her hoody pocket with greedy eyes.

“Give it to me.”

“No. Put the gun down, John.”

John stared at Lexi and then looked at Sherlock. His eyes flashed with something (sacrifice?) before he looked back at Lexi with hard eyes.

“Please give it to me, Lexi.”

“No.”

“If you don’t give me the phone I’ll shoot Sherlock.”

Lexi froze for a moment, the look in the doctor’s eyes told Lexi he was being serious. Lexi bit her lip. She pulled out her phone and held it out to John. John lowered his gun and went to take it. Lexi pulled back the phone before he could grab it and threw it away from Sherlock and herself. John moved to take the phone and Lexi moved beside Sherlock. Sherlock still hadn’t moved, his eyes were transfixed on something not in this reality. Was he lost in his mind palace? Had the revelation totally broken him? John picked up the phone and tucked it into his pocket. He seemed somewhat relieved but still had his gun pointed at Sherlock.

“Good girl,” he muttered.

Lexi sneered at him, her skin crawling with the infantile comment.

“What are you waiting for? Run off to your Master.”

John lowered his gun and stepped backwards and Lexi relaxed slightly thinking John was about to leave. Then his phone buzzed. He checked it and visibly sighed.

“I’m sorry,” he said. Lexi frowned not understanding his words. Sherlock looked up seemingly out of his mind palace. His eyes were filled with tears but none escaped his eyelids.

And then the world stopped.

It seemed the world was going in slow motion for the trio. John raised his gun again towards Sherlock, his finger on the trigger. Lexi watched as he went to pull it back and shoot Sherlock in the head. She responded but the reaction seemed much more intense from her stand point. Her gun exploded with noise and the vibration was enough for the gun to go flying out of Lexi’s injured hands. A bullet whizzed through the air and hit John square in the head. Lexi let out a breath. Somewhere someone was screaming.

Lexi looked at Sherlock and realised he was the one shouting at John. He had moved towards John throwing himself down in the process to catch John’s falling body. His body landed with a thud against Sherlock’s knees and his brains splattered across Sherlock’s face and chest. Sherlock didn’t seem to notice though as he tried to shake John awake. Lexi lowered herself to the ground, suddenly hyperaware of what she had done. John’s lifeless body moved but only because Sherlock was shaking it. They both knew John was dead, yet Sherlock in his shock seemed to think he could shake the doctor awake. His best friend was dead and there was no way to avoid the fact that the only person Sherlock had trusted with his life was now lying motionless on the floor with his brains decorating the rooftop and the detective’s coat. Lexi looked at her hands in dismay, had she meant to shoot John? She had retaliated because John had been about to shoot Sherlock. Yet the very act of killing him had made her stomach flip.
Lexi had cut open people, dissected corpses and even been to a few murder scenes. But she had never killed someone. Until now. The gravity of her actions hit her stomach like a freight train. She scrambled up slightly only in time enough to throw up against the doorway down to the hospital. Lexi could hear people moving at the door downstairs. The gunshot had been loud enough to alert people in the hospital. Lexi’s thoughts went back to John, the bile in her throat rose again and she threw up the rest of the contents of her stomach. He had tried to kill her and Sherlock but that didn’t necessarily mean he had deserved to die. She didn’t mean to hit his head but her relative inexperience had made the gun ricochet off of her wrist and send the bullet further upwards.

There was no getting past John’s dead body.

She had nothing left to throw up.

The door burst open to the right of her and police officers swarmed onto the roof. Lexi was pulled away from the wall and her vomit and pressed to the floor. She felt the click of handcuffs against her sore wrists that had been pressed against her back. The other police surrounded Sherlock and John with their guns held up. They were screaming for the detective to move away from the body but Sherlock continued to try and wake up John. From where she laid Lexi could see the river of tears coming from Sherlock’s eyes. He was distraught and Lexi had been the cause. A tear slipped from her own eye but she was too shell shocked to follow through with the tears. She watched at the police pulled Sherlock away from John, he only protested until Lestrade appeared. The detective inspector had stopped in front of John’s body with a slack jaw. The scene was obviously overwhelming — John had been his friend too and now he was lying with his brains splattering the rooftop. Lestrade looked at John and then at the gun and then at Lexi. His eyes hardened and he looked at Sherlock who was still screaming John’s name.

Lexi watched as Lestrade pushed off the officers who were holding Sherlock. Lestrade grabbed Sherlock’s shoulders and cracked his hand hard off of Sherlock’s face. The hit was hard enough to stop Sherlock’s hysteria and the detective came back into his own head. Sherlock looked at Lexi and then back at John. She felt heavy hands pulling her up off the floor. Lestrade had turned to look at Lexi.

“Take her back to my office. Keep her cuffs on. Now,” Lestrade snapped his voice strung out. Lexi guessed he too was trying not to cry. Sherlock was still staring at John, his eyes a void with no end. Both Lexi and Sherlock became aware of what had happened.

Lexi had killed John Watson.

Oh God what had she done?
The bile in her throat was enough to make her stomach do flips still. It burned acrid against her tongue and made her salivate in her otherwise parched mouth. Two police officers sat in front of her in Lestrade’s office, the Detective Inspector had yet to arrive from St Bart’s, it was likely he was trying to usher a hysteric Sherlock away from John’s dead body.

God.

John’s dead body.

It still hit her like a freight train. She had killed John. Shot him. It had been in self-defence though. Perhaps if she’d done nothing she would have been the one hysteric on the floor trying to wake Sherlock up. But then John would have disappeared with the phone and the last glimmers of her humanity. Lexi ran through her head the scenario, where she had been stood, the bullet trajectory and the surrounding area. There had been at least three CCTV cameras that had caught the altercation: one from the building across the road and two from the rooftop they had been standing on. That still didn’t take away from the metal taste in her mouth and the sheer horror in her mind. The officers had been asking her the same questions ever since they got into Lestrade’s office.

“What made you shoot the gun, Alexandra?”

“Why did you do it?”

Of course Lexi hadn’t responded, how could she? Her mind still replayed the actions like a broken recording and each time the impact of the bullet lodging into John’s head didn’t get any easier to hear. So there she sat with her eyes staring at her increasingly abused wrists attached to some very shiny cuffs.

From behind her the door opened and someone stopped in the doorway.

“Get out,” snapped a gruff voice she knew well.

Lestrade came into view as the police officers filed out of the room. He sat down in his chair with his head in his hands, he rubbed his face vigorously for a moment before sitting back into the chair and looking at Lexi with hard eyes. At some point between the rooftop at St Bart’s and getting to his office Lestrade had been crying, his eyes were bloodshot and puffy like he had been furiously rubbing away tears. Lestrade sat for what seemed like an age. Lexi didn’t move either, her eyes refused to see through the images playing in her mind. The spell was broken when she felt movement at her wrists, she flinched half expecting to see another knife at her veins again but this time it was just Lestrade’s soft hands taking off the cuffs which had been attached a little too tightly. Lexi pulled back her hands away from the table and pulled them into her hoody, her glassy green eyes dared to take a peak at Lestrade who had sat himself back down with his hand over his mouth and his thumb cupping his cheek. Lestrade caught her eye and he let out a tired breath.

He knew Lexi was capable of taking out men heavier and stronger than her so there was only really one reason he had let her hands free: he had seen the CCTV. He had seen John go to shoot Sherlock and Lexi respond. He had also seen the gun fly from Lexi’s weakened hands as she shot the gun. They both knew Lexi had only done what they both would have done. Lestrade lit a cigarette and
offered it to Lexi, she took it acceptingly with her hand shaking to place it in her mouth. Decidedly the probability of Lexi ever being able to go back into medicine with the abuse her ligaments had taken was ever decreasing. Lestrade eyed her hand as it shook and took a long drag in of his cigarette.

“I’m sorry I didn’t listen to you,” Lestrade mumbled letting out the cigarette smoke in a controlled manner.

Lexi nodded slowly, there was no point in holding grudges now, what was done was done.

“Sherlock?” asked Lexi, it had been a while since she had spoken and her voice was gravelly and coarse. Her voice trembled slightly, she was scared of the answer.

“Sherlock is … Sherlock is devastated. He’s downstairs actually. If any night would be a danger night it would be tonight.”

Again she nodded, of course tonight was a danger night for Sherlock. John had been Sherlock’s world, his brother in the truest sense (more than Mycroft had ever been) and today his world had been shattered. John had turned a gun on him with the intention to get rid of him, though she wasn’t sure how much influence Moriarty had had, and then he had had to comprehend that the man he had loved most in the world had tried to kill someone he was fairly fond of. (Lexi could not be sure to what extent their relationship had gone since it was a rather tumultuous thing.) Quite literally the entire of Sherlock’s world had ended. And she had been responsible. Lexi couldn’t help but think that without her presence Sherlock Holmes would still be his happy self in his little flat in Baker Street. Lestrade gave her the moment to mull over her thoughts before butting out his tab on the desk (obviously not fussed with the state of his desk) and leaning forward with purpose.

“Lexi I know this must be hard for yo— … for us but I need you to tell me again what you think happened and I don’t just mean with what happened today … tell me everything.”

Lexi put her hands back on the table in front of her, looking down at her shaking hands once again. Her eyes felt itchy and she knew if she regaled the story again she’d break. Lestrade seemed to sense her thoughts and his soft hand, surprisingly, came into contact with her own so that he was holding her hand reassuringly. Normally the feeling would have repulsed her, the close proximity of another body, but today his hand on hers felt nice she guessed the way a reassuring hand hold was meant to feel.

Lexi took in a breath and told her story from the beginning.

Sherlock Holmes was proud to say he was a man of clinical nature. His detachedness from most things gave him the cutting edge to view things with a detective’s eye and quite often this allowed him to solve otherwise heart wrenching cases. Today his clinical nature had failed him. His clinical nature had failed him all along. For the longest time John had been in Moriarty’s pocket and he hadn’t even the slightest notion that something was afoot. John had never really been overly affectionate of Lex, since the first time he had met her he had disapproved of her overt nature and proclivity to drugs. He had also objected to Sherlock finding someone so alike yet so drastically different to himself. Now Sherlock knew why John hadn’t liked her, it was one more person to notice something was wrong.
Sherlock had been rather ungraciously placed in a padded cell meant for Lestrade’s more volatile detainees. His spacial awareness only came back into view when the cell door had clicked shut and it was a stark opposite from where he had been. Before the cell he had been watching John hold a gun up at him and Lexi holding a gun at John. Hell had spilled over into reality and there was a deafening explosion in his ears — it wasn’t until he had been sat alone that he’d placed an action to the sound. The explosion had been the cracking of John’s skull against the bullet that Lexi had fired. Sherlock frowned again, twisting his lip in a painful manner, trying to get rid of the thoughts from his overactive mind. To no avail. Sherlock could see the lifeless eyes of John staring up at him as he tried his best to wake him up. It had been a rather infantile reaction, one that reminded him of Redbeard, but it had been his only way to cope with the loss of someone so important to him. It had been his only way to cope with the betrayal of someone he thought he knew so well. Hot, sticky tears rolled down his cheeks. He slammed his back off of the padded wall trying to focus his mind, it helped slightly because his mind processed the physical pain rather than the mental clusterfuck his mind was.

Sherlock stood trying to rearrange his thoughts. He ended up pacing furiously instead. With nothing to hit to focus his mind he began to talk things through with himself. John. John was a good place to start as any. He had been trying to protect Mary, that much was obvious. Mary, who was otherwise called Rosamund, was a contracted killer who had been under the payment of the US Government to assassinate key members of Parliament. There were a number of reasons the US would want to covertly take out key members of the UK Parliament, not to mention the continued funding of the Afghanistan war if it were made to look like a terrorist attack. Whoever had ordered it had been on the receiving end of a failed operation because for some reason A.G.R.A had split internally. Perhaps someone had objected to the contract? This seemed unlikely given they were a band of contract killers who had killed children. That mystery remained open, but it wasn’t the mystery worth solving. Someone had collated the data and placed it all conveniently onto a memory chip. In the wrong hands it had the potential to start war. And quite like the beautiful genius Moriarty is, he has placed it in the hands of a med-school student with a penchant for getting high. The natural order of the world, for all intents and purposes, was completely out of kilter because Moriarty had intended it to be so.

Sherlock.

But what remained the biggest question — the most important question — was how one was to legally bring down Moriarty.

Sherlock.

Of course the easiest response would be to just murder Moriarty in the most creative way possible. Because he killed John. John was dead because of him.

Sherlock.

Yes. There was only one fate for Moriarty and it lay at the end of Sherlock’s bloodied fists.

“Sherlock!”

A voice snapped him out of his thoughts, he had been forcibly stopped by an object in his path. Lestrade wasn’t too much smaller than him, only by a few inches or so, yet his appearance under Sherlock’s peripheral was enough to surprise the detective. He jumped back slightly away from Lestrade who reached out to hold him by the shoulders. The wild look in his eyes alarmed Lestrade which made him speak slower. The words coming out of his mouth moved at a slower pace towards Sherlock, yet still the detective didn’t comprehend his speech. Sherlock moved back to muttering again as Lestrade moved out of his vision. He heard the door click shut somewhere and he wasn’t sure how long it was until it opened again.
Sherlock turned to tell Lestrade where to go but he was stopped in his tracks by a familiar, yet equally as surprising, figure. Irene Adler stood in cuffs in front of him with sad eyes. She had the hue of purity about her without her makeup on and it gave him flash backs to times spent on foreign lands with the dominatrix: they would wake up together under a canopy with a light breeze on them and she would look the picture of beauty with no makeup on her doe-y brown eyes. Sherlock blinked slowly at Irene’s appearance.

“Hello,” she said softly, each word melting off of her lips.

Sherlock was perplexed with the arrival of Irene so his brain couldn’t quite comprehend the meaning of her visit. Instead he was left with the few words his primitive brain could offer him.

“Irene…”

“How are you Sherlock?”

The detective paused. Was this in his head? Was his self-conscious literally forming a new defence? Was he really beginning to lose his grip on reality?

Sherlock decided he must be right because Irene gripped his cheeks with a soft yet firm touch, seemingly having heard everything that had run through his mind.

“How strange.”

His Irene frowned.

“What is strange?” she asked, her aristocratic English accent bouncing off the quiet of the room.

“That my own mind would create a defence mechanism against the chaos that is going on in my own mind. Your appearance is obviously a sign that my mind palace is running at a higher strain to normal,” he explained though he wondered why he bothered giving the fact he was very likely explaining things to himself.

Irene kept her grip on Sherlock’s face, the confusion of the conversation still painted all over hers.

“Oh, no, Sherlock I am not in your head. I am very much real. I’m here to talk you out of this … this madness you’ve put yourself in.”

Sherlock twisted his head out of her hands in suspicion.

“Why you?” he bluntly asked.

Irene considered the question immensely, the detective could see her working out the answer.

“Because I’m the only person you’ll stop for.”

“What do you mean?”

The question seemed simplistic enough to Irene because her frown expanded across her face.

“Sherlock, you’ve been talking to yourself for over an hour and a half pacing back and forth. You wouldn’t stop for anyone.”

Sherlock stepped back from her, patting down his coat. She was right. The temperature of his coat had changed since the rooftop … since John. He ran his hands over his face. His eyes, though red and itchy, were bone dry. He had long since stopped crying. Sherlock looked at the door. It was
open and Lestrade was stood leaning in the doorway with his arms crossed. He had also long since lost his coat and jacket instead opting for a creased white shirt rolled up to the elbows and a half arsed tie. The Detective Inspector’s eyes were also red and bloodshot; he’d been crying too. Yet there was a certain detachment to his look, he was still working. Sherlock took a deep breath in, steadying his thoughts and calming himself down. He had to be like Lestrade — as strong as Lestrade. A strange thought but for once Sherlock was allowed to admit his admiration for the Detective Inspector.

Sherlock looked back down at Irene. She had long since lost her designer clothes and dangerous looking heels. Instead she was dressed in an orange jumpsuit and a pair of white plimsols — the attire of someone residing permanently in a prison. Her allure was somewhat lacking compared to usual. His inner thoughts chastised him; how superficial of him to judge her based on her attire. She didn’t quite catch his breathe the way Lex did.

Lex.

Her name caught on his brain like a thorn. It brought him back from the edge of his thoughts and back into the room.

“I am in your gratitude Irene,” Sherlock mumbled.

He leaned down and planted a kiss on her cheek. She didn’t move as he did so, not like she normally would.

He remembered he went to thank her, to kiss her on the cheek but she moved at the last moment so that his lips were nestled into the crook of her neck and her perfume was intoxicating him in the most sensual of ways.

Sherlock pulled away from Irene and looked to Lestrade, he had been looking into the padded cell but as Sherlock had come around from his thoughts he had stepped back slightly to give Irene and himself room to talk. Lestrade heard the finality in Sherlock’s voice and he looked back in.

“Lexi?”

Lestrade pointed up towards the ceiling, he obviously meant his office and not the literal ceiling. Sherlock went to leave the room but Lestrade stepped in his way, Sherlock came to an abrupt halt.

“Listen Sherlock I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to see Lexi right now,” Lestrade began.

“Why?” he retorted with apparent obliviousness.

Lestrade wasn’t prepared for Sherlock’s question because he opened his mouth to fish for an answer but came up with nothing. Sherlock took the opportunity to push past the Detective Inspector who followed him in close proximity.

“I just don’t think either of you are in any kind of state to see each other, Lexi is —“

Sherlock skidded to a halt, turning on Lestrade.

“She’s what? A murderer? Is that what you were going to say?”

Lestrade slammed into Sherlock’s chest but recovered remarkably quickly. Sherlock was expecting Lestrade to give him the riot act; that Lexi was a danger to society who had done nothing but cause mayhem and murder since escaping from the psychiatric ward at St Bart’s. He had his own speech ready to refute Lestrade. Lestrade’s facial features softened.
“She’s devastated.”

Sherlock looked away from the Detective Inspector, his cheeks flushing with guilt at his ready belief that Lestrade was condemning Lexi. It had crossed his mind — the woman he loved had killed the man he loved. But she had only done it to protect him, he had seen John’s finger on the trigger. He had seen the strain John was placing on the trigger finger, whatever message he’d gotten had told him to fire his gun. He never admitted it but Lexi was smarter than he was, she had picked up on the signs at least five-seconds before he had and had acted accordingly, as he would have in the same position. Yet she had killed John Watson. Lexi Stuart had lodged a bullet in the brain of his dearest John. Would it just have been easier for John to shoot Sherlock? Would it just have been better if it was Sherlock’s brain splattered across Bart’s rooftop? His intuition told him no: there were still many things to put to a close, too many people relying on him, too many loose ends. Yet the death of John Watson was equally as world ending for the detective. In many ways it would have probably been better if he had died instead. But that was a selfish thought and not one for now, not when he had Lexi to confront (to console?).

Sherlock locked eyes with Lestrade, his eyes were a cloudy blue — the kind of glassy that betrayed the onslaught of tears — yet he remained calm.

“I know. Let me see her.”

Lestrade let out a long sigh and motioned towards the end of the hallway in front of them. That was his cue that Sherlock was free to go with no one stopping him. Sherlock stalked down the hallway.

“Sherlock?” Lestrade called.

Sherlock stopped as the automatic door opened for him.

“Sherlock?” Lestrade called.

Sherlock stopped as the automatic door opened for him.

“For what it’s worth, I’m sorry.”

A single tear left Sherlock’s eye, he made eye contact long enough for Lestrade to notice but before Lestrade could say anything Sherlock turned and left, rubbing his cheek in the process.

Lestrade’s office was located centrally within the NSY. Even though he wasn’t the head of the NSY (the job often kept for men with too much money and not enough sense, who hadn’t seen a day’s policing since the 70’s) Lestrade had the bonus of being needed by more than one task force. Therefore getting to the Detective Inspector’s office was a relatively simple task, even for a man as navigationally incompetent as Sherlock (navigation was not an important thing to store and besides, who needed an inner compass when one had signs?).

Five minutes later and Sherlock was stood at the door of the office. He hesitated, knowing Lexi was on the other side of the door. What was he to say to her? Could he really forgive her for ending the life of his best friend? Could he place his own life above John Watson’s? Obviously not. But that didn’t make the forthcoming conversation any less difficult. Sherlock pushed down the handle on the door, the frosted glass door clicked open and made a whooshing sound on the carpeted floor. Lexi was stood looking out the window, her blonder-brown hair looked so odd matched to her skinny frame and battered body. He was so used to seeing her with pink hair that it was oddly refreshing to see her without the wacky colour. Lexi seemed to be in a world of her own, staring absently out the window. The fact that she hadn’t heard him coming in gave Sherlock an opportunity to steal a look at the woman in front of him. She had no makeup on, like Irene, but unlike Irene who had looked naked and afraid Lexi looked perfect. Even if she was covered in bruises, track marks and had two angry welts across her wrists her complexion and soft skin called to him in a way Irene never could. Sherlock moved silently towards Lexi, offering her a few more precious moments of ignorance. His hand found the back of Lexi’s neck; he touched her gently but she still swung around defensively to
fend off whoever was upon her. Sherlock caught her fist easily enough as it went for his chest. When Lexi caught sight of Sherlock her arm went limp and Sherlock let her hand fall gently to her side. Her green eyes searched his blue ones for the longest moment.

“Lex…” Sherlock uttered almost soundlessly.

The presence of his voice seemed to startle Lexi and she began to talk so immensely fast that Sherlock struggled to keep up. Her reaction betrayed the telltale signs of her half-caste accent that reached somewhere in between Northern English with a lilt of Irish. Sherlock reminded himself minutely that one day he would have to pester her on her background, he had yet to find out about her history, other than that she was an orphan. How selfish of him.

“I shot him I shot him he raised his gun I didn’t mean to shoot him in the head. God I can still hear the bullet hitting his head Jesus fucking christ I killed him why did he raise his gun why didn’t he just drop it. Oh Mary what about Mary does she even know? There was so much blood and you were screaming and…” she broke off into a sob mixed with a retch.

Sherlock went to take her face but she turned quickly, stumbling into Lestrade’s desk and leaning over a bin. Whatever had been left on her stomach (not a lot) was emptied into the bin, she began to hyperventilate as the gravity of her actions were re-realised. Sherlock moved quickly towards her. He plucked her skinny frame from over the bin and swept her into his arms. The detective noted how much weight she had lost again, her clothes barely keeping to her — it was a testament to how much she had been struggling and how much he had been fixated over Moriarty because he hadn’t noticed so much. Sherlock leaned against Lestrade’s desk with Lexi cradled in his arms. He held onto her tightly, afraid he might lose her again if he let go. Lexi sobbed into his chest but he didn’t mind so much because it gave him the opportunity to assess his own thoughts. His cheeks were sticky from the tears but he had all but finished crying when he had cradled John’s body. Instead Sherlock pressed his lips against the top of Lexis head as she cried. The detective found himself slowly rocking side to side, he wasn’t sure if it was because it comforted him or because it comforted Lexi, perhaps both.

He wasn’t sure how long had passed when Lexi stopped crying. Hell, he wasn’t even sure if she was still awake given the exorbitant amount of stress she had been under. His arms ached with the effort of holding the skinny woman in his arms, she didn’t weigh a great deal but it had likely been some time that he had held her. Sherlock’s eyes caught sight of the settee Lestrade usually used to catch a few hours of sleep when he was banished from his (increasingly diminishing) marriage. Sherlock gently picked his way towards the settee and placed down Lexi, terrified she would break.

The movement seemed to wake her. Lexi’s eyes opened slightly and she found Sherlock staring fondly across at her. He had taken to sitting cross legged on the floor so that he could keep a watchful eye on her. Some resilience seemed to seep back into her face as she tried to wake herself up. They had both been lost in their own hysteria and it seemed they both needed each other to wholly come out of the other side — Sherlock had been very nearly close to losing himself again after Irene had appeared in front of him, it had been the promise of seeing Lexi that had encouraged him to go on. Lexi didn’t move her body but her head repositioned so she could see Sherlock better. She noted that he too looked like shit, his angular face usually made him look sharp and alluring, today the sharpness mixed with the red, irritated eyes made him look gaunt and tired.

“Hey,” she whispered hoarsely.

“Hey.”
“I’m sorry … about John,” said Lexi.

Sherlock looked down at his hands for a brief moment but looked back at Lexi with a bittersweet look.

“So am I, Lex, so am I. It should never have come to this.”

Lexi nodded with a snotty sniff.

“What are we gonna do?” she asked with remarkable innocence.

Sherlock pulled out the phone from his pocket.

“This won’t end unless we end it ourselves,” Lexi’s eyes hardened at the sight of the phone, “so we end it.”

Sherlock unlocked his own phone, trying his best to ignore the dried bloody smudges on the phone and thumbed in a message. Lexi read it as he typed.

19:07PM: We have something of yours. If you want it, come and get it. SH

The reply was instantaneous. It made both Lexi and Sherlock sit to attention.

19:07PM: Tsk, tsk, Sherlock. You are an impatient man. I thought you might want to let the news sink in first.

19:07PM: Oh btw, soz about Johnny-boy, he was actually quite a competent minion. :-(

19:08PM: Be seeing you real soon, Sherlock. Be seeing both of you real soon.

Neither Sherlock or Lexi wanted to know how Moriarty knew they were both together, but it made them both lean together apprehensively.

The final problem needed it's solution.

Chapter End Notes

This story is so very nearly at it's end! I'm not going to spoil how many chapters are left but I hope you're all enjoying the ride ❤
Fury xo
Guilt Ridden

Chapter Notes

This is a pre-warning that this chapter is gruesome/pretty dark but totally has a good ending for persevering through it!

Fury xo

The crucified man stood in a dark room. The dark room oozed. Lexi stood opposite the crucified man. His blood dropped onto the floor, the droplets echoing as they fell through the silence. Lexi watched the man with fascinated eyes. She wasn’t afraid. This was the third time she’d had the dream. The man never moved but the blood got inexplicably deeper with every dream. There was something wrong about the man (if one could ignore the dreadful obviousness that was the crucifix) that Lexi couldn’t place her finger on. The pale woman could do nothing but stare, not the kind of stare that stung at one’s eyes after a few moments but the kind of stare where one’s eyes were comfortably in position and had no fret of becoming dry. It would then be more prudent to call Lexi’s staring more akin to gawking. The blood pooled at her feet like water, lapping at her Converse and staining the white. But it didn’t matter because the crucified man had a peculiar quality about him that Lexi found oddly familiar.

His head was attached backwards and she was looking at the man from behind. The repulsive stitches, if one could call such shoddy work stitches, seemed to be sealed together with giant staples as if a child had attempted to sow the head back on but had failed miserably and had resorted to using hardware staples to secure the head. It reminded Lexi of a med student in their first ever semester — shaky hands and atrocious line work. The crucified man’s face was curiously out of kilter, something which reminded Lexi of a half-used candle: the skin drooped in certain places like dried wax from the eyes to the edge of the crucified man’s mouth. Peculiar still was the crucified man’s eyes, or rather the lack of eyes — eyeballs were replaced with metal discs, on further inspection Lexi decided they were tokens, roughly eighteenth century, she guessed some kind of archaic English monetary value. Of what relevance they had reached beyond her admittedly expansive knowledge, she had never gotten close enough to see the detail on them, except that they had a face on them and the damage was old and extensive. Lexi had yet to speak to the crucified man — the blonde haired woman had received the impression that the crucified man wouldn’t respond to her questions if she tried. This dream was different, Lexi was stricken by an urge to speak to the man. But what to say to a man who theoretically should be dead?

“Hello?” She probed wondering if the crucified man would reply. When he didn’t Lexi was overcome with the urge to step forward as if by creating motion, kinetic energy, the crucified man would burst into life. She stepped through the blood, gingerly placing her foot down on the unseeable floor. The crucified man didn’t move, didn’t blink and didn’t speak. Not even a moan against the inevitable pain one would receive having such gnarly stitches and staples.

“Uhm, my names Lexi. Or Alex. Or Lex. Whichever. It’d be really great if you didn’t reenact a scene from a horror film and murder me,” she continued with a nervous, if not slightly humorous tone. Lexi took another step forward again taking caution to test her step before she firmly planted her foot. “What’s your name?”
Perhaps she had been too optimistic in expecting an answer. Lexi took another step forward, she was now in close proximity to the crucified man to the extent she could see the maggots crawling through the gaps in his stitches. She leaned forward so that her chin was sticking out with her eyes narrowed in order to see more detail. Still Lexi felt profusely at ease.

“I feel it would make sense to ask what significance you have to frequent my dreams,” she stated, her face mere inches from the crucified man. Lexi pouted immaturity when the crucified man didn’t reply.

And then the most peculiar occurrence happened. The blood, which had been bleeding profusely around the shoddy stitches, pooled at the coins in the crucified man’s eyes like he was about to cry. Lexi narrowed her eyes, her face still uncomfortably close to the maggots in the crucified man’s face — this was a new event and Lexi watched in fascination as the blood tears dribbled down the rotten cheeks of the crucified man.

“Oh wow. You, uh, you need a tissue?” Lexi asked with a semi-humorous tone that seeped with uneasiness. The crucified man opened his mouth. Lexi raised her eyebrows, her fascination continuing, as the crucified man’s mouth expanded like a snake past his jaws. She heard the cracking of the bones as they dislocated and snapped, Lexi grimaced. The act of dislocating ones jaw didn’t bother Lexi, she had seen enough during her time in A&E, it was instead the chthonic moan that escaped the man's jaw that made Lexi take a step back. It was lamentable that this dream, of all the creepiness it entailed, would be the dream that the hairs on the back of her neck stood up. Someone, or something, stood behind Lexi.

Trying to ignore the crucified man’s disquieting scream and with some trepidation about what was behind her, Lexi turned slowly. Mary Watson stood in front of her. Lexi tried to take a panicked step back from the woman but ended in the arms of the crucified man. His arms bent backwards, inclusive of the snapping bones, so that his arms encompassed Lexi’s slender yet muscular ones. It seemed Lexi could not move, the hands around her biceps were vice-like and she was overcome with the feeling that even if she tried to struggle there would be no release. At least the hellish screaming had stopped, perhaps that had been the crucified man’s way of warning her of danger or perhaps it had been a way of summoning the dark shade that was Mary. The blonde had no choice but to examine the apparition of Mary. She was dressed in the most ravishing ivory dress that had embellished sequins down to the hem, its length seemed impossibly long so much so that Lexi couldn’t see the end of it. Her face was adorned with elegant makeup that accentuated the angles of Mary’s face and the beauty of her larger than average blue eyes. It was the hollowed out circles under her eyes and the paleness of her lips that made Lexi uneasy. With makeup as elegant as Mary’s one would have thought her lips and face would have been filled with colour instead it was as if a white-wash paint had been added over the top of her magnificence. Like a shade of her real self.

“Mary…” Lexi gasped. A single, dark black tear fell from Mary’s eye.

“You murderer,” she whispered in response. Lexi shook her head in exasperation, her mouth slightly agape at the truth in Mary’s statement.

“I - I - I had no choice, please believe me. I am so very sorry,” exclaimed a horrified Lexi.

“You murderer. You shot his head so that his brains leaked from his head, so that Sherlock nearly lost himself in his grief. You killed my John,” continued Mary, her voice getting louder. Lexi opened her mouth to say something but found herself floundering in dismay. She felt her eyes growing hot with the guilt of her actions. Mary went on.

“YOU KILLED MY JOHN! YOU BITCH! YOU MURDERER!” She screamed in anger, her face distorted in impossible ways. Lexi’s face became wet with her tears, her mouth still open in horror.
She tried to pull away, to recoil, from Mary’s burning gaze but the grip of the crucified man became unthinkably stronger.

“DON’T YOU KNOW WHAT MURDERER’S GET? THEY BURN IN HELL! YOUR DREAMS WILL BE NOTHING BUT PAIN, SO YOU KNOW THE PAIN THAT I FEEL. YOU FUCKING BITCH.”

The feeling of panic flared in Lexi’s chest; she tried to break free from her captor’s grip yet the grip of the crucified man became stronger. She could feel the bones in her arms bending under the pressure, the cracking of her skin against the sharpness of his nails. Lexi reverted her gaze to Mary, she hadn’t moved yet a knife appeared in her hand. It reminded Lexi of a meat cleaver that chefs used to carve up meat.

“No, please Mary, I beg you, I’m so sorry… I never meant to kill him!” She begged, tears running from her eyes in partial guilt and partial pain from the cracking of her arms. Lexi let out a painful sob. Mary didn’t seem to notice as she slammed the meat cleaver into Lexi’s stomach. She let out a wail at the pain that was more akin to a dying animal than a human being. Mary didn’t seem to mind as she pulled the meat cleaver and drove it into her stomach again and again. Lexi’s legs almost buckled under the exorbitant amount of pain but the crucified man held her up as he snapped more of her bones. Like before her eyes wouldn’t close yet they began to sting as they slowly dried out. She could see her entrails spilling out onto the floor like she was some kind of monstrous piñata, Lexi felt stick to her core yet she couldn’t escape her nightmare. Mary pulled out the cleaver, now decorated with Lexi’s blood but instead of slicing into the blonde’s stomach even more her thin, bony hand pushed its way into Lexi’s stomach and rooted about, like she was searching in her handbag for an illusive object. Lexi could feel her hand pushing upwards like a knife, past her organs, past her rib cages and onto her heart. She felt the crushing pain as Mary pulled at her heart, she could feel the snapping of her arteries as her heart came away. She could only but watch as Mary held her heart in front of her, letting out hysterical sobs as she watched her dying heart.

“Pleease Mary…” she begged again as drool and snot ran down her face. It seemed when one was dissected all manners went out the window.

Mary leaned in close to her face, her own face a shade of destruction.

“Now you know how it feels,” Mary whispered viciously.

Lexi felt the cold end of a gun press against her temple. More tears fell from her eyes as she tried to plead with Mary. She heard the hammer click.

BANG.

Lexi woke with a start, sitting up right in her bed, sweat dripping over her body as if she had showered. Her heart hammered in her chest as she hyperventilated in panic. She could still feel the pain of her stomach from where Mary had driven the meat cleaver, the blonde pulled her top up to double check her stomach. Apart from the ugly scar from her gunshot wound her skin was smooth and soft. Lexi drew her legs up to her chest, hugging them close as if it would protect her from the outside world. She focussed on her breathing for the longest of moments, forcing her heart to slow and her breathing to level. Her surroundings came in to her vision. She was in the spare bedroom at Baker Street, in her knickers and a tank top. The room seemed normal, her fresh pressed clothes had been left on a chair next to the vanity table. Out of the corner of her eye something moved. Lexi turned her head slowly, fear gripping her stomach in the expectation that Mary would be stood with the meat cleaver in her doorway. Instead it was a familiar, more welcome silhouette: Sherlock’s. He
was stood in his t-shirt and grey joggers with a worried expression painted across his face. In his hands were two mugs, it didn’t take a genius to figure they had tea in them. Lexi looked back down at her knees still trying to get her breathing under control. She felt pressure on the bed as Sherlock sat down at the mattress edge, Lexi looked up again with trepidation — had he changed his mind on how he felt about her? Did he blame her like Mary had in her nightmare? His face said anything but. The brown haired man offered her a cup of tea which Lexi for once gratefully accepted. It was still dark outside and Lexi noted the time on her alarm clock said 4:05AM.

“Did I wake you?” Lexi asked quietly. Sherlock nodded gently.

“You were screaming in your sleep…I tried to wake you but you seemed pretty lost in your sleep. I thought it was best to let you ride it out,” he explained softly. Lexi nodded in understanding. “What was it about, if I may ask?”

Lexi thought about her dream but found her heart involuntarily increasing again. Sherlock must have noticed the change in her demeanour because he changed subject.

“Once you fell asleep in Lestrade’s office I took you home. You stayed asleep in the car and all the way up to your bed. I figured you needed the sleep so I left you to it.” Lexi remained silent, instead choosing to take a loud sip of her tea.

“This is good, thank you,” she mumbled motioning to the tea. Sherlock half-smiled but his eyes remained sad with a hint of worry.

“I just thought you’d like to know that Lestrade won’t be pursuing anything other than accidental death in self-defence… the CCTV footage showed you —” Sherlock paused as his voice broke but only for a few seconds “it showed you protecting me and the gun ricocheting off your hand. We know … I know you didn’t kill him intentionally.” The last part was a whisper as Sherlock talked candidly about John’s death. Lexi nodded again not sure how to take in the information. How was she meant to respond? Perhaps she should have told Lestrade to press murder charges, to lock her away indefinitely so that she couldn’t interfere with anyone’s life or end it prematurely. Instead she changed tact.

“… Mary?” She asked hesitantly.

Sherlock took a sip of his tea as Lexi had before. He considered his words for a few moments before letting out a long sigh.

“She’s at the NSY, with Lestrade and Mrs Hudson and Harry, John’s sister,” he added the explanation of Harry after Lexi frowned in confusion, “so far she’s been … catatonic. She cried for a long time and then she just … shut down.”

Lexi closed her eyes as her vision swam with the overwhelming feeling of the guilt. Her eyes felt warm again so she scrunched her eyes with vicious pressure trying her best not to open the floodgates again. Sherlock removed the tea from her hand and she heard two small bangs as Sherlock placed the tea on the bedside table. Strong hands found themselves around her in a hug as she held her eyes shut, Lexi could do nothing but melt into Sherlock’s embrace. His warm body felt reassuring — enough to allow Lexi to open her eyes having fought back the dizziness and tears. When Sherlock sensed her breathing returning to normal he pulled back slightly, his beautiful face close to hers. His blue eyes locked with her green ones.

“It occurs to me I never actually thanked you … for saving my life. I have often thought of my life as expendable, that death would find me one way or the other, but I find myself shamefully glad you did shoot the gun … even if it had its own consequences. So thank you, Lexi, I owe you my life.”
Lexi looked at him with melancholy. It certainly didn’t feel like she had saved his life. Sherlock moved his hands to her cheeks softly, his thumb brushing her gaunt cheeks. Softly his lips pressed against hers and Lexi felt her grief melt momentarily as her body became overwhelmed with Sherlock’s embrace. She kissed him back with fervour, suddenly desperate for his touch. His tongue soon danced over her plump lips, a small moan escaped her mouth almost minute in noise but Sherlock had heard it and he seemed encouraged by the noise. His lips pressed with more intensity against her own and she acquiesced until Sherlock traced her cheek bones with his lips and moved onto her neck and shoulder blades. He pushed her down against the bed, to which Lexi fell without complaint only stopping to pull off his top. Sherlock continued to kiss her neck and jawline as he pulled up her top. A loud moan escaped her lips as Sherlock’s mouth and tongue found her nipple, he teased her with his tongue occasionally nipping with his teeth to get an extra moan out of her mouth. Lexi felt herself becoming wet between the legs, her bud throbbing with the desire to be attended to. As if reading her mind Sherlock slid his hands into her knickers, massaging her with perfect attention. She let out a gasp at the euphoric feeling as Sherlock continued to kiss and suck on her nipples with careful caress. He continued to toy with Lexi until she was overcome with the need to feel him inside her. She pulled him up towards her so that she could feel his hard erection against her groin. Lexi could feel his pulse between her legs and she kissed him almost ravenously, physically demanding his touch. Sherlock acquiesced, pulling off his joggers and her knickers with smooth motion and then she felt him thrust inside her with passion. He continued to kiss her as he fucked her and Lexi began jutting to his rhythm. Sherlock took charge of Lexi as he thrust harder and deeper into her, small groans of appreciation escaped his throat each one in time with his thrusts. She felt his breath on her neck stiffen after a five minutes of them vying for control of the rhythm, he was close to coming. Lexi took charge of the movement of them together. Another groan escaped his lips and she found herself coming close to her own orgasm, as Sherlock stiffened as he orgasmed, Lexi climaxed letting out a moan.

He collapsed next to her, out of breath from the exertion. Lexi laid for a few moments enjoying the feeling before rolling over to face Sherlock. He had his eyes shut and he breathed heavily but she could feel his buzz. Lexi kissed his cheek gently before collapsing into the crook of his arm. Automatically his arm came around so that it touched her naked body, his other arm resting behind his head. They said nothing as their breathing levelled out. Lexi opened her eyes and looked up to Sherlock, he sensed her eyes on his face and he craned his neck to look at her with a sliver of a smile. She stared at him with a soft look.

“I love you, Sherlock Holmes,” Lexi whispered.

Sherlock kissed the top of her head softly.

“I love you too.”

They laid there in silence, letting each other’s breathing calm them down. For the first time Lexi had a dreamless sleep.
The morning birds chirped especially loud this morning. Lexi stirred from her sleep with a disgruntled moan, once she had thought the birds chirping in a morning was sweet but now it felt as if they were trying to peck into her head and sing their melodies. The blonde haired woman scrunched up her eyes and turned further into the sleeping Sherlock’s chest. She didn’t want to acknowledge what today was. His breathing soothed her angry, perturbed mind with his rhythmic chest rising up and down — ever the sign of a man who was in a deep sleep. Lexi watched his chest rise and fall with a small smile on her face, she would be happy to live for morning’s like this: snuggled into Sherlock’s chest, completely sober and completely safe in his arms. Lexi ran her hand over Sherlock’s chest slowly feeling each of the individual toned muscles as she went. Her smile faded as she caught sight of her wrist and the ugly pocked red and white skin where John had attacked her. The physical reminder seemed to set the Always off in its neurotic ways. The dream came first, the nightmare which replayed over and over in her mind along with the screaming of the crucified man. Then the gravity of her role in John’s death; the Always would jump back to reminding her that John was very much dead after that. She felt her heart rate threatening to skyrocket with the inevitable feelings of sickness and delirium that grief offered but instead she chose to sit up so that her elbow was resting on the bed and she leaning on it. Sherlock grumbled slightly at the movement but otherwise didn’t stir, Lexi watched him with melancholy eyes debating whether she should wake him. She decided not to. It would have been better to let the curly haired man sleep for a few more hours than force him to wake to a world of grief and misery. The blonde gently moved to sit at the end of the bed, shrugging on the t-shirt Sherlock had discarded some few hours before, she noted that even with their time apart his clothes still engulfed her. Next she pulled on her knickers that she too had discarded last night; for the next hour or so while she ate breakfast they would do, at least until she threw them off to shower.

Lexi padded down the wooden steps semi-silently, the only telltale sign of her descending the stairs was the creak of the wood in the old house. She walked into the kitchen her eyes scrunched shut at the morning light and her mouth tipping open as she yawned lazily. The few hours she’d managed to rest with Sherlock protecting her had been blissful and she’d felt better for those few hours than she had done in weeks, Lexi enjoyed the yawn as it happened knowing her body had eased slightly in its tension. She grabbed the kettle from its holder, not bothering to look up since she knew exactly where it was and held it under the tap. The water flowed into the kettle as she considered last nights events. She smirked at the memory, letting out a small sniff in giddiness, before looking to check the level of water in the kettle. As she did so Lexi noticed a flash of light behind her, in those few precious seconds she realised that it was the silver end of a knife. Her eyes widened in surprise and she moved quickly away from the movement, alongside the length of the kitchen. A long blade slammed down into the wooden workbench where she had been stood not seconds before, attached to it was Mary Watson dressed in black with her platinum blonde hair tucked neatly behind her ears. Lexi stumbled slightly in surprise. Was this the Always breaking the bonds between thought and reality? To punish her for sleeping dreamlessly some of the night?

Lexi watched as Mary turned towards her, pulling out the knife as she did so. Her face wasn’t anything like it had been in her dream. There was no makeup or shade to her face that made her look nightmarish or ethereal, just red swollen eyes and chapped lips from where the aggrieved woman had been crying too much. Lexi decided this was very much not the Always and that in fact this was very much the grieving fiancé of John Watson. She looked at the knife in Mary’s hands and swallowed nervously.

“Mary…” she muttered with a gasp.
Mary didn’t stop to hear the rest of her words, she moved as quick as lightning at Lexi, the knife held like an extension of her arm slashing towards Lexi’s throat. Lexi used the kettle to deflect the attack by instinct, the blade bounced off of the kettle but left a deep gouge in the metal. She had no other choice but to throw the kettle at Mary so that she could move out of the way before Mary came at her again with the knife. The platinum blonde batted the kettle away and advanced on Lexi who moved backwards with careful steps, determined that her end wouldn’t be because she had tripped over something and cracked her head. Lexi held up her hands in front of her trying to persuade Mary to stop.

“Mary put the knife down, please,” she asked, this time a little louder and with a little more urgency than an astonished mutter.

Mary pulled her face back in a level of hate Lexi had never witnessed and went again at her with the knife. Lexi stepped out of the way of the knife, noting how easy her body had responded to her commands. She guessed Ash had taught her some things after all.

“Why should I put the knife down?” Mary spat with anger. She seemed to up her game because as she brought the knife down she took a side step to catch Lexi off guard. Lexi had to step and duck as the knife went past her forehead, she was sure if the room had been slowed down she would have seen her own severed blonde hairs falling to the floor. Lexi stumbled back further away from the advancing Mary, her hands still out in front of her.

“Let me explain, Mary!” She begged loudly this time. She wondered how heavily asleep Sherlock was not to have heard the kettle banging off the floor or Mary’s shrill voice.

“You don’t get to explain!” Snapped Mary as she brought the knife down towards Lexi’s head. Lexi couldn’t dodge this time so instead she caught Mary’s wrist with her hand, the knife no more than a few inches away from her head. Panic flared in her chest as the strength of Mary’s arm bared down on Lexi’s weakened wrist. Her hand was shaky enough without the pressure of a knife baring down on her — Lexi tried to use her other hand to bat the knife away from the two of them but Mary was quicker, she knocked Lexi’s hand away and brought her own spare hand against the blonde’s throat in a vice like grip. Lexi felt the air crushing out of her throat, very much reminding her of her nightmare, she began to panic further her primitive instincts kicking in. Lexi brought her legs up to slam her feet into Mary’s chest, instead she was met with her legs wrapping around Mary’s waist. In response Mary moved forward towards the living room wall and slammed Lexi off of it. Winded, the blonde slid to the floor trying her best to catch her breath, she noticed the blade appear once more above her. Lexi resigned herself to the possibility that she couldn’t move in time given how winded she had become and how much her wrists and throat ached. Instead the blonde feebly held up her hands to defend herself from the onslaught but instead of a searing stabbing pain in her hands Lexi heard a clatter and then a thud as Mary was barged into. At some point in the furore Sherlock had come down the stairs awake and had entered the kitchen, the two women had been so focussed on each other they hadn’t seen or heard Sherlock calling to them. As Mary had started to bring down her knife on Lexi Sherlock had seen no other way but to intervene by tackling Mary against the front door.

The detective stumbled back with the exertion and Mary was bowled over onto the floor. The silence in the room was swallowed by Lexi wheezing for breath. Sherlock turned to her with haste, bringing himself to his knees to check she was okay.

“Are you hurt?” He asked with a lowered tone.

“I’m … I’m fine,” Lexi wheezed rubbing her neck. Sherlock wiped his hand across her forehead and then against his t-shirt (she wondered where he kept all his clothes since he was wearing the one
from last night), it was bright red. Was that her blood? Lexi touched her forehead and felt a light cut from where Mary’s knife had nicked. They heard a click from behind Sherlock and the detective turned where he was knelt. Mary stood with a gun aimed at the two of them, Sherlock put his arms up in front of Lexi so that Mary had no good shot at the winded woman.

“Mary whatever this is, whatever you think this is, this isn’t how John would have wanted it,” Sherlock said with anxiety. A tear rolled down Mary’s cheek as she looked at Sherlock.

“She killed him, Sherlock, murdered him!” Cried Mary in dismay at Sherlock’s protective stance.

“No, no Mary, Lexi didn’t murder John. She killed him because he was going to kill me,” Sherlock explained slowly to the erratic Mary. Mary shook her head angrily.

“No. You don’t get to do this, you don’t get to defend her.”

Sherlock stood up so that his body perfectly aligned in front of Lexi’s crumpled form.

“If you have anyone to blame, it should be me, I should have seen there was something wrong for a long time. I should have known that John needed help. I should have been able to help him…” Sherlock exclaimed with profound sadness, “if there’s anyone here you should shoot, it should be me.”

Mary seemed to think this over for the longest of moments and Lexi bit on her lip with the faintest of hopes that Mary would instead choose to leave.

“You’re right, you should be blamed too,” Mary said with finality. Lexi’s heart lurched and she tried to push Sherlock out of the way with a noise half way between a shriek and a gasp. Instead of the sound of a bullet exploding from a gun Lexi heard a metal ’thwang’ from behind Mary. Sherlock and Lexi watched in amazement as Mary crumpled to the ground forwards, completely knocked out by Mrs Hudson who was stood with a silver metal tray in her hands and crockery around her feet. Neither Sherlock nor Lexi said anything as Mrs Hudson picked up the china. Her sweet face gave them the once over and then she looked at Mary with sad eyes, not at all like a woman who had just hit her over the head.

“I’ve told you time and time again, Sherlock, I don’t do guns in my house,” Mrs Hudson said, scolding the astonished detective. Sherlock quickly turned his astonishment into a grin at the reliable old Mrs Hudson. “I’ll go pop the kettle on again, I expect we’ll have more company after this.” And with that Mrs Hudson disappeared back down the stairs leaving the unconscious Mary Watson on the floor in her wake.

Fifteen minutes later and an ambulance accompanied by two police cars appeared at Baker Street. The paramedics briefly glazed over Lexi and Sherlock (the blonde noted she probably knew half of the emergency responders in London by now) and quickly deemed them fit to be left alone. Lexi held a cloth to her head as Mary was placed on a stretcher and carried down the stairs alongside two burly police officers, Lestrade appeared at the doorway having passed the unconscious Mary on the way down. Lexi noticed instantly that he hadn’t had any sleep since yesterday, his usually well shaven face had a 1-day shadow and his eyes were devoid of any real emotion given his lack of sleep mixed with his sorrow at losing a friend. Lexi busied herself with the cloth on her forehead so she didn’t have to make eye contact with Lestrade. Sherlock, however, stood to meet the Detective Inspector as he walked into the room. They began to discuss the state of Mary, her obvious dangerousness given her skills and the safety of Lexi — all discussed while Lexi remained silent. She thought on a little of what they were saying.
I deserve no ‘police protection’. I killed her fiancé — of course she would seek her own kind of justice. I should’ve let her kill me. It would have made things a lot easier.

Lexi pressed the cloth to her head again, the wound beginning to throb as the adrenaline left her body.

I’m so sorry Mary.

She knew her thoughts would do the widow (for there was no other definition for what John and Mary had been to each other) no good, it wouldn’t alleviate her grief nor would it help her understand the downfall of the man she loved. Lexi tuned back into the conversation, her thoughts fizzing away as she heard Sherlock talking about Lexi being returned to her home country, to Ireland, for safety. She stood up abruptly, her face scowling. The blonde had never informed anyone about her birth place, in fact she had spent a great deal of time masking the Irish tones with the Queen’s English that her own accent was lost on her, even when she was high. She assumed that her complete breakdown last night had allowed some of her native accent to slip through her well placed mask. The thought of returning to Ireland made her skin crawl, Ireland was no ‘home’ for her. There was no loving mother and father waiting for her on the other end of a plane ride. All that awaited her in Ireland was a drug fuelled alcohol binge and an institutional stay. No, that would not do.

“Excuse me but I think I deserve a say in my own future,” Lexi snapped, her intense English accent ensuring her usual voice didn’t sound too forced. Sherlock and Lestrade turned to look at her as if they had forgotten she was there. “I’m not going anywhere, thank you very much. I think its high time the men around here stopped treating me like I’m some kind of object that will break. I —” she took a pause at her thoughts forming into words but she continued “I killed a man. I killed John. I accept that as an action I took and I do not blame Mary for trying to come to terms with that.”

Lestrade and Sherlock stared at her with hesitation, Sherlock went to open his mouth to argue back. Lexi refused to give him the opportunity.

“While I generally hold my life in lower regards to those around me, I have no wish to see myself killed any time soon even though life is hellbent on my mortality. The decisions I have made don’t give me the opportunity to simply ‘run away’, there’s no escaping that and I’ll be damned if two men are going to try and decide my fate for me.”

Lestrade rubbed his head, the clear stretch sign that he was stressed. He had probably hoped that Lexi would disappear off the face of the Earth because her not being in the equation was a lot easier to deal with. If he did think that he didn’t say it out loud.

“Alright,” he mumbled conceding defeat, he turned on his feet and walked out the door, “keep me informed!” He called as he descended the stairs leaving Sherlock and Lexi alone.

Sherlock let out a long sigh between his lips as Lestrade left, as soon as the door slammed shut Sherlock rushed to Lexi checking her over.

“Are you all right?” He asked with genuine concern, checking her face over. Lexi pulled away gently moving around Sherlock and towards the kitchen. She picked up the kettle she had used to defend herself from Mary tutting at the giant gouge in the metal, Lexi had to give it to the woman; she knew how to use a knife, the gouge was deep enough that if it had been Lexi’s throat Mary would have cut it clean in two. Lexi shivered and placed the kettle down on the counter, aware of Sherlock watching her. She decided to change the conversation.

“I owe you a new kettle,” she muttered jokingly, running her fingers along the gouge line. Sherlock didn’t seem to find the remark funny, he stood with his hands in his dressing gown pockets looking
frustrated. Lexi sighed looking back down at the counter. She had been expecting his reaction.

“Listen, Lex, don’t you think it would be good for you to get out of London?”

Lexi didn’t look up from the counter.

“No.”

“What about going to see your family?” He asked with laced caution in his voice. Lexi ran her fingers across the counter absent-mindedly.

“I have no family, not really. None that matter.”

Sherlock sat in front of her on the bar stool that was usually surrounded by chemistry equipment, instead the counter was bare where Mary and Lexi’s scuffle had pushed much of the glass onto the floor. Mrs Hudson had cleaned it up like the little trooper she was. Lexi reminded herself she’d need to buy flowers and tequila for her saviour at some point.

“It crosses my mind that I never asked you about your family, or your life before I met you in general. I apologise,” Sherlock said with sincerity. Lexi wondered how often he apologised or whether his sincerity was solely for her. She thought about her family: Lexi had never known her birth parents, at least not officially, she’d tracked them down of course. That had been elementary for a 15 year old with her intellect. But an abuse lout of a father and a brow beaten mother wasn’t how she had envisioned them, in some ways she had hoped for a traditional family with loving parents who made her home cooked meals and welcomed her home with open arms every Christmas and special occasion. Instead she’d received too many foster families looking for a cheque payout on child benefits and too many foster father’s who’d been a little too intimate for a child. Then she’d spent the best part of four years spending Christmas alone in whatever accommodation she could find or doing overtime at the hospital so she had enough hours to pass her classes a year in advance. That had faltered when she found a temporary halt to the Always; the heroin. Lexi continued to trace her fingers along the counter top.

“There’s not much to tell, really,” she muttered awkwardly. Sherlock sensed her hesitation and began tapping on the countertop with barely hidden desire to understand her. Lexi looked at the man across the counter debating what to tell him. It was clear that he wouldn’t be satisfied until she gave him some kind of proper answer but then, did she really want to air her dirty laundry? She had already killed his best friend, the last thing she wanted was to alienate him even further by sharing a side of her that no one knew of. She said nothing, Sherlock waited. Lexi sighed with irritation and turned towards the fridge she opened it but there was nothing in it except for, oddly, a bottle of rum. Lexi smirked at the label before turning to Sherlock with the bottle in her hand, he noticed it and smiled with sadness. She looked back down at the bottle in her hand before deciding to pick up two glasses in from the cupboard. So what if it was only 8am? At least she wasn’t doing cocaine or heroin. Lexi poured two generous glasses and Sherlock took his without complaining. She sat next to Sherlock, almost as if they were at a bar. Taking a large sip, Lexi looked at Sherlock with a level gaze.

“What would you like to know, then?”

Sherlock considered her question with a sip of rum, his face painted a picture that it was oddly satisfying in comparison to the usual drivel he drank. Did Sherlock even drink? Lexi also considered her thoughts over a drink of rum. It was spiced and laced with honey — of all the things she thought of John, at least he had had a good taste in alcohol.
“Okay, well, what about your parents?” He asked with genuine curiosity.

“I never knew them. Though it was a relatively easy task to track them down based on the adoption agency’s database.”

“And?”

“And what?” Lexi countered.

Sherlock looked at her quizzically.

“And what did you find?”

Lexi took another drink. She swallowed, grimacing at the acrid taste it left in the back of her throat.

“A drunken father and an abused mother. No one worth any time to think about.”

Sherlock nodded slowly. She was silently apprehensive of Sherlock’s response: if he said he understood, she knew he wouldn’t because he had had (from what she had gleamed) quite a privileged upbringing — a stark contrast to herself.

“Siblings?”

Lexi looked at him with unguarded suspicion.

“Why are you so interested?” She asked.

Sherlock smiled the smallest of smiles at her.

“It occurred to me I don’t know anything about you, I’d like to pride myself on the knowledge of my girlfriend to anyone who should ask. I’m not a prideful man about many things, but knowledge is one of them.”

Lexis cheeks turned pink with the overwhelming feeling of acceptance.

“Girlfriend?”

Sherlock paused, he too had reddening cheeks.

“Well, uh, I mean that is if you want to. I’ve never had an opportunity to call someone my, uhm, girlfriend. I guess that’s what we are, if you want to be?”

Lexi smiled sheepishly. She had never had anyone ask her if she wanted to be their girlfriend before. The blonde looked at the curly haired man over her glass of rum.

“I have no siblings.”

Sherlock took her response as confirmation, looking down at his own rum glass with the first genuine grin he had had in the past few days. Lexi looked down at her own drink with a small smile. They let the silence settle in as Sherlock managed to regain his own cool composure.

“So, ehm, this is one that’s really awkward,” Sherlock began, Lexi looked up with curiosity.

“Go on…”

“When is your birthday?”
Lexi pulled a face.

“Birthdays are such trivial matters. Who wants to celebrate getting one step closer to impending mortality?” She countered sounding ominously like Sherlock. Sherlock twisted in his stool to look at her.

“When’s your birthday, Lex?” He asked again.

Lexi shook her head.

“Not relevant.”

“Mycroft knows… I could just ask him.”

“How does your brother know everything?”

Sherlock shrugged knowingly, “Government.”

Lexi debated his reaction. It was very likely Sherlock was petty enough to ask his older brother Lexi’s date of birth, he certainly knew it much to her chagrin. It was probably worth not including Mycroft since he disliked her so much.

“…My birthday is well, it’s today.”

Sherlock raised an eyebrow not believing her. He placed his glass down on the counter, trying to catch her eye. It hadn’t been something Lexi had ever contemplated before, her own birthday. Sure she had acknowledged it but she had never celebrated it. Sherlock leaned towards her with an accusatory squint.

“Are you lying?”

Lexi turned her chair so that she was sat facing directly opposite Sherlock. As she took a drink she shook her head.

“I don’t have you a gift…” Sherlock murmured genuinely hurt. Lexi felt bad for telling him when her birthday was. But then a dubious look glinted across Sherlock’s eyes and he grinned at her cheekily. Lexi squinted back at him with her own suspicion: what was he thinking? Suddenly Sherlock downed his rum and stood up with determination, Lexi watched him with surprise as he forcefully took her glass off of her and threw her over his shoulders. She let out a surprised laugh but otherwise didn’t resist the toned man’s grasp. He set off down the hall towards his bedroom.

“Where are you taking me, Sherlock Holmes?” She giggled trying to twist around to see the detective’s face. Sherlock looked at her out of the corner of his eye with a cheeky grin.

“Why to give you your birthday present, of course.”
The funeral procession passed into the cemetery. Trees lined the road as the hearse went past, the daisy’s billowing as the mourners passed. Somewhere in the distance Lexi watched, dressed in black, by one of the trees. The tree she was stood near, or hiding near depending on who was watching her, had begun to wilt with the telltale signs of winter. John’s funeral was on a particularly cold day, the mourners were dressed in heavy coats that were mostly black. The blonde was dressed in a black jacket, black jeans and a black beanie to ensure her silver blonde hair was masked from the funeral procession. They had decided not to tell the world about what happened on the rooftop, save for a few souls, why ruin the reputation of a dead man when it couldn’t be helped? And for all intents and purposes John had been a good man, a very good man indeed so it was no wonder Sherlock had agreed with her when she had informed Lestradé that it helped no one telling the world of John’s downfall. As far as the mourners were aware: John’s parents, his sister Harry, ex-military comrades and countless friends and family (of whom Sherlock had little knowledge of, for all his bragging) John had fallen to his death from the rooftop of Bart’s — a tragic accident that couldn’t be helped. Lexi hadn’t wanted to assign his death to an accident, she had been quite prepared to assign the guilt solely to herself (as, she argued, it should have been).

The funeral procession passed in the distance and came to a halt at the end of a row of gravestones. The coffin was unloaded out of the back of the hearse and Lexi watched as a group of men in Royal Fusilier fatigues carried the coffin, with great ease, towards the burial site. Lexi turned away from the view instead focusing on the cigarette her shaky hands tried to light. She tried a few times to light the cigarette but failed spectacularly. Steadier, larger hands lit the cigarette for her and Lexi looked gratefully up at Sherlock who was stood in a black trench coat adorned with his usual leather gloves and black scarf. It seemed Lexi would have lasting damage in her hands, though she did predict the shaking would stop in a few months given repeated physiotherapy. There was little doubt she’d be able to be a surgeon.

Sherlock had also decided to stay away from the funeral for Mary had not been shy about apportioning some of the guilt towards the detective. The grieving Mary had been released from Lestradé’s custody with no charge, Lexi had been firm in her decision not to press charges. Lestradé had cautioned Mary that should either Holmes or Stuart turn up dead he would reign down the (clumsy, yet collective) fury of the NSY upon her. Lexi was sure at least for the moment she would be safe from the vengeful hands of Mary Morstan. Sherlock had done nothing but brood in the corner, shamefully agreeing that he too would be safe, with that said there was no need to antagonise an already vengeful widow.

They both watched from a distance as the coffin was lowered into the ground.

“He had so many friends…” Lexi noted, blowing out smoke from her nose sullenly.

Sherlock stood behind her with close familiarity, his presence warming her cold body with both heat and emotion. John had once said in his blog that Sherlock was a brain without a heart and quite an unemotional one at that, Lexi noted John had been very mistaken. It had been worth John’s death to know the loyalty and love that laid behind the detective’s cold mask. She looked at him now and noted that Sherlock’s eyes were dimmed and his usually firm lips were shaking with barely restrained emotion. It was her turn to press herself to Sherlock’s chest so that he could resume his usual clinical demeanour, save the telltale brush of his thumb against Lexi’s shaking palm.

They stood silently for the entire procession, Sherlock turned away as the coffin was lowered into the ground — the blonde wasn’t sure if it was the thought of his best friend lying cold and dead in the
ground or the fact he couldn’t be there to say goodbye. It was all Lexi could do to watch, she saw it as a punishment to herself, for her actions, that she should watch the man she killed be buried in the dirt. Lexi thought she would cry but her eyes remained oddly cold against the brisk December wind. As the last of the mourning group tapered off Lexi watched as Mary stood alone above the freshly settled dirt, she faced down towards the grave adorned with lilies and poppies. Lexi silently moved across the grass towards Mary, the only telltale sign of her feet moving was the crunch of the bristly, semi-frozen grass as she moved. Mary had to have heard her coming, the woman was smart and trained enough to denote the difference in footsteps. She didn’t move. Lexi decided that if the woman pulled a gun on her, hell, or even if she tried to snap her neck, Lexi would not protest. Mary didn’t move. Their breath danced in the air in front of them.

“I didn’t think you’d come,” Mary muttered quietly, her eyes boring into the soil where John lay. Lexi followed her gaze staring at each individual granule of soil. Somewhere in the background, she knew Sherlock was watching with overt worry.

“I came to pay my respects,” Lexi replied, equally as quietly.

“Did you now?” Mary retorted with barely veiled venom.

Lexi didn’t hold it against her. If their roles had been reversed, if Lexi had been the one to bury Sherlock because of Mary she knew she would have been equally vengeful — if not more so.

“Yes.”

The women stood in silence for a few minutes neither knowing what to say to each other.

“He always hated lilies,” Mary noted, a faint wistful smile on her face.

“I never knew him as much as I should have,” Lexi said with a similarly wistful voice.

Mary looked at her with her eyes filled with tears but she didn’t have the face of a woman broken.

“If you had known him you wouldn’t have pulled a gun on him,” Mary said with a clear voice. Lexi looked away twisting her lip, “he was a good man, a decent man.”

“Look at me, Alexandra Stuart,” Mary exclaimed stiffly, Lexi (after a pause) raised her ice blue eyes to look at her, trying her best not to waver under the guilt “you will live with the knowledge that you killed a good man for the rest of your life.”

Lexi nodded in understanding. John already haunted her dreams.

“I know.”

Mary nodded with affirmation.

“You’re like him,” Mary commented. Lexi frowned not understanding, the blonde haired widow noticed her look and half smiled in undisguised satisfaction, “Sherlock. You’re just like him. Your worst enemy is your own mind, I could kill you. God, I could dismember you for what you’ve done but I think it’s worse if I let you destroy yourself. Both you and Sherlock — your greatest demon is yourself and there is no fitting vengeance than to watch you self destruct at a distance. Any other death is a mercy.”

With her final words spoken Mary turned and left Lexi standing over John Watson’s grave. At some point throughout the conversation Sherlock had appeared at the end of the row of graves on the roadside. He had initially hesitated away from the female duo as they conversed but now, as Mary
walked towards the road, he moved towards John’s grave. Mary stopped in front of Sherlock. She never did hear what Mary said to Sherlock but it had been short and abrupt enough to stop the detective in his tracks. She, however, had continued walking towards the exit of the cemetery with her hands reaching into her pocket for her well used tissue. Lexi watched her leave with a heavy heart and chose not to speak to Sherlock as he stood solemnly over his best friends grave. There were no words left to say.

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The taxi ride back into London continued in silence. The cemetery had only been in Kensall Green less than fifteen minutes away from Baker Street and the walk would have been tolerable, yet there had been too much life in the streets for the level of guilt Lexi and Sherlock both felt. At least in a taxi they could stew in silence. Sherlock flicked through his iPhone with automatic boredom, with no one left monitoring John’s blog (where they got most of their cases from) the emails were pouring through with appeal. There were hundreds of email messages asking for interviews and press releases too, the detective for the first time was without his doctor and the events of the rooftop were shrouded in mystery for the fans of John’s blog. All that was known was that the good doctor was dead and that the detective had refrained from the spotlight more so than usual. No one seemed to give much notice to the skinny pink-turned-blonde haired woman following in short proximity (the media never did give much attention to female counterparts of any man … unless they too were famous or were wearing a particularly outrageous outfit) so Lexi managed to operate fairly unhindered. The taxi pulled on to the street away from Baker Street — since John’s death camera crews and reporters were desperate to catch a glimpse of Sherlock and they had inhabited the pavement around the flat, the only way in and out unseen was through the back garden which no one seemed to attribute to 221B. As the taxi pulled up to the back gates of 221B Sherlock pulled out his wallet ready to pay.

“How much?” Sherlock mumbled lazily, fishing his way through the tenners and mothballs of his wallet. At first the cabbie didn’t reply, Sherlock frowned with irritation for the first time looking up towards the driver on the other side of the perspex glass. He (because the probability of the cabbie being a male was substantially higher than it being a female) had yet to turn around, his face was skewed by his flat cap but on further inspection the detective could see dark hair under the grey tartan cap.

“I said: how much?” Sherlock asked again this time his voice sharper. Lexi looked up from her thoughts with a furrowed brow.

“For you? No charge,” responded the cabbie, turning to face them through the glass.

Moriarty sat with a smile on his face that was filled with the same kind of joy a child would have from watching ants run away from the death glare of the sun. He didn’t seem too fussed that both Lexi and Sherlock were only a piece of glass away from his throat, but then Sherlock decided that the man had no fear of death or pain and causing chaos in an unexpected way was just an added bonus. Sherlock went for his jacket pocket trying to grapple for the gun nestled into his chest — he had decided it was better for their protection to carry a gun when out of the flat because the amount of times when they could have used one was very quickly stacking up. Before he could reach the gun a black handgun appeared at the glass aimed at Lexi, the detective stopped what he was doing aware of their predicament. Sherlock was sure for a split second Lexi had let out a tut at the presence of yet another gun being pointed in her direction, he didn’t blame her.

Moriarty had his lips pursed in another tut-like motion and Sherlock let out a levelled huff.
“Thought I’d come give my condolences…” Moriarty mumbled as if his words were no more than an absent minded thought that needed voicing, he met Sherlock’s gaze with voracious eyes and a smile on his face, “but I think you two have enough brooding on your plate for all of London.”

Sherlock caught Lexi’s face as it turned with a venomous scowl.

“What do you want, huh?” Lexi snapped, hints of her Irish accent slipping through her usually well guarded speech, Moriarty acknowledged it with a twitch of his grin, “if you’re going to kill us just do it already. I’m sick of all this pussyfooting around.”

Sherlock wished Lexi wasn’t so abrupt with her words. For a man as abrupt as Moriarty Sherlock didn’t put it past him to act on a challenge. Sherlock held his breath as Moriarty turned his gaze towards Lexi with consideration.

“No … you of all people should know I like foreplay. Besides there’s no dramatic irony killing you both in the back of a car.”

Lexi went to interrupt but the stony look in Moriarty’s eyes silenced her.

“However consider this your final warning, dears. Daddy is sick of this game now. If you don’t give me the phone the rest of the world will burn.”

The last two words were emphasised by the tapping of the gun on the glass with barely controlled excitement. Moriarty used his spare hand to lean into his pocket, he pulled out a red book (Sherlock noted a red book much akin to Mycroft’s red book, it was perhaps a purposeful reminder of Mycroft and Moriarty’s correspondence) and flicked through the dated pages. Most of the pages had crude drawings and indecipherable handwriting but one date in particular had ‘BOOM’ written on it.

“Well I guess all my days are booked apart from … oh would you look at that; three days from today.”

Moriarty pulled out the chewing gum from his mouth and pressed it against the glass. At the same time he ripped out the page in his red book that had the aforementioned date in it (10/12/17) before slamming it against the gum, the page stuck to the gum with an overkill of saliva that was probably done on purpose. Another car, this time one with blacked out windows and expensive looking grill plates, pulled up alongside the cab, Sherlock didn’t take his eyes away from Moriarty. The exaggerated grin disappeared from his handsome, angular face which left a malicious stare in its wake.

“Three days. Don’t disappoint me … or this time it won't just be John Watson’s body rotting in the ground.”

With that Moriarty pulled another sick smile and got out of the car in one motion. He slid like a snake into the back of the car with tinted windows. As the door pulled to a close Sherlock watched the consulting criminal pulled on a pair of aviators as if the cold December weather was sunglasses worthy. The car pulled away leaving Sherlock and Lexi alone in the back of the cab. Sherlock rubbed his face tiredly as they both stared at the page stuck to the window. Lexi let out a small, inaudible chuckle which began to increase in volume, Sherlock looked over at her quizically.

“There’s something about the number three. People always give up after the number three,” Lexi giggled manically.

Sherlock looked back at the diary page. He looked at the smilie face next to the word ‘boom’. The detective guessed whether he liked it or not in three days time either Moriarty would be dead or he
would.

Sherlock began to laugh.
To all my fabulous readers and Sherlockians,

Thank you so much for still having the patience to wait for this next chapter. Events in my personal life recently have made the writing of this chapter markedly difficult. As well as this I want you all to know that this chapter isn’t just any fluff and filler chapter but one of the penultimate chapters of the series and therefore takes a little more ‘jooshing’ than usual.

Please know that my heart is still very much in the life of Lexi and Sherlock and that an answer to their plethora of problems is on its way.

Much love,
Fury xo
Revelations Pt.1

Chapter Summary

This is the final chapter, but I’ve split it into three parts for clarity and because I love leaving y’all on a cliff hanger.

The harsh December weather stung Sherlock’s cheeks. Not even his favourite scarf could protect from the wind that lashed his face but then the detective and his companion were stood on the viewing platform of the Oxo Tower on Canary Wharf so it was little wonder that the December air attacked his body. It was four in the afternoon and the viewing platform was filled with tourists wanting to get a more art-nouveau view of the London skyline. Sherlock had never really appreciated the London skyline, he was always looking beneath the metaphorical skirt of London, at the trash and grime that surrounded its lowlife denizens. That was where he truly operated, it irked him immensely that Moriarty had chosen such a prestigious establishment to parade his control over their predicament, why they couldn’t finish their concerto at Baker Street was beyond him but then the detective had to remind himself that Moriarty wasn’t a man of practicality or subtlety.

Across the River Thames the London skyline looked broken — the skyline wasn’t its usual self: beyond the mist and cold, hanging air Buckingham Palace stood empty and charred in the grey wash afternoon sun, an ugly reminder of the extent of Moriarty’s power and unpredictableness. Sherlock’s thoughts turned to Irene Adler who was still sat in chains in Lestradé’s care, for all he thought of Greg Lestradé and his incompetence he was silently grateful that the man had managed to fend away the voracious prosecutors and vengeful mourners that wanted to see justice for the countless death of hundreds. Foreign powers had increased their own pressure on London’s police force and government in a bid to see justice for their own citizens that had been caught up in the explosions, again Sherlock wondered how much input his older brother had had in letting him deal with the situation. Sherlock knew Moriarty would disappear into the underbelly of London once more if Lestradé and Mycroft became too involved, he knew that this was his (and Lexi) fight — a rather poetic symbol of his meddling in the affairs of New Scotland Yard and the criminal underworld.

“What do you think he’ll turn up?” Asked a voice that cut through his own thoughts, scattering them into his vast mind. Sherlock looked at Lexi, her wide green eyes almost oozing innocence. Had it not been for the steely glint of darkness underneath the emerald hue in Lexi’s eyes, Sherlock could have been fooled into thinking she was an innocent bystander. On the contrary Lexi was as culpable as him, only just managing to keep up with the destruction Moriarty left in his wake. Kept up with his thoughts, Sherlock had forgotten the question.

“Sorry… what?” He muttered looking pointedly alert at his companion (Was it too cheesy to say girlfriend? He supposed so since he still couldn’t quite conquer the nigglng feeling of excitement in his stomach.) In response Lexi half-smiled, trying her best to mask her apprehension and half amused with Sherlock’s absent mindedness.

“Moriarty. Do you think he’ll turn up?” She repeated, her body shuffling closer to his as if to steal his warmth. Sherlock had no doubt in his mind that Moriarty would turn up — he was surprised that he had given them the three days to figure out what the fuck they were to do. The three days of relief had been a sound description of Moriarty’s madness, he had proven to be unpredictable before enough to blow up half of London (‘because he could’) and enough to give Lexi and Sherlock three
days to settle their own affairs. Because he was so damn sure that he would win. Sherlock tilted his head to the side, it wasn’t like they had much to hope for Moriarty had legions of assassins at his whim, he had already proven how much power he held by using John. Sherlock resisted the urge to pull off his glove and chew on his already bruised nail (it had become somewhat of a stress reaction instead of injecting himself with a cocktail of drugs, as tempting as it was).

“I wouldn’t be surprised if he was already here somewhere.”

Lexi shivered, Sherlock noted the temperature hadn’t changed in the past thirty-seconds (microbursts tended to change weather extraordinarily quickly) he deduced it was likely the thought of Moriarty as more than a perturbing sub-conscious thought that made her shiver more than the cold. He knew all to well what it was like to have the very real bogeyman smashing its way through into the active mind. He couldn’t think of anything reassuring to say so instead he pressed his body to her side reassuringly deciding that this would alleviate both the coldness and the stress the blonde was feeling.

“We aren’t just going to give him the phone, right?” Lexi muttered in more of a statement than a reliant question. This time it was Sherlock’s turn to give a half-smile.

“I have devised four probable outcomes from this meeting and not one of them involves giving Moriarty the phone.”

If it had been John, he would have taken his answer as gospel and as a holy weapon against the greatest enemy of the mundane mind: the unknown. Alas Lexi was a cut above John, and sometimes he pondered even himself, so she had already analysed the probable outcomes and their likelihood of survival.

“And not a single one of those give us the probability of more than a 3% chance of walking out of here.”

Sherlock pulled his lips into a thin grimace.

“But he won’t get the phone,” he cajoled sounding eerily bemused with the situation. Sherlock watched as Lexi gave him her unimpressed stare, apparently Sherlock had applied humour to the wrong situation.

‘A bit not good’, John used to say.

Sherlock sniffed and nestled himself further into his scarf. Lexi leaned on the barrier between the top of the Oxo Tower and the 200ft drop to the cold pavement below. Another ten minutes passed and Lexi had gone through an entire carton of cigarette’s, the stress had made her a chronic smoker — Sherlock made a note that she should probably have help quitting the intense cigarette usage, but then he supposed there was little chance of them leaving the Oxo Tower so instead he pulled the cigarette from Lexi’s thin lips and inhaled it for himself. As he exhaled the puff of smoke, with its tendrils dancing in front of the pair, Lexi broke the silence.

“Have you noticed there’s no one in the restaurant? Not even waiting staff…” she didn’t turn to point out her observation, Sherlock assumed it was likely that their time had come and whatever fate awaited them was awaiting.

“The dinner bell is ringing, Lexi,” Sherlock muttered darkly, dropping the cigarette from his had and letting it fall the eight storeys to the floor. They both turned.
Lexi had been right in her observation. There was no one in the restaurant, no waiting staff, no customers and all the tourists who had been on the observing deck had gone too. It seemed that Lexi and Sherlock had been so caught up in waiting and thinking and fretting that they hadn’t noticed that, one by one, the floor had been cleared. A section of the wall divided the restaurant into fine dining and casual dining; beyond the clutter and tat that was placed to make the restaurant seem appealing and homely sat Moriarty on an eight seater table. Lexi noted he seemed quite at home at the table as if it were his own desk or throne room. But then that suited Moriarty, anywhere he wanted was his throne room. His lips curled into a smile as he saw Lexi and Sherlock come around either side of the divide.

“Please… take a seat…” he rasped, the request more of a demand than an invitation. Sherlock stayed standing, so did Lexi. Moriarty sniffed.

“Suit yourselves. Do you have it?”

Sherlock produced the black phone from his pocket, Moriarty’s doe-y brown eyes latched onto it with greedy eyes.

“Tell us again why we should give it to you?” Lexi said, her voice stiff and emotionless.

Moriarty looked at his nails nonchalantly.

“You know when he was on his deathbed—Bach—he heard his son at the piano playing one of his pieces. The boy stopped before he got to the end…”

“And the dying man jumped out of bed, ran straight to the piano and finished it.” Sherlock retorted.

Moriarty grinned, his eyes slithering across Lexi and Sherlock.

“Couldn’t cope with an unfinished melody,” Lexi muttered.

“Exactly, my lovelies, and like Bach I just can’t cope with loose ends… call it my one and only character flaw.”

“Be honest though, you two have loved this little game… you’re just a tiny bit pleased, no?” Asked Moriarty smugly.

Lexi tilted her head.

“With your terrorist attacks and attempted murder?”

This time Moriarty ignored Lexi and stared straight at Sherlock, the detective’s eyes flickered a little and Lexi noticed the tension in his usually restrained eyes.

“With having a problem that is almost unsolvable, every hero deserves a good villain.”

“And every hero needs a good sidekick…” Sherlock uttered, his voice dark and cryptic.

Lexi looked at Sherlock with a frown on her face, she didn’t like being referred to as a sidekick. Moriarty’s nodded slowly, happy that Sherlock was keeping up with him.

“Yeah… you can’t have two sidekicks, that isn’t how it works. Good job we got rid of one so we
can finish our little story.”

“What do you get out of having the AGRA files?” Lexi asked, capitulating to her curiosity. Moriarty seemed to notice her for the first time in the conversation.

“Oh, wow, are you that far behind?” Moriarty asked with a genuine frown, “I’m soooo disappointed,” his voice wobbled on the ‘so’ as if he were going to sing, “you haven’t worked it out yet?”

Sherlock shifted.

“You have control of AGRA, you have control of Mycroft, you have control of the government,” Sherlock filled in the blanks. Moriarty didn’t like his answer, he stood up abruptly buttoning his suit jacket.

“It’s so disappointing that you are so ordinary, Sherlock. I thought you were like me but it turns out you're just ordinary like everyone else.”

It was Sherlock’s turn to frown.

“I don’t understand.”

“Of course you don’t because you don’t understand how easy it is to manipulate you.”

“AGRA was just for you, Sherlock.” Lexi muttered almost silently. Moriarty’s eyes flicked to her and he smiled once more.

“Off you go then,” Moriarty responded.

“The attacks, they were your advertisement to the world that you can do what you like…. You had access to everything because you have something that lets you access anything.”

Sherlock looked at her, his eyes changing in the light of the room and with the sudden realisation that the mobile phone, while important, was created solely to fuck with Sherlock. John’s death had more to do with Sherlock’s anguish than any sacrifice made on Moriarty’s behalf.

“You don’t really need the phone, not really.”

Moriarty cocked a gun shaped finger at Lexi and clicked his tongue.

“Bang on, baby!”

Next to her Lexi felt a breath leave Sherlock. She wanted to take him by the hand and tell him that it wasn’t his fault. But she knew that Sherlock would think it was — after all, Moriarty had been obsessed with Sherlock from the start and all of this, the deaths, the attacks, they had all been for Sherlock’s anguish and Moriarty’s pleasure.

“I can open any door anywhere with a few tiny lines of computer code, stored on that phone. No such thing as a private bank account now, they’re all mine. No such thing as secrecy. I own secrecy. Nuclear codes. I could blow up NATO in alphabetical order. In a world of locked rooms, the man with the key is king, and honey, you should see me in a crown.”

Moriarty paused and pushed his face into Sherlock’s so that he was no more than a few inches away from the detectives face.

“But all of it, is just for you, Sherlock. I don’t care about riches or power, I just like to watch them,
watch you, competing and scrambling to understand.”

Sherlock stared into Moriarty’s eyes, his hand trembling slightly at the prospect of losing. Lexi went to push Moriarty back but Sherlock was quicker, his right fist jabbed out and hit Moriarty on the cheek strong enough to knock him back and against the table. Sherlock moved as Moriarty hit the table, his hands grasped Moriarty’s collar and Sherlock slammed Moriarty off of the table. The dark haired man laughed as his back slammed off the table, Lexi moved to pull Sherlock off of the Irish man. She knew he was enjoying Sherlock’s pain and he wasn’t overly fussed for his own wellbeing. Her little hands yanked Sherlock’s shoulders and surprisingly, given her weight, she managed to pull Sherlock back off of Moriarty. Sherlock stumbled into her and she gripped him softly.

“We’re better than him, Sherlock, it’s taken me months to understand it, but we aren’t fallen… not like him.”

Moriarty sat up on the table and righted his tie and hair, still grinning. Sherlock’s hands were still shaking but Lexi noted he seemed to have reigned his anger in again.

“Falling’s just like flying… except there’s a more permanent destination,” Moriarty replied in a chuckle which was almost maniacal.

“So. You watch us burn and then what?” Sherlock spat angrily.

Moriarty looked about as if he was confused at the question, his cheek was an angry red colour but it didn’t seem to matter to him.

“And then I go back to playing with the ordinary. It was good while it lasted, really, you made me jump through a few hoops, made me owe you one but you’ve lost Sherlock.”

“How have I lost?” Sherlock asked.

Moriarty stepped around them and sauntered out onto the viewing platform, Lexi and Sherlock could do nothing but follow him — more out of curiosity than anything else. The dark haired man took in the sight of London but he seemed more displeased with it than anything. And then he turned quickly on his heel with his hands in his pockets.

“Did you tell your little friends then?”

“About what?” Lexi retorted. Moriarty looked at her again with dissatisfaction that she had once again spoken. She reminded herself that she was meant to be dead in this game, no longer a factor — just one more shattered piece in Sherlock’s life.

“About why I blew up half of London.”

“No,” said Sherlock.

“But you understand, don’t you?”

“Of course.”

“Very good. I want to hear you say it.”

Sherlock paused, his lips pulling into a thin line because he knew what he had to say. Moriarty leaned forward, anticipating Sherlock’s voice.

“Say it…” ordered Moriarty.
“…” Sherlock let out a breath, “…Because you can.”

Moriarty was giddy, he jumped up on the spot. Lexi was sure if he had a party popper he would have used it.

Lexi blanched at Sherlock’s apparent defeat.

“But we can just arrest you, you blew up half of London!”

Moriarty tutted and shook his head.

“Wanna tell her Sherly?”

Sherlock looked at Lexi darkly.

“We can’t prove it. As far as the government is concerned Moriarty doesn’t exist… and they have the perfect culprit in handcuffs.”

“…Irene,” muttered Lexi, finishing Sherlock’s explanation.

Moriarty began rummaging in his pockets, most exaggeratedly that Lexi and Sherlock tensed expecting a gun. Instead the consulting criminal pulled out a green and yellow striped party horn, one that was cheap and probably from the same shop as the tacky tiara they had found at Windsor Castle.

“Go on, Sherly.”

“We can’t stop him…because he doesn’t exist.”

The party horn broke the intense silence that fell around the trio. Moriarty was celebrating in the most ridiculous manner but it seemed he didn’t care. Lexi frowned at him and looked back down. She bit her lip thinking through the revelations.

Moriarty didn’t care about money, power or fame. He didn’t care if he had the world at his fingertips or any bank to break into — his genius separated him from the rest of the world in that he viewed society, the ‘normals’, as his play toys. When Sherlock had ruined his playtime at the Hatton Bank Moriarty had found a new play toy and everything leading up to this moment had literally been a game. The deaths and explosions, John’s downfall and Lexi’s guilt had all been so that Moriarty could enjoy the heartbreak of Sherlock Holmes.

Lexi looked at Sherlock, his eyes watery. Moriarty pushed himself up close to Sherlock again. His thin finger caught the first tear that wept from Sherlock’s eye. He placed his finger in his mouth, making an ‘mm’ noise as he did so.

“I always wondered what you tasted like,” a sick smile interrupted his words, “sweet.”

Sherlock pulled away disgusted as if Moriarty’s proximity repulsed him. Moriarty giggled again.

“So we can’t arrest you, but...” Lexi paused, her hand reaching into her waistband, “we can kill you.”

Moriarty eyed up the gun.

“You could,” he murmured, his smile dropping slightly but not disappearing. His slender body moved over to Lexi as if he could glide. Lexi aimed the gun and Moriarty stopped just short, his temple pressed into the gun.
“You could shoot me just like John. Watch my brains splatter out all over the place, just like John’s did.”

Lexi’s hand wavered slightly at the thought. Sherlock remained looking away, trying to put his emotions in check. Lexi wondered if he was stuck in his mind palace. She breathed out slightly and pushed the gun against Moriarty’s forehead so it would leave a mark.

“You could shoot me but then what?” Moriarty asked watching Lexi, when she didn’t reply straight away he moved past the gun gracefully and came close to Lexi’s face. “You’re already so broken that if you did, you’d be shattered and not even your knight in shining armour could save you.”

Lexi lowered the gun, she knew he was right. Moriarty’s lips brushed her cheek and she shivered.

“Now we have our final problem, don’t we?”
Sherlock could smell the cologne Moriarty was wearing, his close proximity made the sweet smell roll off in waves. It wasn’t entirely repulsive; the smell was nice but it didn’t help it was on someone he wanted to put a bullet into. The consulting criminal had moved from touching Lexi’s face with his lips (something which took him all his might not to intervene) to standing extraordinarily close to the detective.

“You obviously know what has to happen,” whispered Moriarty so that Lexi couldn’t hear.

Sherlock’s shaggy brown locks wisped in the wind and danced across Moriarty’s face, he resisted the urge to smile as Moriarty pulled away from his dissection of Sherlock. Sherlock inclined his head without looking away from the Irish-man though he so desperately wanted to embrace Lexi and tell her that their 3% probability of survival was just a joke. But he knew he mustn’t and even if he did he knew Lexi would see through his gesture. Sherlock looked down his nose at Moriarty.

“Obviously.”

Moriarty grinned and nodded in approval.

“Clever boy…”

“What makes you think she will?”

Lexi frowned looking at Sherlock and his crypticness.

“Incentive.”

“What incentive would that be?” countered Sherlock.

Moriarty turned his grin into a maudlin one, Sherlock had never seen it before and he decided rather quickly that he wasn’t keen on finding out why Moriarty’s face had become… eviler. Instead of replying Moriarty checked his watch. He made a big gesture of watching the clock tick towards the next minute, he could see Lexi shifting irately in her spot but she didn’t dare say anything given how the two men in front of her had shared a look between each other. Sherlock, on the other hand, couldn’t keep himself quiet at the exaggerated and excruciating pass of time.

“Leave her out of this, she’s not your main concern. She’s boring, irrelevant. It’s me you want, not her.”

Moriarty put his watch hand in his trouser pocket, his brown eyes looked into Sherlock’s like an intrusive needle. The smile had dropped, in its place was the face of a predator with hungry looking lips.

“That’s where you’re wrong, Sherlock. She is the key to everything.”

Sherlock tilted his head with a frown. “She doesn’t matter —“

“Have you learned nothing?” Interrupted Moriarty, “Alexandra Stuart IS the key. YOU chose her, YOU saved her. Lexi is your downfall — not John, not Mary. Lexi.”
“So?”

“You don’t need me to spell it out for you, Detective, but I do so like the drama. To see you truly, and honestly, fall Alexandra Stuart needs to die and what better way to leave you in the eyes of the world as a grieving detective who gets his nearest and dearest killed?”

Lexi looked sharply at Sherlock. He could see she had not heard the two men talking between themselves.

“What’s he on about Sherlock?” She asked sounding quite unlike the genius she was.

Sherlock looked at her darkly his eyes a mixture of fury and sadness.

“What incentive?” Sherlock barked, ignoring Lexi’s strangled, worried voice.

Moriarty checked his watch once more before smiling at the time.

“Ding dong. On the hour and all is so not well!” Chanted the Irishman with a singing voice.

At first Sherlock thought perhaps Moriarty had just gone completely and utterly insane, beyond the point of logical thought either externally or internally. The detective had, for a brief moment, considered pushing him over the edge of the balcony but the moment had flashed past as quick as it had arrived in his mind. Instead Sherlock was greeted with a red dot on his chest. As his blue eyes trailed down to view the dot, which shook slightly from the distance of the gun point, Lexi also watched. Realisation crossed her tired face and she turned slightly on the spot as she rubbed her eyes. They both needed sleep but life had a tendency to throw itself in their way.

“So what? You shoot me and then she shoots you,” Sherlock pointedly said.

Moriarty nodded with his lip stuck out as if he was sincerely considering the option before shooing it away with a flash of white teeth. The red dot moved up towards Sherlock’s forehead.

“Sure, yeah, you’re right. I’ve masterminded this entire thing just to be let down with the realisation that if I shoot you I die. Come now Sherlock, give me some credit.”

“Okay, so, how?” Sherlock responded not being able to keep his curiosity at bay. Moriarty smiled knowingly.

Lexi had a bitter stare in her eyes. In every conceivable way Moriarty had bested them. It had turned out that instead of wanting anything specific, the Irishman had given himself to his delusions and his own intelligence and turned them towards Sherlock. It hadn't always been like that; before Sherlock had arrived on Moriarty's radar he had spent his days toying with the underbelly of society. Some days he even fucked with the crème de la crème of society, with Mycroft to be precise. Mycroft's younger brother had been insignificant, until he had foiled more than one of Moriarty's games. Now it seemed they were forever going to be chased by Moriarty's madness, whether they liked it or not. Even behind bars there was no escape. The red dot sat on Sherlock's forehead like an ugly scar; it danced in and out of the centre of Sherlock's forehead as the person who had the gun wobbled with the focus required to keep a good shot. Lexi felt the bitter taste of bile against her tongue, she felt sick at the prospect that Sherlock could potentially die. She had been kept out of the loop to the men's small talk up until now, but now it was all on the table and Lexi wasn't sure she wanted to know the outcome. She guessed that 3% survival probability had gone down to at least 1%.

"What do you want from me?" she asked, eventually capitulating to his will. Moriarty's grin had never left his face since he had near enough kissed Lexi on the cheek.
"Do you not understand yet? I thought you were meant to be the better of the two of you."

Sherlock went to say something but Moriarty reacted quicker, his thin index finger came up to Sherlock's lips, as if to shush him.

"Your talking time is over, dear," Moriarty said, his eyes not leaving Lexi. Sherlock shot a dangerous look at Moriarty but acquiesced all the same.

"Indulge me," Lexi said sarcastically.

Moriarty lowered his hand from Sherlock's lips and rolled his neck. It cracked with a sickening noise that reverberated around the viewing platform.

"Okay, let me tell you a little story, shall I?"

Lexi resisted the urge to roll her eyes. She knew how much he was enjoying this.

"Once upon a time the handsomest Sheriff in all the land liked to lock away all the baddies. When one day he stumbled upon a baddie so naughty that not even he could catch him. But that didn't stop him trying. One day the Sheriff met another baddie, a sad and lonely girl who stole to keep her life going, but because the Sheriff was so handsome he managed to turn the lonely girl into a happy girl. The evil baddie noticed how happy the Sheriff was and how irritating he had become trying to catch him. So the baddie decided to devote his life to destroying the happiness of the Sheriff. The girl and the Sheriff thought they were winning but in the end they walked straight into the baddies trap because he was so much cleverer than either of them. Then the girl realised the only way to save the day was to sacrifice herself. The baddie liked this ending because it also meant that the Sheriff eventually understood his place in the world."

No one said anything as Moriarty rattled off his dark tale, when he finished Lexi ran her fingers through her hair.

"I never said I was any good at telling stories, but I think that one was pretty good. I do love a good ending," Moriarty chuckled.

Lexi paced slightly at her thoughts.

"There's no way you can get yourself out of this - you know that," said John, standing across from her on a rise that overlooked a vast ocean. This was the place in her mind she most frequently visited but since last time, when it had been calm and reassuring, the storm clouds lashed at horizon and the waves threatened to engulf the hill. John stood in front of the setting sun, which had bathed the world in an ominous glow. She wondered now of all times why she was seeing John. She supposed it was to do with the fact that John was a representation of her guilt. Or her 'shit-out-of-luckness'.

"I'm trying to think John, shush."

"Why though? You know I'm a reflection of you and you know I wouldn't be telling you unless there was any other way. Otherwise he'd be here instead of me."

John meant Sherlock. But he didn't, or couldn't, utter his name.
Lexi chewed on her lip, becoming more aware of the rising tide.

"I could --"

"You couldn't," interrupted John.

"What about--"

"Nope."

"FUCK," she yelled at the setting sun. The clouds turned darker still and her mind was drenched in darkness at the unknowing.

—

Lexi looked back at Moriarty.

"And what makes you think I would do it? Why couldn't we just take you down and arrest you?"

Moriarty seemed to consider it for a moment, as if she had caught him off guard.

"In this story? Not even I matter. Dead or alive... though there is one more thing. Sorry. I forgot to say. Sherlock?" he motioned towards the detective who had been trying his best to burn his stare into Moriarty's head.

Sherlock looked sadly at Lexi. Somewhere in her mind John pointed out that she'd never seen Sherlock look so defeated.

"He has guns on Lestrade and Mrs Hudson."

"I would've had one on John too but I think Lexi dealt with him spectacularly. Mycroft too, by the way."

"Fuck you, you insane son of a bitch!" she spat angrily. She raised her gun again but Moriarty tutted and pointed his hand towards the red dot on Sherlock's forehead.

"You have quite the temper don't you?"

He held his hand out for the gun. Lexi threw it down onto the floor angrily. Moriarty looked at Sherlock with his sick smile.

"Be a dear, would you?" he asked Sherlock who knelt down and offered the gun to Moriarty.

Moriarty took the gun with enthusiasm. Then he checked his watch again.

"Now I do have an appointment to keep with Irene before the day's over. So if you wouldn't mind?"

Lexi looked down before steeling her eyes.

"It's the only way to keep Sherlock alive. He can't play his game if Sherlock's dead. So do it, for him."
Lexi looked at the ledge of the viewing platform. It was a solid brick wall that came up to her waist. Large enough for her to stand on. Lexi pulled herself up with significant ease (considering her wrists were all but fucking). She wasn't scared of heights but even so the journey down was still nauseating enough. Moriarty appeared just next to her feet, leaning over the edge and looking down.

"Long way down..." he pointed out dryly. Lexi nodded with an amused snort.

"Yup."

"Please don't do this," pleaded a voice behind her. Sherlock wasn't talking to her though, he was talking to Moriarty who turned slightly, leaning against the wall.

"Come now Sherlock, let's not beg that really is below a man of your intelligence."

"I'll jump myself. I'll even shoot Irene for you. Just not her. Please."

Lexi felt her eyes prickle at the desperation in Sherlock's eyes. Moriarty only increased his grin. He reminded the blonde of a cheshire cat.

"While that IS a tempting offer I know there'll be much more fun had out of watching Lexi fall to her death. I can practically bathe in the anguish."

"Please..." Sherlock whispered, tears falling from his eyes. Lexi looked at him with profound sadness.

Moriarty forced a bored yawn.

"Enough pleading, God, it makes this so less titivating."

As she was looking at Sherlock, Lexi felt a heavy hand against her leg. Moriarty shoved her as hard as he could with a maudlin laugh. She fell.

Sherlock shouted out as Lexi fell. It was all he could do. He rushed forward as she fell, not bothered about the red dot floating in front of his forehead. As she fell Sherlock watched, as if in slow motion, as Lexi grabbed a hold of Moriarty by the neck and pulled him with her. Moriarty still hadn't stopped chuckling as he flipped over her, he grabbed onto Lexi's ankle while Lexi held desperately onto the brick wall with the end of her fingers. The strain in her hands made her eyes water in pain and as Sherlock rushed to grab hold of her he couldn't help but notice the red scars stretching against gravity.

"Sherlock!" Lexi called, her voice marred with panic.

Moriarty swung below her.

"I've got you, Lexi, I've got you."

"No, you don't!" shouted a voice from below Lexi. In response to their vain attempts to hold on to one another a whizzling noise passed between Sherlock's ears and then the pain seeped into his hand.
A bullet was lodged into the wall where his hand had met Lexi's. He yelled in pain in unison with Lexi, who let go of his hand. The jolt forced Moriarty off of Lexi's foot. Sherlock used his other hand to grab onto Lexi's other hand, his clothes slowly dousing in blood from his shot hand.

"I have you, Lexi. I will always have you."

Lexi was held by Sherlock's left hand and he pulled her up and over the wall as a sickening thud was heard below. She collapsed into him, writhing in pain from the bullet that had gone through both of their hands. Sherlock seemed to weather the pain better than her though, as he sat up and checked over Lexi. The red dot had disappeared and Sherlock noted that there had been no other shots fired. Sherlock stood up and looked over the ledge. There, eight storeys below laid what was left of Jim Moriarty. Sherlock shivered a the thought as Lexi pulled herself up to look, both hands covered in blood and pressed against her chest. Sherlock guessed there was no point taking out a target if there was no opportunity to be paid. A scream was heard from below as someone passed by Moriarty's mangled body. Lexi pressed herself against Sherlock tiredly, seemingly not fussed that Moriarty had fallen to his death laughing.

As sirens wailed in the distance Sherlock pressed his lips against Lexi's forehead before whispering to her.

"I will always have you."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much to everyone who enjoyed this series! Lexi and Sherlock's journey isn't over yet though, there are still a few loose ends and of course no one really knows the length of their relationship yet ... Not even mummy!

Much love,
Fury xo

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