A Matter of Trust

by scarletmanuka

Summary

After the death of his wife, John is finally ready to move on and commence a relationship with Sherlock. His advances don't go over as well as he'd hoped as Sherlock realises exactly who he wants.
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

A hopefully-unnecessary author note!
This story contains Holmescest (gasp!). It’s a work of fiction exploring the developing relationship between two of my favourite characters. Just because I write about two brothers getting down and dirty, it doesn’t mean I’m suggesting you try and shag your own siblings. If you have a problem with this kind of relationship, may I suggest you edit your search filters so you can avoid them?
For everyone else, hope you enjoy!

Mycroft looked up from the report on his desk detailing the ongoing economic fallout from the US presidential election as Anthea poked her head round the door. He took in the slightly apologetic look on her face, the set of her shoulders, and combined with the fact she hadn’t used the intercom knew that he had a visitor. “Who is it?” he asked, knowing it could only be one of two people - Doctor Watson or Detective Inspector Lestrade.

“John Watson here to see you, sir. You have twenty minutes before your meeting with the Finance Minister. Shall I show him in or send him away?”

He took a moment to consider this. He knew that Sherlock wasn’t in any trouble so he almost felt like being spiteful. The doctor’s cockiness had always grated on Anthea’s nerves and she would relish the chance to send him on his way, which would keep her happy. On the other hand, the interactions between John and Mycroft were few and far between since they weren’t exactly chummy, even after the events at Sherrinford. If the doctor had popped by unannounced then he would certainly have something on his mind that Mycroft would want to know about.

“Send him in I suppose,” he told her, an apology in his eyes for denying her a spot of fun.

She smiled wryly at him, and then opened the door further, ushering in the blonde.

“Doctor Watson, to what do I owe the pleasure?” he asked, gesturing for him to have a seat. He kept his voice neutral and all emotion from his face.

John rolled his eyes as he sat himself primly in the chair, his military bearing still not fading after all these years. “Really, Mycroft, after all we’ve been through together you can’t use my first name?”

He gave him a thin smile. “Apologies... John. I find myself falling back on formalities when I’m at work.” He hoped the pointed reminder would cause his brother’s flatmate to get to the point.

“How have you been? Not seen much of you lately.” Obviously not.

Mycroft sighed internally. It seemed that John had interpreted his actions during Eurus’ little game incorrectly. Mycroft hadn’t been trying to be kind to John, he had been willing to sacrifice himself for his little brother. As much as they rarely saw eye to eye, Sherlock was his whole life and he would do anything to see him happy. For some reason he had become attached to the goldfish sitting in front of him, and he wasn’t going to let their sister kill his new best friend. It appeared that John had taken this to mean that they were now at the point in which they exchanged pleasantries. “I have
been busy,” he told him. “In fact, I still am. I don’t mean to be rude, John but I have a meeting shortly that I need to prepare for. Can I ask what has brought you here today?”

“Oh, of course. I forget that you have a county to run.” He shot him an amused look and it took every ounce of Mycroft’s considerable willpower not to strangle the man. He had sacrificed almost everything for Queen and country and the self absorbed little man in front of him dared to make light of it? John Watson thought he knew what sacrifice was but he knew nothing. If he’d had to give up even a tenth of what Mycroft had had to, he would have crumpled into nothingness.

“Indeed, so if you could be kind enough to tell me what you require?”

“It’s about Sherlock.”

“I gathered.”

“You’re aware that Irene Adler is not in fact dead, and that he’s still in contact with her?” It was an accusation.

“Yes, Sherlock was rather gleeful that he’d managed to pull one over me. I learned of his little rescue mission the day after I spoke to you. It was of little consequence to me if Miss Adler lived or died -”

Lie! His jealousy roiled close to the surface and he forced it back down lest a flicker of it show on his face. “- but it seemed Sherlock felt strongly on the matter.”

“So even after throwing in with Moriarty you were happy to have her wandering free?” John demanded in indignation.

“She was little more than a pawn in Moriarty’s grand plan, and she burned her bridges thoroughly. There was no threat of her teaming back up with him - in fact, she was on the run from him.” He gave the doctor a blunt look. “What is this about? Why does it matter to you if she’s alive or not?”

The rigid set of his posture dropped for a split second as John practically squirmed in his chair. “I was just wondering if it was likely she would be back in London anytime soon.”

“Not that I’m aware. She seems to have built herself quite the empire in Las Vegas and I doubt she’ll give that up in a hurry.” The relief on the blonde’s face was obvious. Mycroft narrowed his eyes. “She’s a threat to you. You’re wondering if she’ll stand between you and the chance at a relationship with my brother.” A blush spread across the doctor’s cheeks. “Good grief - you’re in love with Sherlock!”

John glared at him. “Got a problem with that, Charlie Brown?”

Yes! He’s mine! “Your love life is of no concern to me,” he said airily, when all he wanted to do was scream at the man in front of him.

“You’re right. It’s not,” the doctor said in clipped tones.

“And yet, here you sit. If this is none of my business, why exactly are you here?”

John looked chagrined. “I’m not sure, exactly. I suppose I just thought you’d know about Irene. I won’t keep you any longer.”

“Very well. Good day, Doctor Watson.” With a small nod, John was up and out the door and Mycroft took a moment to let the mask fall. His face dropped into his hands even as his heart shattered. Why on Earth could he not keep his emotions in check? Why did Sherlock have to be the exception to every rule? Why could he not take an interest in someone, anyone else? Why did it
always have to be his baby brother?

He sighed and filed away the report he’d been studying, knowing he wouldn’t be able to concentrate on it at the moment. The Finance Minister was an imbecile and Mycroft could get through the meeting unconscious and propped up with a stick without the man noticing. He could allow his mind to wander.

Lady Smallwood had been avoiding him since he had spurned her advances. A little like Lestrade, she was the best of a bad lot, and if circumstances had been different, she would probably have been as close to perfect for Mycroft as he could get. But he had tried when he was younger to distract himself with others, but it had done nothing more than compound the fact that he could not have what he so dearly wanted.

It was wrong to love his brother. Wrong. Immoral. Illegal. It didn’t stop him though. He’d been in love with Sherlock for as long as he could remember. He couldn’t even pinpoint the moment it changed from brotherly affection to romantic longing. Sherlock was synonymous with love in his mind, and no one could ever replace him. And so since Mycroft couldn’t have his brother, he would have no one. He honed the Iceman image in order to keep others at an arm’s length, to keep his heart safe.

Of course, he couldn’t keep it safe from threats beyond his control - those that Sherlock attached himself to. These had been few and far between, and he was almost certain that his brother had never actually been intimate with anyone. It was his emotional attachment that had been the cause of most of Mycroft’s jealousy. Mrs Hudson and Lestrade posed no threat since they were allies. The landlady considered Sherlock to be a son and the DI thought of him as a younger brother, and both had only his best interests at heart. Molly Hooper’s affections would never be returned and the politician felt an almost kinship with her. He knew the pain of unrequited love and he almost felt protective of her.

The biggest threats so far had been Adler and Moriarty himself. Their intellects had sparked Sherlock’s interest like no one but Mycroft had ever managed before. The heady mix of danger and the game had energised his younger brother, and even once Moriarty was dead, Miss Adler was still out there, insinuating herself into his life one orgasmic moan at a time. Even though he rarely texted back, Sherlock was still drawn to her.

It seemed that Doctor Watson was now on the radar. When he’d first burst onto the scene, spouting the phrases ‘Brilliant’, ‘Fantastic’, and ‘Not gay’ Mycroft had observed closely but had quickly come to the conclusion that he was nothing more than a friend. Not something that he’d ever personally felt the need for, but he knew that Sherlock did. After the tragic murder of Victor, he’d withdrawn into himself and closed himself off, but in doing so, his spark had dimmed. It came back in force when John Watson came into his life, and for that, Mycroft would always be grateful. He had even found himself liking the doctor to some extent. However arrogant, cocky, and self assured the soldier was, he hadn’t been a threat and he made Sherlock happy so he was firmly in the good books. But now...now things were changing.

It had only been a few months since his wife had died and as inexperienced at emotion as he was, even Mycroft thought that was much too soon to be chasing after someone else. He was aware of the video messages Mary had left, and knew it was the reason John had moved back into 221B with his daughter. It seemed however that he was more than happy to move on and to fill the void she had left in his life. Unfortunately for Mycroft, he had his sights set on Sherlock.

His brother’s happiness was paramount, and no matter how much it hurt, how much his heart shattered, Mycroft would do nothing to get in the way of his happiness. If Doctor Watson made Sherlock happy, then the older man would remain in the shadows, an aching spectator, and would
take comfort in his brother’s joy.

As Anthea buzzed in the Finance Minister, one thought gave Mycroft a small amount of solace. If John Watson hurt his brother, there wouldn’t be a pit deep enough to hide in to keep him from Mycroft’s vengeance.
Chapter 2

Sherlock was lounging on the couch, waiting for the timer to go off so he could check the progress of the spleen that was currently marinating in a myriad of chemicals in the fridge. Rosie was asleep in her bassinet, making sleepy cooing noises. She had been drooling at an alarming rate recently and he knew it wouldn’t be long before the peace and quiet was over and teething began. He had made sure to place an order for some decent noise cancelling headphones online earlier that day.

He heard the front door open and close and then the familiar steps of John climbing up to the flat. He came in and put the shopping down on the kitchen table before coming into the lounge.

“She behave?” he whispered loudly as he looked down at his daughter.

“I gave her a bottle just after you left and she’s been asleep since.” Sherlock didn’t bother to whisper, just kept his voice to a low murmur that he knew wouldn’t disturb the child.

John shook his head with a grin and placed a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder, allowing it to linger. “She’s only ever that good for you.” He finally removed his hand, but not before trailing his fingertips along the sharp collarbone beneath the purple shirt. He headed into the kitchen, not noticing the uncomfortable crinkle between his flatmate’s eyes.

Sherlock rubbed absently at his shoulder as he closed his eyes, trying to banish the prickly, crawling feeling he got from casual touches. He wasn’t generally a tactile person, but John had seemed to be one of the few exceptions. He had never had a problem before with asking the soldier to retrieve his phone from his jacket pocket, or have him examine him after an injury, or even from the random brushing of limbs as they moved about the crowded space of the small kitchen. This had been different, more intimate, deliberate. Something had changed and it made him distinctly uncomfortable.

The only other people he allowed to touch him in a familiar manner were his parents, his brother, Mrs Hudson, and Rosie, who was practically his niece (and just a baby) and so didn’t count. He allowed the odd hug on special occasions from people outside of that group (namely Molly and Lestrade) but tried to avoid it at all other times. His parents weren’t overly affectionate so even though he didn’t mind physical contact from them, it was rare anyway. And then there was Mycroft.

When they were children, they had sought affection from the other. What they lacked from their parents, they found in each other. Mycroft was the one who would tend his wounds and kiss him better after a fall, he was the one who carried him when he was tired and gave him piggy back rides in the garden, and when he woke in the middle of the night from a nightmare, it was always Mycroft’s bed he sought for comfort. And then his older brother had gone off to university and Sherlock had felt abandoned. When he’d come home that first Christmas, Sherlock had pushed him away when he’d tried to hug him, wanting to inflict the same feelings of rejection onto his brother. From that point forward they had drifted apart even though deep down all Sherlock wanted to do was to cling to him and never let go.

As much as he enjoyed riling his brother up and sniping at him, he loved him dearly. Mycroft was the only person in the world that he could trust irrevocably. He would always have Sherlock’s back, and would do everything he could to protect him. Even if it meant he was overbearing at times, the young detective knew that if he fell, Mycroft would be there for him. As much as he valued John’s
friendship, he had been scorned too many times by the doctor for him to be able to trust him to be there when it mattered the most. No matter what he said or did to upset Mycroft, it wouldn’t stop him coming if he was needed. He would never abandon Sherlock.

When he had been away for those years, untangling and dismantling the web left behind by Moriarty, Sherlock had drawn into himself, hiding away from everyone. His one means of communication with his old life was a cheap burner phone that he used scarcely. Mycroft would text him at least once a week to check up on him, but he rarely replied. It was only when the loneliness got too much that he would reach out to his brother. Mycroft would always reply promptly, and offered what comfort he could. Sherlock hadn’t realised just how much he missed Mycroft until the day he appeared in that cell in Serbia and had caught him in his arms as he fell from his shackles. He had clung to his brother, not realising he was desperate for touch until he had strong arms wrapped around him. At first he had put it down to his isolation and thought that he would become slightly more tactile upon his return and then it would all go back to normal. However he found that he was still uncomfortable when he was hugged and slapped on the back. After some experimentation he discovered that it was only Mycroft’s touch he longed for.

So much had happened between then and now, he’d had little time to even ponder the results and what they meant. He had almost killed himself following Mary’s instructions to save John, and then there was the whole ‘forgotten sister’ bit. He was more relieved than he could say that Mummy and Father had seemed to have forgiven Mycroft for his deception. Although he could see that the situation could have been handled slightly differently, on the whole he agreed with his brother’s decision to mislead his parents. They had struggled enough with the emotional and societal backlash from his own oddities - he could see their hearts breaking over the violence and destruction that was Eurus. Mycroft had a thankless job as the one responsible for the hard decisions but he always did what he thought was best.

“Sherlock?”

“Hmmm?” He was pulled from his reverie by John standing over him, and his tone of voice indicated he’d tried several times to get his attention.

“I said, do you want a cup of tea?”

“Oh, yes, please.”

John huffed fondly and pottered back to the kitchen to start the kettle. “What mysteries of the universe were you thinking about this time?”

“I was thinking that I should really catch up with Mycroft to see how he’s doing.”

“Um, okay. Any particular reason? You’re generally not too concerned with what the British Government is up to.”

“The events at Sherrinford hit him hard. I don’t like to think of him being so stressed.”

“Pretty sure you have to be human to be stressed,” John mused as he pulled down the teacups.

Sherlock’s eyes narrowed. “Mycroft was willing to sacrifice himself for you, John. I’d have hoped you’d be a little more grateful.”

“In case you forgot, he was a bit of an arse about the whole thing.”

“You know perfectly well he was just trying to make me mad enough to shoot him. I told you not to take it personally.” He felt his anger rising at his flatmate’s flippant disregard of his brother.
“Yeah well, he’s been enough of a dick at other times for me to feel justified in taking it personally, Sherlock. Honestly, you’ve never had a problem bitching about him before, I don’t know why you’re having a hissy fit now.”

“Because he’s *my* brother, John, and I’m allowed to whinge about him. That doesn’t make it okay for you to say horrible things about him.”

“Yeah, fine, whatever,” John brushed off his concerns and set about making tea.

Sherlock was fuming. He felt the desire to reach for his violin and saw at the strings until the flat was filled with the sounds of a dying cat, however that would undoubtedly wake the baby. He stood abruptly. “I’m going out,” he announced.

“What? Where?”

“No idea. Just out.”

John hurried from the kitchen looking flustered. “Will you be back for dinner? I’d planned on making something special, and thought we could watch a film.”

He resisted the urge to roll his eyes and make a comment about them not being an old married couple. “Yes, fine, I suppose I can be back for that.”

He didn’t wait for a reply and stormed out of the flat, leaving a confused John in his wake.

Chapter End Notes

Posted two chapters to kick it off and will post again in about a week :)}
He walked for hours, lost in thought, his feet taking him blindly along the streets of London. His anger simmered, and then cooled enough for him to begin to head back home but he knew if John made any other untoward comments about his brother, it would return hotter than ever. The emotion was a little confusing he grudgingly admitted to himself. He’d never felt the need to jump to Mycroft’s defence quite so much in the past. He could only put it down to seeing the more vulnerable side of his brother and learning that he was just as capable of making mistakes as Sherlock was. It had actually made him feel closer to Mycroft - had made him more relatable and that he wasn’t just the better, older brother that he could never hope to emulate.

When he arrived back at Baker Street he found John was in the kitchen strapping Rosie into her highchair. The table had been cleared of his latest experiments, the microscope now sitting on the bench next to the toaster, and it was laid out with placemats and their best cutlery.

Sherlock raised an eyebrow. “Since when do we eat at the table?”

“I just thought it would be nice for a change,” John replied airily.

He recalled John’s parting words as he left and tried to figure out what sort of occasion warranted going to such measures. In this he was blind, having no clue as to what was going on.

Once the baby was securely in her chair, John pulled a dish from the oven and placed it in the centre of the table. It was some sort of creamy pasta dish and he had garlic bread, salad, and wine to go with it. “I hope you like it - I’ve not made this before so you’re being my guinea pig for once instead of the other way around.”

“Surely by the time you’d bought all the ingredients and then spent the time cooking it, it would have been easier to just get a take away from Angelo’s?”

His flatmate sighed and Sherlock noticed the tightening of his eyes before he gave him a somewhat forced smile. “I’m aware I could have gotten us take away, Sherlock. I just wanted to do something a bit different.”

Yes, you seem to be doing a lot of that today. “May I ask what the occasion is?”

John took a large sip of wine, avoiding his gaze. “Does there have to be an occasion? Can’t I just do something nice for you?”

“Doing something nice would be getting us a take away. This is something more and I don’t understand.”

“Sherlock!” he snapped before wincing as Rosie began to cry. He huffed as the genius waved him away and unbuckled the baby, pulling her into his lap. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to raise my voice. Look, there’s no occasion, it’s nothing special. I just felt like cooking and thought we could have a nice night in with dinner and a film. If you’re not up for it, then fine, I can do something else.”
Understanding that now was not the time to push unless he wanted to get into a full blown row, Sherlock relented. “It’s fine. Dinner and a film is fine.”

John gave him a small smile and then plated him some food since his hands were full with the baby. “So, what experiments are you working on?”

By the time they had finished dinner and were seated on the couch with a DVD lined up, John was back to his chirpy mood from earlier that day. The movie was some action/spy flick and even when Sherlock tore the plot to shreds he just laughed, batting at his friend’s arm playfully and joining in. They paused the movie halfway through and the doctor took Rosie from her place on Sherlock’s lap and put her to bed. Sherlock got up and made tea for them, noticing that when he returned to the lounge, John was sitting much closer to the middle of the couch than he had been earlier. Sherlock placed the mugs down and sat, but even pressed as close to the arm of the couch as possible, his thigh was pressed uncomfortably against John’s. He took some deep breaths, forcing himself to stay seated and not run from the room. They resumed the movie but he could tell that John wasn’t watching it - his eyes flickered constantly over to roam Sherlock’s face and he could hear that his breathing had sped up. At one stage he felt John’s eyes linger on him and once he’d been staring for ten seconds, Sherlock turned to face him with a questioning look. His flatmate just smiled at him and turned his face back to the telly but not before he pressed his leg closer.

It finally dawned on Sherlock that the doctor was making a move on him. He cursed his inexperience for not seeing it earlier so he could have avoided this situation entirely. He knew that if he told John outright that he wasn’t interested, it would shatter the new found truce they had found since Mary had died. The best course of action he decided was to play dumb. Ignore all the cues and signals and act like everything was normal. Surely that should be enough to get out of this horrible situation?

Unfortunately, it wasn’t. John must have decided that he’d have to be more overt than usual to offset Sherlock’s lack of experience. The movie had come to a finish and Sherlock had turned off the telly. “Well, that was a load of codswallop. You really do have appalling taste in films, John. It’s bored me half to death so I’m going to head to bed.” He stood to go but a hand caught his wrist and pulled him back and he twisted as he slumped back onto the couch, ending up against John’s chest.

“Sherlock, there’s something I wanted to do,” John said breathily. Without giving the younger man a chance to ask what, he started to lean forward.

Sherlock saw it happening in slow motion - John’s eyes closed, his lips pursed, and his mouth got closer and closer. He couldn’t hold back the panic and he leapt from the couch, pushing hard and sending John sprawling against the cushions as he did so. “What on earth did I mean, saying I was going to bed? How silly of me, I completely forgot that Mycroft asked me to come round tonight. I’d better dash, you know, before he gets mad at me for being late. Okay, time to go, bye!”

He practically ran from the room, not even bothering with his coat in his hurry to get out of there. He thundered down the stairs, ignoring John’s cry of protest behind him and erupted onto the street. He gulped in cold lungfuls of air, and hurried down the road, his mind racing. He didn’t even bother trying to hail a cab, just allowed his feet to tread the familiar path towards his brother’s house. Panic was still ebbing at the edges of his mind and it didn’t start to fade until he was standing outside of the elegant front door. He took in a deep breath and pressed the doorbell.
Mycroft was just contemplating going to bed when he heard the doorbell chime. He crossed to the monitor in the hallway, a slight frown wrinkling his forehead as he thought about who it could possibly be at this time of night. His mouth dropped open slightly in shock as he took in the lanky form of his brother on the front step, and then it pressed closed in worry. Sherlock never used the doorbell. He mostly picked the lock or broke in through a window, or if he was in a hurry he might deem to actually use his key.

Scolding himself for worrying before he had all the facts, Mycroft went to the door and undid the locks. He didn’t miss the look of sheer relief on his brother’s face when he opened the door.

“Sherlock? What’s wrong?” His eyes took in his brother’s form, noting the lack of a jacket, the cheeks rosy from the cold, and the wild look in his eyes, almost like panic.

“Can’t a man drop by to see his brother in the middle of the night without getting the third degree?” He had tried to sound as nonchalant as possible but the slight hitch to his voice sent off alarm bells in the older man’s mind.

“I wouldn’t know since you’ve never just dropped by ‘for a chat’. Nevermind though, come inside.” He stepped aside to allow him to pass and Sherlock surprised him again by squeezing his arm in thanks. “Bloody hell, Sherlock. You’re freezing!” He looked more closely at his brother and noticed the slight tremor as his teeth threatened to begin chattering. “Did you walk here?”

Curling his arms around his middle in an attempt to warm up, Sherlock nodded. “I needed time to think.”

“And whatever you were pondering was so momentous that you didn’t think to grab a coat?” Mycroft took him by the elbow and guided him into the sitting room. “Come and get warm.” He sat him on the end of the couch closest to the fire and then ducked out to the hall closet. He came back with a soft polar fleece blanket and wrapped it around his brother’s shoulders before sitting next to him.

“Th...th...thanks,” he managed to say as his teeth finally ran away with themselves.

Mycroft rubbed almost absently at Sherlock’s back, trying to warm him up. “What happened? Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

“Th...th...thanks,” he managed to say as his teeth finally ran away with themselves.

Mycroft rubbed almost absently at Sherlock’s back, trying to warm him up. “What happened? Are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Curls bounced as he shook his head. “I’m fine.”

He threw him a skeptical look. “And yet you’re here. Why?” He already suspected that it had something to do with John’s visit earlier in the day, but he knew that if he pushed Sherlock, he would retreat further into himself.

“Would it be okay if I could have some tea?” his brother asked instead, his eyes pleading for more
time to get his thoughts together.

“Of course. I’ll be back in a moment.” Mycroft went to the kitchen and popped the kettle on to boil. He spooned leaves into the pot and collected two cups, a small jug of milk, and the sugar bowl, arranging them on a tray before leaning back against the counter while he waited for the water. He admitted to himself that he was rather shaken as he’d never seen Sherlock in such an agitated state before. Well, not whilst sober anyway. It was clear that John’s advances had not gone over well, but had Sherlock merely panicked from his lack of experience? Or had John been forceful? Or perhaps his interest had been reciprocated and after the fact Sherlock had been overcome with embarrassment? No, that wasn’t it - he hadn’t seen any signs of a sexual coupling on his brother. The relief he felt at this was staggering and more than slightly immoral, but he had long ago stopped feeling guilty for his feelings. He knew that eventually he would have to overcome the jealousy that raged within himself at even the thought of someone that wasn’t him touching his brother in such a manner, but it didn’t look like today was going to be that day.

The whistle of the kettle pulled him from his thoughts and he filled the teapot. He picked up the tray and made his way carefully into the sitting room, smiling as he saw that Sherlock had kicked off his shoes and curled up on the couch, snuggled up in the blanket. He placed the tray on the coffee table and then gave his brother a pointed look. He huffed but moved his feet up enough that Mycroft had room to sit down. Once he was perched on the edge, he prepared two cups of tea and slid one down the table until it was in front of the younger man’s face. Picking up his own cup, he then shuffled backwards until he was sitting comfortably.

Sherlock made no move to pick up his tea but almost shyly he inched his feet down until they were resting in his brother’s lap. Mycroft made a concerted effort to keep from freezing in shock, not wanting to scare Sherlock away. He took a sip of his tea and then balanced the cup on his knee with one hand, the other hand dropping until it was resting on top of one slender ankle. After several long minutes when it was clear his touch was accepted, he began to slowly rub his thumb in circles.

Time seemed to come to a standstill in the room. The air hung still and heavy despite the chill outside, and the silence was absolute. Mycroft became hyper aware of his own heart, beating erratically in his chest. He moved his thumb ever so slightly so it moved beneath the hem of the dark trousers Sherlock wore, to settle on the bare skin above his socks. He chanced a glance towards his brother and saw that his eyes had fluttered closed, his long lashes dark against pale cheeks. Mycroft could see the thrumming pulse point in his slender neck and he moved his fingers around until they sat lightly over the posterior tibial artery, feeling the matching flutter beneath his fingertips. Sherlock’s heart was racing as much as Mycroft’s was and a small flicker of hope sprung up in his chest. Could he even dare hope that his younger brother felt the same way?

They sat there for a long time, Mycroft’s fingers drawing patterns on Sherlock’s ankle, both of them almost breathless from the chaste touch. The moment broke suddenly as Sherlock’s phone began to ring and he cursed as he drew it from his pocket. He glared at the screen and then thumbed it to silent before throwing it onto the coffee table. One look confirmed Mycroft’s suspicions about the caller - John.

“Not going to answer it?” he asked gently, hoping to coax some information from his brother.

“Nope,” he replied, the ‘p’ popping as he twisted and hid his face in the cushion.

“Can I ask why not?”

“Nope,” can the muffled reply.

Mycroft couldn’t help but smile at the churlish response. Even though his questions were going
unanswered, Sherlock was pressing his feet closer against his big brother’s stomach. One of his trouser legs had ridden up slightly as he’d twisted around and feeling bolder, Mycroft began stroking up and down the bony shin. He allowed his head to drop back against the couch and felt himself relax, just taking comfort in the fact that his brother was letting him have this small pleasure. His fingers trailed up almost to his knee and then he dipped them down to rub along the back of his calf, causing Sherlock to moan almost orgasmically into the cushion.

So far, Mycroft’s cock had been behaving itself, but at that wanton sound, it jumped to attention, straining against his pants. Unable to help himself he froze, panic clouding his brain, expecting Sherlock to jump up and call him a pervert before storming off.

Instead, his foot pressed harder against Mycroft’s groin and began to rub up and down. The pressure felt divine and an answering moan slipped from his mouth. The air between them almost crackled with tension, but they both remained silent, neither wanting to be the one to break the thread between them. Mycroft resumed his feather light touches to Sherlock’s leg and Sherlock continued to move his foot across the bulge in his brother’s trousers, both content to draw out the moment.

The doorbell chimed loudly through the room and Sherlock yelped and jumped up from the couch, tangling in the blanket and crashing to the ground. He scrambled to his feet, panic in his eyes, looking like a cornered animal. “John!” he uttered.

Mycroft stood and took a brief moment to rearrange himself before laying a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder. “What would you like me to do, brother mine?”

“I don’t want him to know I’m here. Please, Mycie.” It wasn’t the pleading tone that told Mycroft just how much Sherlock didn't want to see his flatmate right now, but the use of his childhood nickname. It had been at least twenty years since it had passed his brother’s lips but for it to slip out now proved just how frazzled he was.

“Of course. Go upstairs and I’ll get rid of him.”

Giving him a grateful look, Sherlock hurried away. Mycroft calmly folded the blanket and placed it on the back of the couch before heading into the hallway. The doorbell chimed again and he allowed his expression to fall into one of indifference. “Doctor Watson,” he greeted the soldier, knowing it would irk the man after their earlier conversation.

“I need to speak to Sherlock,” the blonde said without preamble.

“Yes?”

“Sherlock?” He raised one of his eyebrows. “My brother isn’t here.”

“He said he was coming here before he ran from the room.”

“Pray tell, what did you do to cause him to run from you?”

John huffed and ran a hand through his hair. “Look, it doesn’t matter. I just need to speak to him.”

“On the contrary, it does matter to me, Doctor Watson. You come to me only this morning, giving away your intentions of beginning a romantic relationship with my brother, and now you’re here saying he ran from you. I must confess, this worries me greatly.”

John’s eyes narrowed. “Nothing happened. I only tried to kiss him and he freaked out, saying that he was supposed to meet you here. Look, is he here or not?”

“I’ve already told you he is not.”
“Are you sure? I know how he likes to pick a lock. Maybe he broke in and you don’t know it yet?”

Now it was Mycroft’s turn to narrow his eyes dangerously. It was much more threatening on him than on the ex army doctor. “I think I’d know if he’d broken in.”

“Or maybe he’s hiding behind the clown,” John hissed, annoyingly referencing their previous prank.

“Even if my brother had managed to get into my house without me knowing, why would you think that I would allow you access to him? If Sherlock felt so threatened by you that he has run to me for sanctuary, I would not be inclined to allow you inside.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Mycroft. This is me we’re talking about! You know I’d never hurt him. I just want to be able to explain; to talk to him so I can clear up this mess.”

“John, I don’t know what else to tell you. He’s not here and you arguing about it isn’t going to make it any less true.”

“So you’re not worried at all? If he’s not here then neither of us know where he is!”

He rolled his eyes. “My brother is an adult, and as such he is capable of looking after himself. You obviously made him uncomfortable and he needs some time away from you - I fail to see what there is to be worried about.”

“He might be somewhere getting high for all we know!”

“If you are so concerned that this would lead to a danger night, should you not have considered that before you propositioned him?” he asked pointedly.

“No! Because I didn’t think he’d reject me!” John paced back and forth on the front step in agitation.

“You were so sure your attraction would be reciprocated?” He pushed down the pang of jealousy at knowing that most people would have assumed Sherlock would jump at the chance to be with John.

“Urgh! I can’t have this discussion with you right now, Mycroft. Just...look, just call me if he shows up.”

“Very well. Good night, Doctor Watson.” He watched as the man strode off, and shut the door only when he was out of sight. He moved about the lower floor, switching off lights and ensuring the alarm was set before heading upstairs in search of Sherlock. He wasn’t in the spare room that he regularly used and with a mixture of hope and curiosity, he headed for his own bedroom.

Sherlock was standing at the window, one of Mycroft’s dressing gowns wrapped around him.

“He came to see you today?” he asked in his rumbling baritone, his eyes still focused on the street below the window.

“Yes,” he replied, toeing off his shoes and bending to remove his socks. “Wanted to know if Miss Adler was expected back in London.”

Sherlock turned, his expression surprised. “Irene? Why would he want to know about her?”

Mycroft sighed. “Because he believed she was the only one standing between you and his affections.”

“Why does everyone jump to the conclusion that I’m interested in a sexual relationship with John?” he demanded, pointedly ignoring the part about being attracted to The Woman.
“Perhaps it’s the way you seem to be attached at the hip?” he mused, unbuttoning his jacket. “You do seem to be enjoying playing happy families.”

Sherlock glared at Mycroft. “Just because he and his daughter live with me, doesn’t mean I want to fuck him,” he spat.

“No? Maybe you should have told him that then instead of just running away.” It sounded harsh even to his own ears but he couldn’t help himself.

“Because that would have gone down so well.”

Mycroft sighed and sank onto the side of the bed. “He’s a doctor, Sherlock. You could have just explained that you’re asexual and that you aren’t interested in sex. He would have understood.”

“Annoyingly, John seems to be able to tell when I’m lying,” Sherlock grumbled.

“So you are interested in him?”

“Have you always been this dumb and I just haven’t noticed?”

He pinched the bridge of his nose. “Sherlock, it’s late and I’m tired and I’m in no mood for puzzles. Either speak plainly or go to bed.”

“Your bed?”

His eyes snapped open. “Pardon?”

“I asked,” Sherlock said, untying the belt of the robe and allowing it to fall to the floor, “your bed?”

Mycroft gulped. Sherlock was naked under the robe and stood before him in all his pale glory.

“I...you...what are...”

His younger brother’s grin was feral and he stalked towards him. “I never thought I’d see the day when I made you speechless.” He climbed up onto the bed and straddled Mycroft’s lap, linking his arms around his neck. “I’m not interested in John,” he whispered against his ear. “I’m interested in you.”

Mycroft’s eyes closed and his hands hovered an inch above the tempting skin of Sherlock’s hips.

“We shouldn’t...”

“Pfft, who cares what we should or shouldn’t do? I’ve never been one to care about society’s taboos.”

The older man was torn. On one hand, this was everything he’d ever wanted, but on the other could he risk it blowing up in his face and losing his brother forever? Letting his breath out slowly, Mycroft opened his eyes and pinned Sherlock beneath his gaze. “How long?” he asked in a hoarse voice.

“How long what?”

“How long have you wanted this? Wanted me?”

The nebulae of Sherlock’s eyes regarded him calmly. “Since I realised my feelings towards you had changed? Serbia. Since I figured out how exactly they had changed and the fact that what I feel is sexual in nature? About two hours.”

“Jesus fucking Christ.” Mycroft reached up with one of his hands and rubbed at his eyes. “Sherlock,
you haven’t even thought about this properly! We simply can’t do this without you giving it due consideration.”

“Why not?” He said it with the petulance of a younger sibling used to getting his own way, and Mycroft cursed himself for always allowing him to get his own way. He knew that arguments about morals and lawfulness would fall on deaf ears, so he decided to be honest and put his heart on the line. It was leaving himself open to be mocked but he was past the point of caring anymore.

“Sherlock, this isn’t some passing whim of mine. If we do this, we do this properly. I need you to have thought about this because if we went through with it and you changed your mind in the morning, well, I don’t think I’d recover from that.” He dropped his eyes to his lap, remembering at the last minute that Sherlock was naked and darted them back up to rest on his brother’s collar bones. “I refuse to be some pawn in a game you’re playing with John.”

He felt a finger under his chin and his head was raised until they made eye contact. “This isn’t one of my games, Mycie. I want you, I want this. You’re the only one who has ever gotten me. I know we drive each other mental, but I know you’ll always have my back. I want to do this properly, as you put it.”

He’d left himself open so Mycroft could read how earnest he was, but it did little to reassure the older man. “Just take a little time,” he said. “At least overnight. If you still feel the same way in the morning, then I’ll put my trust in you.”

Sherlock leaned forward and brushed the lightest of kisses over his lips. “As you wish. Can I stay with you though?”

Mycroft nodded. “Of course. Let me get you some pyjamas.”

“I don’t need them,” the detective said with a smirk. “I’m happy to sleep in the buff.”

“Yes, but I need you to wear them, brother mine.” He pushed him off his lap and crossed to the wardrobe to pull out his own sleepwear and a spare set for his brother.

Sherlock huffed but his face was playful. “Fine, if I must.”

They got changed and brushed their teeth and then climbed into bed. Sherlock immediately shuffled over until he was pressed flush against Mycroft and wrapped his arms around him, holding him tight. “You can trust me, Mycie. Promise,” he whispered, pressing a kiss to his temple.

Mycroft didn’t reply, fear at losing this causing his throat to close over. He tucked his head under Sherlock’s chin and closed his eyes, breathing in the scent of his brother.

Long moments passed and then in a low murmur, Sherlock asked, “How long for you?”

Mycroft didn’t have to even think about the answer. “As long as I can remember.”

Arms tightened around him and he felt warm lips touch his neck. Relaxing into the hold, Mycroft finally dozed off to sleep.
Chapter 5

At some point during the night, Mycroft had wiggled out of Sherlock’s embrace and had turned over onto his stomach. His arms were tucked under the pillow, the blanket was pulled up high around his neck, and his feet were poking out the bottom of the blanket. He woke as the first rays of the morning sun peeked through the window and fell across his face. Mumbling, he rolled over and saw that Sherlock was still in bed. He was already awake, propped up on one elbow with his palm cradling his face, watching Mycroft intently.

“That’s disconcerting.”

“You’re very interesting when you sleep.”

“I doubt that very much.”

“You’re very interesting to me when you’re asleep.” He smiled and it looked almost fond. “You still sleep with your feet out, even though it’s winter. I’d almost forgotten that about you.”

“It’s my thermostat,” the older man grumbled. “If my feet are out, then I know how cold it is outside so I’m happy to be nice and toasty under the blanket.”

“I don’t think that’s quite true from a scientific perspective,” he said with a low chuckle.

Mycroft shrugged. “You always had the better scientific mind than me.” He rubbed at his face and then reached out to touch Sherlock’s cheek with the back of his knuckles. “I wasn’t sure if you’d be here,” he murmured.

Reaching out and tugging him closer, Sherlock nuzzled his face into Mycroft’s throat. “Nothing’s changed. I didn’t have any sudden change of heart overnight, even after you stole all the quilt.”

“To be fair, I’m not used to sharing my bed with anyone.”

“I’m sure you’ll get used to it quickly enough.”

“Oh really? Planning on sleeping over often are you? However will you explain that to John?”

Sherlock frowned, clearly not having thought it through. “Maybe I’ll just tell him the truth.” A chill went through Mycroft’s body and he gaped at his brother, causing him to roll his eyes. “Not all of the truth. I’m not stupid, Mycie. Just part of the truth - the part about me seeing someone.”

“Even so, do you think he’ll rest until he knows who it is?” He couldn’t help but be skeptical about the matter.

His brother just shrugged. “Tough. John doesn’t get to know everything about me.” He dipped his head down further and nibbled at Mycroft’s collar bones. “Are we going to have sex now?” he asked, raising his face to grin impishly.

It was Mycroft’s turn to roll his eyes. “You’ve not even taken me out to dinner yet.”

“You want to be wined and dined?”
He sighed. “Not exactly. But I also don’t want to just jump straight into a full on intimate relationship.” He took a breath, sure he already knew the answer but needed to hear it from his brother’s lips. “Have you ever done this before?”

“As much as I deleted memories of a whole sibling, I’m sure I’d remember if I’d partaken in an incestrous affair in my youth.”

“Be serious, Sherlock. You know what I mean.”

His brother huffed and threw himself down on his back. “You know very well that I’m a virgin.”

“I couldn’t be certain. You were away and alone for a long time, brother mine. You came back a changed man and I couldn’t be sure just how changed.”

“The most intimate I got with anyone was with my torturer and not in a sexy way.”

“I’m not trying to shame you, Sherlock. I just need to know where we both stand, and that includes finding out what experience you have.”

“Not much, but I’m not worried because I know you’ll teach me. You were always the best person when it came to teaching me new things.”

He gave him a warm smile. “I’ll try my best.”

“What about you, then? I can’t imagine you’ve been around the block.”

“You’d be right. Some experimentation when I was in university, mostly to try and get over my feelings for you. When that clearly wasn’t working I mostly resorted to toys to take the edge off.”

“Are you an Ann Summer’s frequent flyer?” His eyes sparkled with mirth.

“They’re a tad vanilla for me, Sherlock.”

A grin split across his face. “Oh, do tell?”

“Don’t get your hopes up overly much, I don’t have many kinks. I just prefer establishments where I can get a variety of plugs and dildos in more than one size and a different colour than pink.”

“So, have you been with many people since uni?” he asked, bringing the subject back on topic.

“Every so often when I feel the need for actual human contact I take advantage of a very discreet escort service. It seems to be enough.”

“So how do you want to go about this then?”

Mycroft sat himself up and leaned against the headboard, gesturing for Sherlock to sit against him. He wrapped his arms about him and buried his face into his curls. “I know I’ve always abhorred sentiment, but I fear that when it comes to this relationship I am going to be terribly sentimental. Will that be a problem?”

“I guess it depends on just how sentimental you get.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t be serenading you, or making over-the-top public declarations of adoration. We’re going to have to hide what we have from the rest of the world, but when we’re alone, I don’t want to have to hide what you mean to me.”
“So essentially, we still get to gripe and snarl at each other in public to keep up the facade, but in the bedroom we play nice.”

“I guess that sums it up.”

Sherlock laughed. “That will work for me, as long as you don’t take what I say in public to heart. Consider my vicious verbal attacks foreplay. The meaner I am, the more I want you.”

“Perhaps I should have my tailor make some adjustments to my trousers so they’re better at concealing an erection.”

“Do you really want to have that conversation with your tailor?”

“On second thoughts, perhaps not.” He carded one hand through Sherlock’s hair whilst the other traced random designs up and down his arm. “I would like us to spend more time together, if that’s alright. Not just in the bedroom...I mean, as partners. Not wining and dining, but doing other things together.”

“I’d like that.”

“Really?”

Sherlock twisted slightly in his arms so he could look up at him. “Do you really think I’m that much of a robot that I wouldn’t like that?”

“You’re not exactly social, Sherlock.”

“Yes, well, not with them. This would be with you. I wouldn’t get bored of our conversations.”

“True.”

Deciding to turn around all the way, Sherlock twisted about until he was once again sitting in Mycroft’s lap with his arms linked around his neck. “Are we done with the negotiations now?” he asked archly.

“I suppose so.”

“Good, because I’ve been thinking about kissing you properly now for the past several hours.” He leaned forward and their lips met, and Mycroft felt all his fears and uncertainties melt away. Sherlock’s lips were just as kissable as they looked, soft and pliant beneath his own. They moved together just as perfectly in this as they did with everything else that they did together and it confirmed in his heart that this was right, that they belonged together. He licked at the seam of his brother’s lips and they parted to allow his tongue to probe gently inside. Sherlock moaned and his grip tightened on the back of Mycroft’s neck.

Just as it was starting to heat up, Mycroft’s alarm sounded. He regretfully broke the kiss and stretched across to turn it off. “I have to go to work,” he said with a sigh.

“Call in sick,” Sherlock suggested.

He barked out a laugh. “I doubt they’d believe me considering the only time I’ve ever missed work before was when I was hospitalised.”

Sherlock pouted. “Can I come back tonight?”

Mycroft smiled and cupped his cheek, pulling him in for another kiss. “Of course. We have
unfinished business.” He kissed him once more and then shoved his brother off his lap. “Come on, the sooner I get to work, the sooner I’ll be home.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm going to try really hard to get the next chapter out maybe tonight...let's see how I go after a few hours of writing! I'm super excited about John's reaction to Sherlock getting home...squee!
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Boom! I’m on FIRE! lol Probably full of horrible spelling and continuity errors since it was churned out in a fit of excitement so feel free to bring any mistakes to my attention :) 

Sherlock sat in the back of the cab and looked through the numerous texts he had had from John overnight.

Where have you gone? Please come back so we can talk? - JW
I’m sorry if I moved too quickly. Can you please just come home? - JW
You said you were going to Mycroft’s but you’re not there. Where are you? - JW
At least tell me if you’re okay. Please? - JW
For fuck’s sake, Sherlock, you’re really starting to worry me. Call me. - JW
You’re deliberately ignoring me, aren’t you? Real mature. - JW
Just call me. Please? - JW

He felt a stab of guilt go through him for causing his friend undue worry but it faded quickly once he remembered why he’d left. He’d never done anything to encourage John or to lead him on, so why had he even tried to make a pass at him? What had he said to Mycroft last night? I didn’t expect him to reject me. What had caused him to come to that conclusion? Whatever it was, he’d be set to rights soon enough. They would have the talk that John wanted so badly but it wouldn’t have the outcome he desired.

The cab pulled up outside 221B and he paid the cabbie, then climbed out. He glanced up and saw the curtain twitch and he knew John was keeping an eye out for him. Before he pocketed his phone he sent a quick text to Mycroft.

About to go into battle. Wish you were with me -SH

Knowing it was pointless to delay the inevitable, he squared his shoulders and headed inside. The flat was quiet as he opened the door and he instinctively knew that the baby wasn’t there. John must have asked someone to sit for him. At least they wouldn’t have to keep their voices down. He had a feeling it was going to get loud.

John was waiting for him in the lounge room, his arms crossed and his mouth set in a grim line.

“Hello, John,” Sherlock greeted him amicably.

“Don’t you waltz in here and ‘Hello, John’ me!” the doctor snapped. “Where have you been all night? Why didn’t you respond to any of my messages? Or pick up when I called?”
“Do calm down, John. You’re overreacting.”

“No, Sherlock, I’m not!” he barked. “I have been worried sick about you! You lied about where you were going and you ran out of here so fast that I didn’t even have a chance to talk to you.”

“Perhaps you should have tried talking before the part where you tried to stick your tongue down my throat!”

“It wasn’t like that!”

Sherlock crossed to his chair and flopped down into it. “It appeared very much like that where I was sitting.”

John ran a hand through his hair and came to sit opposite. “I’m sorry if I moved too quickly. I obviously spooked you. I’ll take it slower next time.”

“Next time? How very presumptuous of you, John. What on Earth makes you think there’s going to be a next time?”

“I want to make this work with you, Sherlock! We’ll take it at your pace.”

He held up a hand. “Stop, just stop. ‘This’ is a friendship, nothing more, John. I’m not interested in a relationship with you.”

The soldier wasn’t going to take no for an answer. “It’s the natural progression for us, surely you see that? Everyone else has been able to see it for years! I was blind to it, too but I’m willing to give it a go. We can make this work, Sherlock, I know we can.”

“I disagree.”

“Why? Tell me one good reason why this wouldn’t work?”

“Apart from the fact that I’m not sexually attracted to you? I rather think my partner would be against the idea. He’s kind of the possessive type.”

John looked like he’d been slapped. “Partner?” he asked, dazed.

“Yes, John, my partner.”

“I didn’t know you were seeing someone.”

“Hence why it’s a good idea to talk before trying to kiss someone.”

“How long have you been with him?”

“It’s fairly recent but we’re already serious.”

“I see. And who is it?”

“Someone who cares for me very much and was very put out when I showed up in the middle of the night upset.”

“You were with him last night?”

“Obvious. Do keep up, John.”
“Do I get to meet this mystery man?”

Sherlock arched an eyebrow. “That’s probably not the safest thing for you to do at the moment. As I said, he’s rather put out with you.”

“He’s pissed that I tried to kiss someone who I didn't know was taken? I’m not a mind reader!”

Sherlock stood up. “I think we’ve just about exhausted this conversation. I’m going to have a shower.” Without waiting for an answer, he headed for the bathroom and locked the door. He leaned up against it for a moment, breathing hard. His phone chirped and he pulled it from his pocket, smiling when he saw it was a reply from his brother.

_Courage, brother mine. If you require the cavalry, I can always send over Anthea? - MH_

_I think that would give us away, but thanks anyway. It went as well as could be expected - SH_

_I do hope you didn't ground the shards of his broken heart into the carpet - MH_

_I don’t think I did but he may disagree. He was quite persistent and I needed to get the message across - SH_

_Be gentle with him, Sherlock. He’s still your best friend and as upset as you are with him right now, you don’t want to burn bridges - MH_

_You’ve made a liar of me. I told him my partner was the possessive sort but you seem to be on his side - SH_

_I’m merely being pragmatic. Of course, if he continues to push the issue, you’ll see just how possessive I can be - MH_

_That’s a strangely erotic thought - SH_

_I’ll keep that in mind - MH_

Smiling to himself, Sherlock began to undress and hopped in the shower. As the hot water and steam enveloped his body, he let the current issues with his flatmate fade to the background and concentrated on the warm, tingly feeling he got whenever he thought of Mycroft. He’d always been dismissive of people in love but he was beginning to change his mind. Why would you avoid it if it made you feel like _this_. Of course, most people wouldn’t be able to truly say they were in love so quickly, but really, love was love and since he already loved his brother, he could honestly say he was in love with him. It was just a bigger love now, more encompassing.

He shook his head, smiling wryly to himself at this new found sentiment. If anyone were to discover he’d been pondering the intricacies of love, they’d think he’d suffered a head trauma. The caustic Consulting Detective, Sherlock Holmes didn’t do love, and yet here he was, butterflies in his stomach and a grin on his face at the mere thought of his soon to be _lover_.

He turned the taps off and began to towel off, wondering how far they would go tonight. As much as he wanted to jump in the deep end, he knew that Mycroft didn’t want to rush things. In this, he trusted Mycroft. His protective streak ran wide, but usually for good reason. If he thought they should take it slow, then it was what they should do. It would also help make him more comfortable with the whole arrangement. Sherlock was more dismissive about the social taboo than Mycroft was, and although he’d wanted this for quite a while longer, his older brother had much more to lose if they were to be discovered. The last thing the detective wanted to do was push his brother to the point that he reconsidered the pros and cons of the situation and call the whole thing off.
He wrapped himself in his dressing gown and ducked through to his bedroom to get dressed. Normally around the flat he would wear his pyjamas and his gown, but today he felt like he needed some armour between himself and John. He rifled through his wardrobe, trying to find one of his shirts that weren’t so slim fit. He didn’t want his armour to be appealing so his usual shirts, especially his favourite purple shirt were out. He finally found a plain white shirt right at the back that he’d bought when he’d had broken ribs and needed a size up to cover the bandaging. He pulled it on and repressed a shudder, knowing it was for a good cause. Feeling ready to face the dragon, he took a deep breath and headed for the lounge.

John was sitting in his chair with the paper but it was clear he wasn’t really reading. Knowing that some sort of peace offering would be appreciated, Sherlock went to the kitchen and made them both tea. Mycroft was right of course - as angry as he was right now with John, he didn’t want to lose him as a friend. He wanted to do everything he could to get past this awkwardness and get back to how they normally were. The doctor grunted in acknowledgement when his cuppa was placed on the coffee table and Sherlock considered it a victory.

“So, where did you meet?” John asked in clipped tones, eyes on the paper.

“Why are you so interested?” Sherlock countered.

“I’m just curious. It just seems strange that you never show interest in anyone and as soon as I try to initiate something, you’re suddenly seeing someone.”

His eyes narrowed. “You think I’m making this up?”

John put the paper down and gave him a direct look. “It seems the most likely scenario, especially considering you won’t tell me anything about him, I’m not allowed to meet him, and he sprung up from nowhere.”

If he wasn’t so pissed at him, Sherlock would be impressed with John’s line of reasoning. To be fair, he’d have thought the same. Not that he was going to let the blonde man know that however. “I can assure you he’s very real, John. Can you not understand that the way you’re acting gives me very little incentive to tell you anything?”

“Oh, I’m sure that’s the reason,” he said sarcastically and picked up his paper again, “And not because you’re making him up.” He popped the ‘p’ and Sherlock felt an overwhelming desire to punch him. To be fair, he did owe him a beating.

“I’m spending tonight with him so perhaps I’ll ask him to make sure he marks me so you have proof he exists,” he said with a glower. He leapt up from his chair and stormed into the kitchen, putting the microscope back onto the table and pulling a box of slides towards him. Before he started to examine them, he pulled out his phone and sent another text off to Mycroft.

_Tonight you are going to bite and suck and mark me until I am absolutely COVERED in hickeys. I want it to be clear that I belong to you - SH_
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

I am at my mum's and am slightly drunk but since I wrote most of this earlier, hopefully it'll be legible ;-)

Also, can I just say YOU GUYS ARE AMAZING! I woke up this morning to so much love for the last chapter and this story as a whole and it just blows my mind how quickly you've taken to it. I feel so blessed that my writing is appreciated and enjoyed, it really means the world to me (this is probably coming across as a drunken 'I love yooooooooou' but it's true nonetheless).

Mycroft had found it hard to concentrate on work after Sherlock’s last text. Obviously John wasn’t buying the idea that the genius had a partner and in typical Sherlockian fashion, his brother wanted to prove his point in the most spiteful way possible. Of course, the idea of marking the younger man greatly appealed to Mycroft. They would have to get used to keeping to the shadows and hiding their relationship from everyone, but the thought of leaving a visible sign to say that he was taken...yes, it definitely appealed to him. He was aware of the attention that Sherlock got from appreciative members of the public. He was attractive in a non-traditional manner; what would be considered flaws on others combined to create an appealing androgynous beauty on his brother. He had never felt jealousy when he’d seen those glances in the past because his brother had not seemed to take an interest in anyone. Now though that they were together...it definitely sparked the monster.

He had almost finished up for the day after delegating out more of the minor matters to members of his team that were ready to start stepping up. Generally when he was called away, Anthea filled in to man the fort but the load was getting too much for a single person. Mycroft was aware that no one was irreplaceable and it was always good to have numerous people who could do a task. He balanced the power dynamic by not letting one person have too many pieces of the jigsaw puzzle (other than Anthea of course). That way, if worst came to worst, the jobs would get done by a handful of people without someone stirring the pot by claiming seniority.

He was looking forward to actually finishing on time when he phone chimed. He opened it to find it was a text from Sherlock.

Leaving home now. Do you still have eyes on Baker St? - SH

I have surveillance on the street. Why? - MH

I believe John is going to try and follow me and I want to know for certain so I can take measures to lose him - SH

Mycroft rolled his eyes and cursed under his breath. He wouldn’t be at all surprised if the doctor did attempt to follow Sherlock in the hope of uncovering who his mystery lover was. Luckily, he knew from experience (his own) that there was no one better at losing a tail than his younger brother.

Pulling the feeds up now. Will let you know - MH

A few clicks on his laptop brought up the view of the two cameras stationed outside of 221B. A few
minutes later the door opened and Sherlock exited the building. He glanced over at one of the cameras and blew it a kiss, then winked and headed down the road towards Regent Street Station. Sure enough the door opened again and John stepped out onto the street, catching sight of Sherlock as he turned the corner.

*You were right, as usual. John is indeed following you* - MH

*Predictable and dull. At least it will keep me occupied until you get to your place. Will you be late?* - SH

*I’ve made sure I’ll get off at a reasonable hour. Shouldn’t be more than an hour at most* - MH

*Perfect. See you soon* - SH

Mycroft debated bringing up the feeds from other cameras so as to watch his brother in action, but regretfully decided against it. As entertaining as it would be, it would also delay him and he wanted to be home as soon as possible. He shut down the video streams and pulled the final pile of paperwork from his in-tray.

Forty minutes later he signed off the final document with a flourish and sent a text to his driver to be ready. Bidding Anthea goodnight, he made his way to the car, schooling his expression to his usual look of indifference even though inside he was bouncing around like an excited puppy. The feeling of giddy anticipation was so new to him that he found it a little overwhelming. He honestly didn’t think he had it in him but it seemed that he did have a reserve of emotion inside of him, just buried so deep that it took extreme circumstances to uncover it. It was still beyond his comfort zone though so he took a deep breath and tried to get a handle on it. Every time his thoughts turned to his lanky younger brother, his efforts crumbled and the internal bouncing began all over again.

His driver was skilled at navigating the heavy traffic around the city and they arrived at his home relatively quickly. “Thank you, George. I shan’t be needing the car again until the morning.”

*Very good. Good night, sir.*

The car didn’t pull away until he was safely inside and he placed his umbrella in the stand, looking around for signs of his brother. A glance into the sitting room showed his coat flung over the back of the couch and he heard a door upstairs close. Mycroft headed up the stairs and went into the bedroom, smiling as he saw Sherlock sitting on the end of the bed. He was freshly showered but dressed, his damp curls sticking to his neck.

*“I take it you had no trouble losing your tail?”*

Sherlock grinned. “Took me four streets.” The grin fell away and his face became serious. “It was pathetically easy. His skills have definitely slipped since the time we first started working cases together. That could be a hinderance for future cases, but I’m loathe to increase his skills as it might backfire on me.” Mycroft smiled at his dilemma and toed off his shoes. He began to loosen his tie but Sherlock jumped up from the bed and crossed to him. “Let me?”

He nodded and allowed his brother to unknot the silk. He stayed still as slender fingers pulled the tie from his shirt and their eyes met as Sherlock began to undo the buttons on his waistcoat. Unable to resist, he leaned forward until their lips met in a kiss. “I’ve been looking forward to coming home to you all day,” he murmured.

Sherlock hummed deep in his throat and pulled him in for another kiss. It heated quickly and he fumbled frantically at Mycroft’s clothes, pushing the waistcoat and then his shirt off his shoulders.
The older man worked at the buttons on Sherlock’s own shirt and soon they were standing chest to chest, bare skin pressing against each other. He trailed a hand up his brother’s back, feeling the ridges of the scarring he sustained in Serbia. Long slender fingers grasped at the back of his neck, pulling him ever closer as their mouths moved against each other, tongues tangling sweetly.

Mycroft broke away so he could move down Sherlock’s face, kissing over his chin and jaw and working down to his neck. “Still want me to mark you?” he asked, biting gently at the place just below his brother’s ear but not hard enough to bruise – yet.

“Oh, gods yes!”

He grinned and then sucked harder, eliciting a moan from Sherlock who moved his hands down Mycroft’s back, clenching them over his shoulder blades, nails scraping lightly. Once he’d sucked a nice red bruise, he moved down and did it again, then crossed to the other side and did it again and again. He pulled back and traced a finger over them, smiling at his younger brother. “You look like a horny teenager,” he quipped. “None of your clients will take you seriously.”

“That’s a risk I’m willing to take if it’ll hammer my point home,” he rumbled.

“Childish, Sherlock.”

He rolled his eyes. “And? He started it.” He grabbed Mycroft’s biceps and swung him about until he was against the wall. “Can we please stop talking about John Watson now?”

Mycroft smirked and spun them again so his brother was the one against the wall and deftly undid his zip. “With pleasure,” he growled, dipping his hand down until he could grasp the silky flesh of Sherlock’s cock.

“Oh!” the detective gasped, his head lolling back against the wall. Mycroft took advantage of the exposed column of pale flesh and kissed over the marks he’d left, using his free hand to work Sherlock’s trousers down his hips so he had room to move. Sherlock was positively dripping and Mycroft swiped his thumb over the head, smearing the shaft with pre-come. His hand moved slickly up and down and Sherlock moaned again. He undid his own trousers and wiggled his hips till they slid down his thighs and pulled his own erection free. He re-positioned his hand, taking hold of both of them and continued to stroke.

“Fucking hell!” Sherlock cried, leaning down to capture his brother in a frantic kiss.

It took an embarrassingly short amount of time until they both came, spilling over Mycroft’s hand and their stomachs. Sherlock’s legs seemed to buckle and, breathing hard, he slid down the wall. He tried to pull the older man down with him but Mycroft resisted. “Let me get something to clean us up with.”

He ducked into the bathroom to get a flannel and returned to gently wipe clean Sherlock’s creamy skin. After seeing to his own mess, he threw the flannel towards the bathroom, feeling a surge of pride as it flew through the middle of the doorway and into the hamper. Take that! he thought at the ghosts of his school peers who always picked him last during their phys-ed classes. He sank down next to his brother on the plush carpet and picked up his hand, pressing a kiss to bony knuckles.

“Good?” he asked.

“More than,” Sherlock replied with a sated grin. “You have very talented hands, brother mine.”

They shared a few quiet moments together, before Mycroft tentatively asked, “What are you going to do now?”
“What do you mean?”

“I was just wondering if you were going to stay? Or head home…”

Sherlock raised an eyebrow in disbelief. “Did you really think I would dash off as soon as I’d had my way with you?”

The older man shrugged. “I wasn’t sure if you had better things to do.”

Sherlock pulled him close and kissed him fiercely. “You absolute nincompoop! I’m not going anywhere, Mycie. You have me all to yourself until your blasted alarm goes off in the morning and the Queen steals you from me for another day.”

He smiled shyly. “I’m glad to hear that.”

“So, what have you got in the fridge? If I’m to attempt to wine and dine you, I need to know what I have to work with.”

“You’re going to cook?” He was sure his mouth was hanging open in shock but he couldn’t help it.

“How hard can it be?” Sherlock said dismissively.

Mycroft laughed and stood up, offering his hand to his brother. “Why don’t we go and see what there is?”
In hindsight, Sherlock thought that perhaps he should have taken a change of clothes with him the night before. His plan had been to turn up at Baker Street, covered in love bites and wearing the same outfit - albeit sex-rumpled - as when he’d left. He didn’t take into account just how messy cooking pasta could be and he had pulled on his sauce stained shirt with disgust when dressing this morning. The amused smirk Mycroft had given him hadn’t helped matters, although kissing said smirk off his face certainly did. He made a mental note to keep several changes of clothes at Mycroft’s from now on for future use.

He found his mood couldn’t stay dampened for long, especially when he spent the cab ride home thinking over their newfound intimacy. They’d showered together before bed and Mycroft had surprised him with a blowjob. He’d thought his brother’s mouth was lovely before, but after that experience, he changed the description to divine. After after falling asleep wrapped about each other, they’d woken before the alarm had gone off this morning and he’d done his best to return the favour. He knew it was probably only adequate at best, but Mycroft had responded enthusiastically. He’d been a little too audacious and ignored his lover’s warning that he was on the edge, not quite prepared for the sensation of having his mouth flooded with thick, hot come. He’d choked and spluttered, feeling an absolute fool, and wanted to find a rock to hide under. In an attempt to ease his embarrassment, Mycroft had shared the story of his first time, admitting that he’d actually vomited all over his partner. They had ended up giggling together, and he was more grateful than he could express that his brother was being so understanding. He could so easily have lorded his experience over Sherlock, and at any other time, probably would have as part of their never ending game. But this was different. In this they were equals, both new to each other, and learning as they went.

He arrived home and was relieved when he heard John in the bathroom giving Rosie her bath. He changed into something much more respectable than tomato sauce covered cotton, making sure the top two buttons were undone. He still had a point to prove after all. He stood in front of the mirror, fingering the bruises, smiling as he recalled the feeling of acquiring them. He heard John exit the bathroom but stayed in his room for a while longer. As much as he wanted John to see him, he was also dreading it, knowing it would likely lead to a row.

Finally, he couldn’t bear the shame of hiding any longer and he made his way into the kitchen. The doctor was at the sink, mashing banana in a cup and Rosie was in her highchair. She squealed happily when she saw Sherlock, holding her pudgy arms out to him. He undid the restraints and picked her up, cradling her in his arms. “Hello there, my little scientist. What new things have you discovered today?” he asked. She grabbed one of his curls and pulled it into her mouth, gumming at the strands until they were sopping wet. “I see we’re discovering keratin.” He looked up from the baby and over to John, who was staring at him, or more specifically, at his neck. His mouth was turned down into a scowl and his eyes were burning with anger. “Good morning,” he greeted him politely.

“Looks like you had a very good one,” the blonde spat, turning his back and mashing furiously at the unfortunate fruit.

“Yes, I did,” he agreed mildly. Inside he grinned maliciously. He knew that Mycroft would be appalled at his behaviour, and as much as he understood his viewpoint, right now he was feeling too spiteful to listen to reason.

He put Rosie back in her chair and then crossed to the kettle and filled it from the tap. He stretched up - more than necessary - when retrieving the mugs, exposing his throat to John. He reveled in the
sharp intake of breath as the doctor got an eyeful of the hickey Mycroft had added to his collarbones this morning. He made the tea, pushing one of the mugs towards John and taking his own to the table. He picked up Rosie’s rattle and played with her until the doctor decided if he mashed the banana anymore it would spontaneously combust. John threw the cup onto the table and pulled a chair out from under the table forcefully, then sat and deliberately turned the highchair unnecessarily away from Sherlock.

Fresh anger simmered within the detective as John showed he was more than willing to use Rosie as a pawn in their fight. As fiercely as they were arguing, he hadn’t expected the baby to be thrown in the middle. It was a line he would never have even contemplated crossing and it stung that his flatmate had.

Leaving his tea untouched, Sherlock went into the lounge and retrieved his laptop. He was tempted to get his violin and lose himself in the music, but he knew his emotions were too exposed whilst playing. He didn’t want to give away how upset he was. He opened his blog and read through the latest comments, replying to the ones he deemed worthy of his attention. Once he was done with that, he browsed several news sites, reading between the lines of the articles to deduce which events Mycroft had been working on behind the scenes.

John finished feeding the baby and then brought her into the lounge to collect her nappy bag.

“Going out?” Sherlock asked, trying to keep his voice even.

“I’ve a shift at the clinic. Molly is taking Rosie.”

“You don’t have to bother Molly. I’ll be in for the rest of the day so I can take her.”

“It’s already been organised,” John said in clipped tones before storming out of the flat.

Once the front door had slammed shut, Sherlock flipped his laptop closed and slumped back in his chair. This was just getting worse and worse. Even the warm, vindictive glow inside from John’s expression when he’d seen his neck wasn’t quite enough to dispel the uneasy feeling that was churning in his gut. As loathe as he was to admit it, perhaps Mycroft was right? Maybe he had to (shudder) be the *grownup* here. The indignant anger in his mind flared at the thought, screaming that John deserved everything he bloody got and Rosie loved her Uncle Sherlock and how dare his father use her against him.

“Bah!” He got to his feet and stomped about the flat, then picked up his violin and sawed angrily at the strings. He dropped the Strad unceremoniously on the couch and then went to the top of the stairs to yell at Mrs Hudson. There was no reply so she was either not home or was ignoring him so he went into the kitchen and poked at the spleen that had been in the chemical solution a day longer than it should have been. He smiled in satisfaction as it burst apart and considered leaving it on the bench right next to John’s mug, but decided eventually to bin it instead.

The morning passed in a similar manner and eventually his anger died down and he was able to think more clearly. His phone chirped and he opened up his message app.

*How did your cunning plan play out? - MH*

*I’m sure you have a good idea. It backfired rather horribly. He didn’t let me sit for Rosie today - SH*

*Time to perhaps try to make amends? - MH*

*As much as I don’t want to - yes. Try not to lord it over me too much - SH*
I wouldn’t dream of it, brother mine - MH

Will you come round tonight? I know it will have to be in a brother only capacity, but I don’t really want to face this alone - SH

Of course. I’ll bring dinner - MH

Feeling better now that he knew he’d be seeing his brother in a few hours, he decided to text John. Knowing how stubborn the man was, he figured he’d have to lay it on rather thick to break through the layer of arrogance. Of course, those traits had come in handy in the past (breaking into Baskerville sprung to mind) but they were rather pesky when directed against him.

I apologise for my behaviour this morning - I did it to deliberately upset you and that was wrong. Can we please put this behind us and continue with our friendship? - SH

It was a long while before he got a reply.

Who made you apologise? Your boyfriend? Cos I know you wouldn’t have done it off your own bat - JW

Hmmm, how much to say whilst still being honest? Best keep it simple.

Mycroft - SH

Huh. Didn’t see that coming. Get the feeling he doesn’t like me much - JW

On the contrary - he’s coming round tonight and bringing dinner in an effort to facilitate us sorting this out - SH

Ever the fucking politician - JW

Look, fine, whatever. I’ll be home after I’ve picked up Rosie - JW

Thank you, John - SH

He threw his phone onto the couch and ran a hand through his curls, trying to get a hold of his frustration and anger. If he had any chance of salvaging their friendship he needed to keep his emotions under control. He was Sherlock Bloody Holmes for crying out loud! He was an expert at doing just that. And it was for a good cause after all. As much as he wasn’t at all interested in an intimate relationship with John, their friendship meant a lot to him and he was loathe to lose it. Of course, if it came down to a choice between John or his brother...well, unlike at Sherrinford, he wouldn’t even hesitate now. He wasn’t giving up when he had found with Mycroft for anything.

He wiled away the afternoon with a few experiments and then had a shower and changed into his most arse hugging trousers and a dark blue shirt that Mycroft had bought him. Admiring the way it made his eyes pop, he was under no illusions why his brother had gotten it for him - the colour was even more flattering to his complexion than the purple shirt. He was vain enough to realise that he looked good and knew it was going to drive Mycroft crazy tonight that he could look but not touch.

He heard the door open downstairs and then the familiar tread of his brother’s footfalls on the stairs. He hurried to the door to the flat, wanting to take advantage of the small amount of time they would have alone.

He opened the door for Mycroft and enjoyed the way his eyes widened as he took in Sherlock’s appearance. The bag of Chinese takeaway slipped from his grasp and hit the floor with a thud and he moved forward, almost in a daze, his hands coming up to rest lightly on his younger brother’s chest.
“I take it you approve?” he asked with a cheeky grin.

“Very much so,” Mycroft replied hoarsely. He seemed to come back to himself and he dropped his hands, glancing into the flat. “Is John home yet?”

“Not yet, but probably soon.”

The older man’s grin was predatory and he threaded long fingers through Sherlock’s curls and pulled his face to his, their lips meeting in a passionate kiss. Sherlock sighed and lost himself to it, amazed at how much he had missed this even though they had only been apart for less than half a day. It was over too soon, but they both knew that they could be interrupted at any time. Mycroft ducked down and picked up the takeaway bag and took it into the kitchen, and Sherlock found a bottle of scotch at the back of the cupboard and poured them both a glass.

He had just handed over the glass to his brother (“Sorry, no wine here to wine and dine you with”) when they heard the downstairs door open again, signalling that John was home.

“Showtime,” Sherlock murmured.

Mycroft pressed a quick kiss to his lips and whispered, “Courage, brother dear,” before heading through to the lounge room and taking a seat on the couch. When John entered the flat, Sherlock held out his arms for the baby and counted it as a win when she was handed over right away. “How was the clinic?” he asked, making an effort despite his abhorrence of small talk.

“Busy.,” John responded, his voice lacking its usual warmth. It was civil though so he seemed to be making an effort at their reconciliation. “I’ve totally lost my sympathy for people who refuse to get the flu vaccine and then complain when they come down with the flu. It’s been a horrible year for it.”

“People are idiots, John,” he told him, hoping to sound sympathetic.

“How was dinner?” Sherlock asked.

“Can dinner wait till I’ve had a shower?” He directed the question to Mycroft after nodding in greeting.

“Certainly. We can pop it in the microwave once you’re done.”

“I won’t be long. Molly already fed Rosie so she’ll be fine till her bottle at bedtime.” He headed for the bathroom and Sherlock took the baby and sat on the couch next to his brother.

“No children,” he commented.

The detective shrugged. “I try. I guess I never thought I’d ever have much to do with children.”

“I’m sure Mummy and Father were devastated when they realised the chances of having grandchildren were slim to none.”

“So you never contemplated it?” he asked, curious. They had never discussed their thoughts on the matter and it hit him almost like a punch in the gut. How could he have never spoken to his brother about such matters? They had wasted so much time but at least they were making amends now.
“Who would I have had children with, Sherlock? You know by now that there was no one else for me but you, and it’s not something I would have considered with just a random woman. Besides, with my work schedule it would be most unfair of me to bring a child into this world only to neglect it.”

“It’s a shame,” Sherlock said, wincing as Rosie tugged on his nose. “I think you’d have made a wonderful father.”

His brother laughed. “I very much doubt that.”

“You did a pretty good job with me.”

“That’s not at all the same thing at all. Mummy and Father took care of all your day to day care. I just taught you big brother things.”

“No, you taught me everything that I needed to become the man I am today. How to make deductions, how to survive in a world of goldfish, how to disregard the opinions of the haters and the bullies and to be confident in myself. You gave me a purpose, and something to strive for. My big brother was the single most important person in my life. Is the single most important person in my life.”

Eyes full of emotion, Mycroft opened his mouth to reply when he was cut off by John appearing in the room, toweling his hair dry. “Who’s the most important person in your life?”
It was Mycroft’s turn to want to punch the ex army doctor. Why did the man have a knack of interrupting their rare moments of bonding? Damn him! He took a long, slow breath, allowing his anger to fizzle out. They had a purpose here and they needed to achieve it. At the moment, John was dangerous to them. His feelings of hurt and rejection, not to mention his suspicions could only lead to him snooping around and getting too close to the truth of their relationship. They needed him to accept that Sherlock was involved with someone else and to fall back into his easy friendship with the consulting detective.

“I believe it was a private conversation, John,” Sherlock snapped.

So much for that.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft admonished. “Remember why we’re here.”

“Oh, and why’s that?” John demanded, his hackles raised.

He sighed. His plan had been to just come round and be here for moral support but it appeared he would need to take on more of a facilitator role in these negotiations. “John, I understand your feelings have been hurt by Sherlock’s rejection of your romantic advances. Knowing my brother the way I do, I can only guess at the brutal manner in which he went about it. However, that doesn’t negate the fact that he is, in fact seeing someone, and he is not interested in taking your relationship to the next level. Is it in any way beneficial to either of you -” Here he gave his brother a pointed look, “- for you both to throw away your friendship over this? If it has survived everything thrown at it so far, is this that difficult to put behind you?”

“See, the problem, Mycroft, is that people aren’t supposed to keep secrets from their best friends.” John hadn’t sat down and made use of the opportunity to glower down at Sherlock. “It seems that all your brother ever does is keep secrets. Maybe I’m no longer interested in being kept in the dark.”

Raising a hand to silence the flippant remark hovering on his brother’s lips, Mycroft pinned John with a level gaze. “Even old married couples keep secrets from each other, John. It is not at all viable to expect someone to always be one hundred percent forthcoming about their life with you. Even best friends.”

“Because you have so much experience with best friends,” John sneered.

Mycroft actually grabbed Sherlock’s wrist this time to keep him from jumping to his feet and yelling. He was still holding a baby after all and getting into a fist fight wasn’t the best idea. “I’m also not a murderous foreign dictator but that doesn’t make the advice I give when negotiating any less valid. Either the both of you can continue to act like children and throw away the connection you’ve built over the past several years, or you can be adults and overcome your differences. It’s up to the both of you, but frankly, I do hope you make a decision quickly since I missed lunch today and I’m absolutely starving.”
“Missing a meal here and there wouldn’t be a bad thing for your figure, Mycroft,” Sherlock snarled. “Your suits are getting quite tight around your fat arse.”

“I’ll make sure to discuss that with my tailor,” he replied, trying not to smile.

“It’s a pity he can’t do anything about you penchant for sticking your big nose into everyone else’s business but that’s just my cross to bear I suppose.”

“Really, Sherlock, please remember that you invited me around.”

“I guess even I make mistakes,” he snipped.

John huffed out a laugh at their squabbling and headed into the kitchen to get a drink of scotch. As soon as his back was turned, Sherlock squeezed Mycroft’s hand briefly, no doubt to remind him that there was no actual malice in his words. He hadn’t needed the reminder but it was nice all the same.

When the doctor returned, he turned his armchair a little so it was facing towards the couch and sat. They seemed to be getting somewhere at last. “Okay,” he began, fiddling with his glass. “I agree that we’ve gotten over much worse than this in the past. So, Sherlock, I accept your apology from this morning. I’ll also respect that you are not interested in anything more with me.”

The room fell silent after this. After a long moment, Sherlock said, “And?”

John’s face was blank. “And what?”

Mycroft knew his brother was holding out for an apology from the blonde man but he also knew that they had to pick their battles. He nudged Sherlock with his leg and gave him a pointed look. He was sure that John wouldn’t correctly interpret the slight tightening around his eyes and thinning of his lips that indicated his brother was on the verge of snapping. A long moment passed and Sherlock finally gave him a smile. “I’m so glad you’re willing to forgive me, John. Thank you.”

The doctor beamed and Mycroft knew it was taking all of the detective’s willpower to keep a civil facade. “How about I go and reheat dinner?” the younger man suggested. “We don’t want to risk Mycroft devouring everything in sight, including Rosie.” He thrust the baby at Mycroft. “Here, take her.”


“You can’t really break her, Mycie.” Shocked at hearing the nickname uttered so casually, he took the baby and shuffled her about in his arms until she seemed to be safely seated. Sherlock gave him a warm smile. “See, nothing too it, brother mine.”

Mycroft suppressed a shudder at the slightly emphasised last word. It definitely had a hint of possessiveness to it and he tried not to gape at his brother as he wandered over to the kitchen.

“I’m still pissed at you,” John told him once they were alone.

“At me? What did I do?”

“You could have told me the other day that he was seeing someone! It would have saved me a lot of heartache.”

Well, shit. How had he managed to overlook that? “I apologise, but at the time I wasn’t aware fully of Sherlock’s feelings. Besides, it wasn’t my secret to tell.”
John thought this over and then grunted as he conceded the point. “I suppose so. And I guess I owe you a thank you for forcing the stubborn git to apologise.”

“I want to see my brother happy, John and he can’t be happy unless he has your friendship.”

This seemed to placate the doctor and they sat in silence while Mycroft awkwardly bounced the baby on his lap.

“I just wish he’d let me meet him,” John blurted suddenly. “It would make me feel so much better about the whole thing. Make it more real.”

Mycroft thought frantically of a reply but Rosie burped and then an astounding amount of white liquid bubbled from her mouth and coated the front of the politician’s shirt. “Oh,” Mycroft said, holding the baby at arms length and looking at her like she was the carrier of the ebola virus.

“Oh, sorry about that,” John said with a grin. “The dangers of babies. I’ll grab a cloth.” He nipped to the bathroom and on his way back called through to his flatmate, “Sherlock, can Mycroft borrow one of your shirts? Rosie’s been sick on his.”

Sherlock appeared in the doorway, and it was obvious he was trying not to laugh. He watched as John took the baby from the older man and wiped at her face but scurried off to the bedroom when his brother glared at him. “If you take that off we can get it soaking,” John said, somewhat distractedly as he wiped over the child’s face and placed her onto the floor.

Knowing it would appear silly to head to the bathroom to change, Mycroft unbuttoned his shirt, grimacing as the wet material unstuck from his skin with a goopy noise.

“I don’t believe it!” John exclaimed and Mycroft looked up to see the doctor staring at his chest.

“Pardon?”

“You’ve got a great bloody hickey on your chest!”

Fuck. “John…”

“I don’t believe it. I don’t bloody believe it!” The world seemed to almost come to a halt and he wondered how mad Sherlock would be if he snapped John Watson’s neck. “How is it that both the Holmes brothers can find someone but I can’t? Bloody typical! Is it that Lady Smallwood?”

Breathing a sigh of relief, Mycroft shook his head. “Er, no, she’s not really my type,”

“No, probably not posh enough for you, eh? Even though she is a Lady ,”

“Actually, she’s too female for me,” he muttered, feeling his cheeks blush.

“Oh! I suppose I should have seen that coming.”

“Seen what coming?” Sherlock asked as he came in the room and held out one of his shirts to his brother.

“Mycrof is into blokes and has one,” John told him, rolling his eyes. “I still can’t believe you two have both gotten lucky and I can’t even get a date!”

As John bent over to give Rosie her rattle, the brothers exchanged an amused glance. Mycroft pulled the shirt on, pleasantly surprised that it fit. He knew that he and Sherlock had similar frames and that he’d been losing weight but he hadn’t realised he’d been doing so well. The appreciative look
Sherlock gave him as he fastened the last button told him it hadn’t gone unnoticed.

“I’ll take that,” John said, holding out a hand for his soiled shirt.

While he went to the bathroom to soak the garment, Sherlock took the opportunity to pull Mycroft in for a fierce kiss. “You’ve lost too much weight,” he muttered, his hands roaming over his chest. “My clothes shouldn’t fit you.”

“I find that hard to believe since you seem to like the way I look in your clothes.”

“Oh, I do very much, but that’s more the thought of you wearing something of mine. It’s almost as if I’ve marked you.”

“Yes, well, your marking of me almost got us into trouble,” he replied with an exasperated look.

“Yes, well, your marking of me almost got us into trouble,” he replied with an exasperated look.

“Please. Us being together is the very last thing he’ll suspect. He’d be more likely to suspect you were in a romantic entanglement with Mrs Hudson than with me.”

“I suppose the social stigma is ingrained deeply.”

“Lucky for us.”

“Indeed.”

They heard the taps in the bathroom turn off and moved apart, putting a socially acceptable amount of space between them.

“So, what did you bring for dinner?” John asked as he came out from the bathroom to join them again.
The night went surprisingly smoothly from that point onwards. Things were a bit more tense than usual between himself and John, but all in all, Sherlock was happy with the evening’s accomplishments.

“I really should be getting home,” Mycroft announced as it neared midnight.

“Working tomorrow?” John asked.

“Not officially - I try and spend the weekends away from the office. I do have some paperwork to see to, but I can do that from home.”

“I’ll walk you down,” Sherlock offered as Mycroft pulled on his coat and scarf.

“Goodnight, John,” the older man said with a nod.

“Night, Mycroft.”

The brothers headed down the stairs but waited just inside the front door for the car to pull up. Noticing they were well concealed in the shadows of the hall, Sherlock pulled his brother in for a kiss. “Thank you for being here tonight.” He leaned forward until their foreheads were pressed together.

“It was my pleasure,” Mycroft replied.

“I wish you didn’t have to go. I’ll miss you tonight.”

“So will I. Will I see you over the weekend?”

“Will you have time?”

“For you, I’ll make time, brother mine.”

He shivered, realising the inflection had as much effect on himself as it had on his brother. “I’ll text you, then?”

Mycroft’s lips twitched at his distaste for texting but he didn’t say anything. He knew it was Sherlock’s preferred method of communication and the detective was grateful he was willing to stoop to that level for him. “I look forward to it.” Headlights flashed over the gap under the door, signalling the car had arrived. “That’s me. Goodnight, Sherlock.”

“Night, Mycie.” He pulled him in for another kiss, not wanting to let him go. Mycroft gently extracted himself from his grasp and lay a hand to his younger brother’s cheek, smiling softly before opening the front door.
Sherlock stood for a long time after his brother had gone, lost in thought. Just the idea of sleeping tonight without a familiar, warm body pressed against him was appalling. He doubted he’d get any rest if he retired for the night so he started going over the list of experiments he had on the go, whittling away the ones that weren’t appropriate to conduct in the quieter hours. He got it down to a possible three he could work on and he made his way upstairs, ready to keep his brain engaged so he wouldn’t dwell on the fact his brother wasn’t here with him.

John was waiting for him in the lounge. “I ended up having a nice night,” he said, looking surprised at his evaluation. “I didn’t think Mycroft would be such an entertaining dinner guest.”

“There’s a lot about my brother that would probably surprise you.”

“Yeah, I’m sure there is. Maybe we can have him over again at some stage? You seemed to bicker less the longer the night went on so who knows? Maybe we can actually get to a point where you can actually stand each other’s company?”

_If only you knew...” Unlikely, John, but I suppose it wouldn’t kill me to have him over more often.”

“So, has he met your mystery man?”

He sighed internally but kept his tone civil, friendly even. “They’re acquainted, yes.”

“Maybe we could have a dinner party one night? You could bring Mr Mystery, and Mycroft could bring his man, and maybe I could rope Molly into being my date?”

Sherlock froze. What the hell was he supposed to say to that? “I’m not sure...Mycroft is a very private person. He might not be up for that. Besides, we don’t have a lot of room here - the table only seats four.”

“Well, maybe we could all go out somewhere? And your brother really seemed to be making an effort tonight. I think he’d be up for it.”

“Well, I suppose I can ask him next time I see him.” That was enough of a promise without nailing himself down, wasn’t it?

“Sounds good. Okay, well I’m going to bed. Night, Sherlock.”

He breathed a sigh of relief. “Night, John.”

“Oh, and Sherlock?” The genius looked over at him. “I’m glad we got this sorted.”

Despite not being quite ready to forgive all his sins, Sherlock gave him a warm smile and meant it when he said, “Me too.”

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_I’m done with work now if you’re still interested in coming round? - MH_

_Of course. Lestrade dropped me off some cold cases to keep me going since there haven’t been any good murders lately, but I can leave them be - SH_

_You won’t have any issues at home? - MH_

_No, I made it clear this morning that I would most likely be out tonight and he seemed to be okay with it. I guess he’s being on his best behaviour after last night’s truce - SH_
Mycroft smiled to himself and went to get ready, enjoying a hot shower and then dressing in simple trousers and shirt. He was pleasantly surprised when he heard the door open just as he was finishing dressing. He had thought Sherlock would get caught up in his cold cases or an experiment and not be around for several hours, but it seemed he was just as eager to see his brother as Mycroft was to see him.

He went downstairs where the Belstaff was being flung over the back of an armchair. “I do have a coat stand, you know,” he said, leaning against the doorframe and crossing his arms.

Sherlock shrugged. “This works just as well.” He came over and wrapped his arms around him, burying his face in Mycroft’s neck. “I slept horribly last night,” he complained.

“I’m surprised you even went to bed at all,” Mycroft said, bringing his arms up to stroke across his shoulder blades.

“I wasn’t going to,” he admitted. “But towards dawn I was exhausted so I thought I’d better try. I just tossed and turned for a few hours until Mrs Hudson came up to make tea.”

He glanced over and noticed an overnight bag next to the armchair. “Well, hopefully you’ll sleep soundly tonight.”

“I think if I had your arms around me, I’d be able to sleep in the caldera of an erupting volcano,” Sherlock murmured against his throat.

Mycroft chuckled. “You do realise how sappy and romantic that sounded, don’t you? Aren’t you worried you’re losing your edge?”

“Don’t care,” he grumbled, pulling Mycroft even closer. “It’s the truth.”

Warmth bloomed in his chest as he returned the embrace. If someone were to see them now, they wouldn’t be recognisable as the Iceman and the snarky detective. He didn’t have any use for sentiment when it came to the masses, but for the lithe figure he held in his arms, he had it in troves. He’d worried when he’d said that he was going to be overly sentimental that it would never be reciprocated but Sherlock had obviously decided that it was time to stop holding back from expressing his feelings for his brother. “I love you,” Mycroft whispered, pulling away slightly so he could press a kiss to those plush lips.

Sherlock’s eyes widened and his eyes closed, his whole body seeming to relax. “I love you, too, Mycie. Always.”
Mycroft made them both tea and they sat, legs entwined on the couch, watching the rain out the window.

“John is pushing to meet my mystery man,” Sherlock said in his rumbling baritone.

“Yes, he said as much to me as well.” Mycroft traced circles absently over his brother’s knees with one hand as he sipped on his tea.

“He also wants to meet yours. Suggested we have a dinner one night, all together.”

“Is that so?”

His eyes narrowed as he looked at his sibling. “You don’t seem overly concerned.”

Mycroft shrugged. “I’ve been giving it some thought and I think maybe we need to give him what he wants.”

“And how exactly do you plan on doing that? Shall we arrive with blow up dolls with each other’s photos pinned to their heads?”

“Don’t be absurd. The pins would deflate the dolls.”

Their eyes met and they burst out laughing. “Alright, so what is it you’re considering?”

“He wants to meet partners so I suggest we bring some along. I have two ideal candidates in mind.”

“Who?”

“Two of my most trusted MI5 agents. I’ve known them both for a long time and they’re always happy to pick up some additional, personal work.”

“You’ve used them before?”

“Mmmm. I wasn’t always in the position I’m in now where I could utilise government resources to keep an eye on you, little brother.”

“Oh.”

“They’re both very loyal to me and extremely discreet.”

“I didn’t know you were friends with any of your minions.”

He wrinkled his nose. “I don’t have friends Sherlock. They work for me, I treat them well and have their back, and in return I throw some enticing private work their way.”
“What reasoning would you give them for our needing them to act as beards?”

“They wouldn’t require much of an explanation - that we’re both seeing people we’d rather our friends and family to not know about should suffice. They’ll understand the need for subterfuge, considering my position of power and your celebrity status.”

“I don’t have celebrity status,” Sherlock huffed.

“Oh, of course not. My mistake, Hat Detective.” He grinned.

The younger man batted playfully at Mycroft’s arm. “Fine, you may have a point.”

“In this case, it will work in our favour. That ruse, along with a very generous payment will be more than enough to keep them from asking for any further details. Not that they would anyway, mind you. As I said, discreet and loyal.”

“How much is a generous payment?”

He waved away his concerns. “Nothing to worry about. I’m more than happy to pay whatever they want.”

“I don’t want you to be out of pocket.”

He couldn’t help but smile at how much things had changed in the last few days. It wasn’t that long ago that his brother milked him for every penny he could, whether it be buying new chemistry supplies, designer suits, or just paying to clean up his messes. “Sherlock, as much as I’m touched by your concern, money isn’t an issue. I work ridiculously long hours, and my expenditures - however lavish you think they may be - are actually very few. If I have to spend my money on anything, I think spending it on a way to protect our relationship is worth every cent.”

“If you’re sure. So, when can you arrange this for? I don’t think I can maintain this truce with John for long if he’s constantly nagging me.”

“I can make some calls now, if you’re agreeable? It might be possible for them to come here tonight to meet and then maybe we can tell John we’ll have dinner tomorrow.”

Sherlock looked surprised. “That soon?”

Mycroft shrugged. “I’ve never been one for dawdling, brother mine.”

“Except over the cake trolley,” he teased.

“Better cake than cocaine,” the politician retorted as he got to his feet.

“Touche.”

He fetched his phone and placed two calls. As expected, both men were willing to drop everything and come round at a moment’s notice simply because he had asked. Mycroft had spent most of the previous night going over their options, and as convoluted at this one was, it seemed the best way to keep their secret safe. He was absolutely certain of their loyalty to him, and he trusted them implicitly. He just hoped that Sherlock would be good enough of an actor to keep up a long running facade that he was in a relationship with one of them. Both men, and Mycroft himself, had gone undercover on missions often enough for him to have no concerns about their abilities, but his brother? As good as he was at playing people when working a case to garner information, Mycroft couldn’t be sure he’d be able to keep in character for long periods of time. They didn’t have much of
a choice though - if they wanted to sell this, he’d have too.

He came back to the lounge and nodded at Sherlock. “They’re on their way over.” He sat and pulled the younger man to him. “Since we’ll need to be careful to keep our intimacy even from them, I figure we should make the most of the time before they come.”

Sherlock smiled, and leaned in for a kiss.

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The two men arrived less than an hour later and Sherlock nodded to them as Mycroft introduced them. When his brother left the room to get them a drink, he observed them both, taking in the details. Mark, the younger of the two was tall and lean with a head of light brown curls and hazel eyes. He was slightly clumsy and uncoordinated and likely worked as a technician or analyst. Elliott was older, mid forties from the looks, dark hair dyed to hide the greys. He was solidly built and his clothes were chosen to show off the powerful muscles below. Senior field agent then.

Once they had beverages, Mycroft invited everyone to sit, taking an armchair for himself. “Thank you so much for coming at such short notice. You have my gratitude.”

“No worries,” Mark said. He was toying with his glass and his leg twitched slightly, but his eyes were sharp and focussed. Sherlock deduced he played up the ‘helpless nerd’ persona, not even needing to think about portraying himself as such after so long that it was now natural. He was impressed. Mark would blend in seamlessly whenever he was in the field, giving away no clue as to his extensive training.

“What can we do for you, boss?” Elliott asked.

“I require your services for an indefinite period of time, in a personal capacity so additional to your normal duties. It would not be onerous work, and you wouldn’t be needed often, but your presence may be required at short notice.” He waved towards Sherlock. “My brother and I are both in relationships that we are quite private about. Our close friends and family have discovered that we are seeing people and it is at the stage where we can no longer continue to put off the introductions without causing a fuss.” The last word dripped with disdain and it was obvious that a gentleman such as he would not tolerate such things. “Therefore we need to introduce them to someone, whilst keeping our real partner’s identities hidden. The last thing either of us need is for our parents to find out.”

Sherlock shuddered theatrically. “Mummy would be most unbearable.”

“We would start off with dinner tomorrow with Sherlock’s flatmate, and then it would be on an ad hoc basis from there. It’s well known that we value our privacy so there wouldn’t be many occasions you would be required to be present for. The role you’d play would require sufficient physical contact to portray a convincing relationship, however nothing more intimate than kissing. Remuneration would be the same as previous jobs with an added bonus of twenty percent.”

“Sounds easy enough,” Mark said.

“Your real partners are in the know about this?” Elliott asked. “Last thing I want is a hysterical boyfriend pestering me for stealing his man.”

Mycroft gave him a wry smile. “That would most definitely complicate the matter. You’ll be quite safe, I can assure you - our partners are most agreeable to this solution.”

“I wouldn’t say agreeable ,” Sherlock said with a slight scowl. “Let’s just say they can see the
necessity."

“Quite.” Mycroft looked across at their guests. “Mark, you would be paired with Sherlock, and
Elliott, you would be masquerading as my consort. Are you both in agreement?”

“‘Course,” Elliott said with a grin. “Good paying, easy work for a bloke who’s easy on the eyes.”
He winked. “I’m in.” He missed the scowl Sherlock threw at him, for which Mycroft was grateful.
No use giving away their true positions.

“So am I,” Mark said.

“Excellent. Sherlock, do you want to ask John if tomorrow night is suitable for dinner? If so, we’ll
need to spend some time getting acquainted with our faux partners so we’re comfortable enough with
them to be convincing.”

The detective nodded and pulled out his phone, firing off a text.

_Spoke to Mycroft, he has agreed to your ridiculous idea for dinner. Tomorrow night, Baker Street,
nothing formal, just a take away. Does this suit? - SH_

It was a very short while later that John responded in the affirmative.

_Wow, I did NOT expect to get you to agree so soon. Tomorrow works for me - JW_

“Tomorrow it is,” Sherlock said.

“Right, then. We’ll leave you two alone in here,” Mycroft told the two younger men. “I suggest you
work out a cover story for how you met, a few anecdotes about your relationship, you know the drill,
Mark.”

“Sure thing.”

Sherlock threw his brother a panicked glance, feeling a little overwhelmed at how quickly this was
all moving. Mycroft just gave him a small smile and touched Elliott’s back to guide him from the
room. A moment later his phone chirped and he saw it was from his brother.

_A necessary evil, brother mine. The quicker you get your fake relationship down pat, the quicker we
can be alone tonight - MH_

“You’re nervous,” Mark said, coming to sit next to him on the couch.

“Yes, well, I’m not the most social of people. This is actually my first relationship and I’m still not
even entirely comfortable with my partner let alone a complete stranger that will be pretending to be
my partner.”

“I get that. Just think of it as a case. I’ve read a lot about you, in the news, and on your friend’s blog.
You do this all the time for your work, so just think of it like that.”

He took a deep breath and nodded. “Right. You’re right. That I can do.” Mark smiled and then
leaned in and kissed him. Sherlock yelped and shuffled backwards. “Why did you do that?” he
demanded.

The agent rolled his eyes. “Because that’s exactly the way you reacted. How’s it going to look if I
give you a peck and you shriek and run away?”

“I did not _shriek_ .”
“Yeah, you did. Look, you seem like a nice guy but I’m into blondes. With vaginas. Does it help to know that I’m in no way attracted to you? I get that you feel uncomfortable with this and it probably feels a bit like a betrayal, but it’s just mechanics. There’s no emotion attached to it. This is the means to an end.”

Sherlock closed his eyes and then nodded again. “Okay, yes, sorry. My bad - I can do this.” He opened his eyes to see Mark giving him an encouraging smile and before he could rethink it, he leaned in and gave him a chaste kiss.

“See, nothing to it,” the other man said.

“Nothing too it,” he agreed. He moved closer and initiated another kiss, longer this time, more intimate. It was different to kissing Mycroft. There was no heat in his belly, no ache in his heart, or tingle in his groin. It was warm and wet and that was all.

They broke apart and Mark nodded. “Well done. Right, let’s get our story straight, shall we? What’s a believable way for us to have met?”
Chapter 12

Sherlock paced nervously in his room, unable to sit still. It was almost six and their guests would be arriving any time now. He felt a surge of resentment go through him aimed at his best friend, knowing that the only reason they were going through with this ridiculous sham was to placate him. He didn’t want to waste an evening making small talk and pretending to be smitten with one of Mycroft’s minions; he wanted to be alone with his brother, ripping off his clothes and having his way with him.

His mind drifted back to the previous evening and he felt himself smile at the memories. Once Mark and Elliott had left, he had shoved Mycroft’s trousers down to his ankles, pushed him back onto the couch and then dropped to his knees in front of him. He was a fast learner and the blowjob he gave was exponentially better than his first attempt. There had been an utterly sinful symphony of moans and gasps from his brother’s lips, leading Sherlock to come in his pants, completely untouched as he swallowed down every last drop that Mycroft pumped into his mouth. They had found something for dinner, and then after a shower, Mycroft in turn threw him on the bed and had his own fun. His brother had been the one to teach him about mind palaces so he recognised that Mycroft was mapping every single inch of his body as he kissed and licked his way up and down. He wondered what his room in his palace was like? In his own, Mycroft’s was the room he’d had growing up, but it was far larger and grander than when he’d been a boy. It was rapidly transforming as it was filled with new information and data, and when he went looking for it, a warm glow could be seen coming from under the door.

The doorbell rang downstairs and he ran a hand through his hair before heading into the lounge. He heard Mrs Hudson answer the door and then one set of footsteps on the stairs. Mark then. John came out of the kitchen and gave him a small smile, but he could tell he was almost thrumming with nervous energy. Sherlock could read that he was torn - on one hand, he was chuffed that he was the first to meet the man who had been chosen by the detective, but on the other he was already resentful of him, wondering what he had that John clearly didn’t. Theoretically, at least.

There was a knock at the door and he hurried forward, almost pulling it off the hinges as he flung it open. “Hi,” he said, a little breathless from nerves. He knew John would see it as being from excitement so it served them well.

“Hello, Sher,” Mark said, stepping forward and giving him a quick kiss. They’d debated the use of pet names and Sherlock had dismissed them all, but had acquiesced on the shortened form of his name.

He took Mark’s coat and hung it up, then turned and held a hand out to John. “Mark, this is John Watson. John, my partner, Mark.”

They shook hands, and he watched as John sized him up.

“How can I get you a drink?” he asked his faux partner

“Oh, I actually bought some wine,” the agent said, picking up a bag he’d dropped next to the coat rack. “It’s that 2007 SSB we had on our first date.”

He smiled widely and accepted the bottle. “I can’t believe you remembered.”
“Yeah, well, I might not have a super memory like you, Sher, but I remember the important things.”

“Such as getting a chilled bottle,” he said with a wink. He turned in time to catch the scowl on John’s face at their exchange. “Would you like a glass, John?”

“Sure, why not?” the doctor said with fake cheerfulness. As Sherlock went to the kitchen to open the wine, John proceeded to interrogate Mark. “I must say, I haven’t heard much about you, Mark.”

“Yeah, well, Sher and I are both pretty private people,” he replied with a shrug. “Of course, I know all about you though! Heard all about the adventures you two have gotten up to.” He smiled amicably, ignoring the waves of animosity that were rolling off the blonde.

“How did you two meet?”

Sherlock rolled his eyes at the predictability of John’s questioning, then turned from the bench, carrying all three glasses in his cupped hands.

“Gosh, we go way back,” Mark said, accepting his wine with a smile. “Went to university together. I’d of course been aware he was consulting for Scotland Yard for a while now, saw the news reports and such. Finally found his blog and contacted him on there.”

John huffed. “It’s actually my blog!”

Amused hazel eyes turned to Sherlock. “Really, Sher? You pass The Science of Deduction off as your own. That’s a bit low.”

He didn’t hide the eyeroll this time. “That is my blog,” he said, hooking an arm through Mark’s. “John keeps another blog that he uses to write up our cases, which people tend to mistake for mine. It annoys him to no end.”

Before the doctor could reply, there was a knock at the door. It opened and Mycroft stepped through, followed by Elliott. “Hello,” the politician said with a bland smile. “I didn’t want to disturb Mrs Hudson so I let us in with my key. Hope you don’t mind.”

“Not at all,” Sherlock said.

“Since when do you have a key?” John demanded.

“Since I had one cut for him,” the detective told him bluntly. He crossed to the door and held out a hand to Elliott. “Good to see you again.”

“You too, Sherlock. Nice place you’ve got here.”

Mycroft and Mark shook hands as well, making it clear they all knew one another.

“You’ve all already met?” John asked.

“Of course,” Mycroft said. “I know Mark from Sherlock’s university days, and made sure we were reacquainted when he first got in contact again with my brother.”

“He kidnapped me,” Mark said with an amused laugh.

“He does that,” John told him.

“Of course, Sherlock met Elliott several months ago when we first started seeing each other.”
Elliott reached out to shake John’s hand and Mycroft tutted at his brother. “Forgetting your manners, brother mine? Elliott, John. John, Elliott,” he introduced them.

“Nice to meet you,” the doctor said. “Come on in and have a seat.”

They moved into the lounge, and Elliott held up the large cooler bag he was holding. “Where should I put this, babe?” he asked Mycroft.

“Oh, just pop it on the bench in the kitchen,” he replied, giving him what passed for a sunny smile in the politician’s book.

*Babe?* Sherlock mouthed in his brother’s direction when no one was looking, an eyebrow raised in disbelief.

Mycroft just shrugged and then accepted the bottle of beer that Elliott held out to him. The older agent perched on the edge of the armchair, and slung one arm around Mycroft’s shoulders. It was a testament to how comfortable his brother felt around these two newcomers that he didn’t even flinch, just gave the man’s leg a small squeeze. Sherlock wasn’t having anywhere near as easy a time with it. There was still an awkwardness to the interactions between Mark and himself, and although he could pass some of it off as the fact they hadn’t been together all that long, he knew he had to make it appear much more natural. He had to do it without thinking. He wriggled a little closer to Mark on the couch and the analyst gave him a warm smile.

“I didn’t take you as a beer drinker,” John said to Mycroft.

Elliott laughed loudly. “He didn’t used to be! Turned that adorable nose of his up whenever I drank the stuff. Definitely was more of a one for a fine wine.”

“Don’t forget the expensive scotch,” Mycroft said with a wry grin.

“So what changed your mind?” the doctor asked curiously. Sherlock too, was curious. They’d only covered the basics of the other’s fake history so he wasn’t aware of the little details such as these.

Elliott gave a salacious wink. “He seemed to develop a liking for it after tasting it on me so often.” He cupped the back of Mycroft’s neck and pulled him close, proceeding to snog the ever living crap out of the man. Dedicated to the cause, Mycroft kissed his back, although when they broke apart, he looked flustered and embarrassed by the overt display of affection. Just as he would have done if he really was dating this alpha of a man.

Sherlock knew that it was fake. His brother had told him all along that he’d never wanted anyone but him. This was all an act, a ruse, but the jealousy that roiled in his gut at the sight of this man possessing his brother was very, very real. He stood abruptly, and almost snatched the empty wine glass out of Mark’s hand. “More wine?” he asked his faux partner, not waiting for a reply and hurrying to the kitchen.

His hands were shaking as he poured the last of the wine into the two glasses and he was surprised to find that his eyes were slightly damp. Damn John Watson, and damn his skepticism, and damn that solid mass of muscle sitting there getting handsy with what was his. No one should touch Mycroft like that, or look at him like that, or kiss him like that except for Sherlock. *No one*. What stung though, what really hit him like a punch to the gut, was that Mycroft and Elliott *fit*. At odd times over the years, mostly when Mummy would badger them both about when she’d be getting son-in-laws, he’d allowed his imagination to muse over what sort of a man Mycroft would be with. And he’d always imagined him much like this - strong and commanding, possessive and protective, but affectionate as well. Mycroft could be all of those things, but not in a traditional sense. Sherlock had
always pictured that his brother and partner would be like cheese and chocolate - similar characteristics but differing executions of them, and although one may appear stronger than the other, in reality they were closer to equals. Mycroft would need someone who wouldn’t be intimidated by his intellect; who could put him in his place when his arrogance ran away with him; who was sure of themselves and the attributes they brought to the table; who would be supportive but could also step up into the role of protector. The man out there, with his arm around his brother, and a genuine attraction to him was everything Mycroft needed. How could Sherlock ever stack up against him?

He suddenly felt ill, and he leant against the bench, breathing through his nose and trying to keep the wine he’d drunk in his stomach. He was suddenly very scared that having seen who else was out there and interested in him, Mycroft would call the whole thing off.

Chapter End Notes

This somehow got angsty...I'm just going to go hide under a rock so you can't find me and beat me up.
Swallowing back the lump in his throat, Sherlock composed himself and went back into the lounge. He avoided Mycroft’s eyes, but knew his brother was reading every thought that had passed through his mind in the last five minutes. A brief flicker of exasperation passed over his expression, and then it was gone before anyone else could see.

“Thanks, Sher,” Mark said, accepting the wine and then turning his attention back to John, who was answering a question about how he balanced being a doctor and solving crimes.

“Get’s a bit hectic at times, and I’m sure my boss at the clinic has wanted to boot me out the door for the number of times I’ve left early or called off because we’ve have a body turn up. Wouldn’t change it for the world though.” He smiled brightly at Sherlock.

“You’ve got a daughter, don’t you?” Mark asked. “That must make it difficult.”

“I’m very lucky to have some good friends who are more than happy to babysit. Mrs Hudson especially. She offered to take Rosie tonight; told me she’s happy to take her when I need a bit of time to be social as well as when I have to work.”

“She is a remarkable woman,” Mycroft agreed.

“Yes, she is. Has a nice car, too,” John said with a laugh. “Anyway, enough about me. What do you do for a living, Mark?”

“Nothing near as exciting as you. I’m a market analyst for a software firm. Spend my days crunching numbers and looking for patterns. I do a little bit of freelance work for a private security firm as well, but not often. Just when I need a bit of extra cash and a trickier puzzle to solve. Speaking of which, I might get you to have a look at a cypher I’m having a bit of trouble cracking, Sher.”

“Of course. Anytime, Mark.”

“What about you, Elliott?” the doctor asked.

The older agent looked at Mycroft with a questioning expression. “John is aware of my real work,” the politician said. “You can tell him the truth.”

“I work for MI5 as a physical skills trainer and assessor. I met Myc through work.”

“Really? I didn’t think you were that involved with MI5, Mycroft? Thought you just used them as a resource when you needed some legwork done.”

“On second thought, it appears John actually has very little idea of what I do,” Mycroft said archly. “I’m not just some shadowy puppet master.”

“No, he’s more like a coach for a football team,” Elliott explained. “He analyses the situation, devises tactics, directs the players after assessing their strengths and weaknesses, but is also skilled enough to get in there and demonstrate something himself.”

John laughed. “I can’t quite picture The British Government himself getting his hands dirty.”
“You forget who came for me in Serbia, John.” Sherlock shot his friend a glare.

“Yes, but, it’s not like he’s physically dangerous. I mean, you almost snapped his arm when you were high and he didn’t do a thing to stop you.”

“Because I chose not too, John. Not because I couldn’t. Sherlock wasn’t himself and unlike some, I would never resort to physical violence against him to show my disapproval.”

An awkward silence fell over the room until Elliott coughed and then continued with his story. “Yeah, so even though he does most of his work from that nice office of his, Myc likes to keep his certifications current. He came to see me to brush up on his skills and let’s just say that me pinning him down on the sparring mat led to me pinning him down somewhere else.”

“No need to be crass, Elliott,” Mycroft admonished, but he smiled fondly. “Can’t help myself,” the big man said with a wink. “Just want to world to know how lucky I am to have caught you.”

Mycroft actually blushed, and it took every ounce of Sherlock’s willpower to remain seated and to not leap up and throw the man off his brother. Mine! he wanted to shout. But instead he had to remain sitting, ignoring the undisguised lust in Elliott’s eyes as he flirted with Mycroft. It was just supposed to be an act, but no one could fake that level of desire. The older agent was relishing this role and Mycroft didn’t seem at all displeased. How long would it be until their fake relationship turned into the real deal? Because why would Mycroft pass up the opportunity to have a socially acceptable partner whom he wouldn’t have to hide?

A phone chirped and Mycroft pulled his from his pocket. “Excuse me for a moment. This is my driver - he picked up dinner for us. Sherlock, will you give me a hand?”

The detective nodded and followed Mycroft out of the flat and down the stairs. When they reached the bottom he was pulled into the shadows and pushed against the wall. “Stop that right this instant!” he growled, cupping Sherlock’s face in his long fingers. “It isn’t real, Sherlock. It’s just an act.”

“He’s so much better for you,” he whispered in a broken voice.

“No, he’s not, because he’s not you.” He leaned forward so their foreheads were touching. “You silly, silly man. There has never been, and never will be anyone else for me except you. Trust me when I say this.”

A tear slipped down Sherlock’s face and Mycroft kissed it away, then kissed him properly. It was tender and sweet and through it, Sherlock could feel the love Mycroft had for him. More tears fell and he blinked them away. “I’m sorry.”

Mycroft sighed and pulled him close against him. “You have nothing to be sorry for. I’m the one who should apologise since this insane plan was my suggestion.”

“The insane plan that’s working faultlessly.”

“Be that as it may...I need you to know that I love you with every part of my being and you will never lose me. Promise me you won’t lose sight of that.”

Sherlock nodded, and their lips met in another kiss. “Okay.”

“I’ll be right back. Take a moment to compose yourself before we have to go back up.”
Mycroft slipped out the front door to collect their dinner, but not before kissing his brother one more time.

Chapter End Notes

This is only a short chapter sorry. I'll see how I go tonight, and might get another chapter up as well.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Woot! Two chapters in one day and that's after a long day at work. I'm spent!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Their stolen moment together did much to help Sherlock keep his perspective for the rest of the evening. He still felt the overwhelming desire to rip the older agent off his brother every time he initiated physical intimacy, but he could at least see beyond it. He knew that Mycroft would much rather be kissing him. He knew that when he smiled fondly or used a term of endearment, it was really meant for Sherlock. He knew that tonight it would be he who would be going home with Mycroft and sharing his bed. And although he knew all of this, all he wanted to be able to do was to shout it out from the rooftops, to have the whole world know that they loved each other. But instead he had to sit on the couch, pretend to be involved with the stranger at his side, and watch another man lay claim to his brother. All because society felt that the love they shared was repulsive, vile, and corrupt. How they could think that about something that felt so right and pure to Sherlock was beyond him, but it was the way it was and they were left no choice but to hide their feelings from the world.

They wrapped the evening up and Sherlock went and collected his overnight bag from his room when Mycroft offered he and Mark a lift ‘home’.

“You can always stay here,” John said. “I don’t want you to feel like you’re being chased out of your own home. I’m happy for Mark to stay over.”

“That’s very kind of you, John, but I’m not quite comfortable with that idea just yet.” He hoped the slight tremor in his voice didn’t give away the panic he felt at that suggestion.

“Honestly, it’s not like I’ve never shared a flat before. I’m good at tuning out the sound of two people shagging. Unless you’re a screamer - then I might need some good earplugs.”

“Stop embarrassing him,” Mark chided the doctor. “It’s okay, Sher. I adore the sounds you make - you’ve got nothing to be ashamed of.” He linked his arm with Sherlock and gave him a quick kiss.

“Right, well on that note, shall we be off?” he asked brusquely, his cheeks flaming.


“Night, Mycroft. It was good to meet everyone. Thanks for coming round.”

They left the doctor at the door and went downstairs, piling into the back of the sleek black car that pulled up the moment they left the building.

“That seemed to go smoothly,” Elliott said from his place next to Mycroft, smiling broadly at a job well done.

“Indeed,” Mycroft said. “Most convincing.”

Sherlock was sitting directly opposite his brother and although the car was spacious, they were both
tall men. Their knees were aligned and he used the motion of the car turning a corner to hide the
movement of him pressing his leg against his brother’s. “It should keep John off my back for the time
being,” he agreed.

“Glad we could be of help,” Mark said. “I actually enjoyed the evening. It’s not often I get to be
involved in such intelligent conversation.”

Sherlock had to silently agree. The analyst was much smarter than the average goldfish and he’d
been surprised to discover that the man could almost keep up with he and Mycroft. His brother had
chosen his fake consort well.

They went over the events of the evening, identifying opportunities where they could improve next
time. They dropped Mark off home first and then headed for Elliott’s. The car pulled up and the big
man paused before getting out. “Whoever your bloke is, boss, he’s one lucky man.” He looked as if
he was going to say something else, but then just wished them goodnight and left.

Sherlock scowled as the door shut, crossing his arms and sliding down in the seat in a sulk. Mycroft
rolled his eyes and leaned over to grab hold of his brother’s elbows, pulling him across to sit next to
him. “There’s no need for that, Sherlock.” He squeezed his knee.

“He wants you. He’s hoping you break up with your partner so he can claim you for his own.” He
couldn’t keep the pout from his face.

“And? It’s not going to happen so does it really matter?”

“Yes!” he almost shouted, glad for the tinted privacy screen between them and the driver. “You are
mine. He can’t have you!”

“Really, brother dear. I’m not a toy to be fought over in the sand pit. I do have a mind of my own.”

“So? That doesn’t change the fact that you belong to me.”

“No, it doesn’t, but you could at least try not to sound overly much like a 1950’s man of the house.”

“Really, Mycie - I’m either a spoiled child or a chauvinistic husband. Pick a metaphor and stick with
it.”

“Why should I do that when both seem applicable?”

“Because it makes you sound as if your brain has gone as soft as your belly.”

“If you continue to say such sweet things I might have a change of heart for our plans tonight,”
Mycroft threatened.

“What plans?”

“I was going to save it as a surprise but you’re being quite the brat. Maybe we’ll just go to sleep
when we get in.”

“Tell me what you have planned!”

He gave a theatrical yawn. “I am feeling quite exhausted after this evening. Yes, I do think a good
night’s sleep is just what I need.”

Sherlock pushed him until he was right up against the window and leaned in close, nipping at his
bottom lip. “Tell me what you were going to do to me, brother,” he growled.
Mycroft traced a finger down his cheek and then smirked. “What makes you think I was going to do anything to you?”

The younger man quirked an eyebrow. “Does that mean what I think it means?”

“What do you think it means?”

“You’ve decided that we’re ready to take things to the next step.”

“Indeed.”

“But…”

“Yes?”

“You want me to - ?

“Yes.”

“Oh.”

“Why so surprised?”

“I just thought...well, I thought it was obvious really.”

Mycroft pulled him in for a kiss, licking across the seam of those plump lips until they opened and allowed his tongue to dart inside. Sherlock hummed deep in his throat and his hands clutched at his brother’s shirt. They broke apart as the car pulled up to his house, both breathing hard and Mycroft gave him a fond smile. “Well, are you ready?”

“Yes ,” Sherlock said breathily.

“Good. Come on, brother mine, come inside and make love to me.”

Chapter End Notes

Isn’t that a *lovely* way to end a chapter? ;-) *evil cackle*
Chapter 15

They didn’t speak as they made their way up to the bedroom, a delicate tension thrumming between them. Mycroft led his little brother by the hand, turning on the light but dimming it as they stepped inside. He slowly began to unbutton Sherlock’s shirt, pressing kisses to each inch of pale skin as it was revealed. Once it had been pushed off broad shoulders, he undid his own buttons, not hurrying his movements, but there was a quiet urgency to be able to press skin against skin.

They met in a kiss once they were naked from the waist up, slow and deep. Mycroft allowed his hands to wander over Sherlock’s back, tracing teasing patterns over the scars. Sherlock held Mycroft’s jaw with one hand, while the other tangled in his hair, allowing him to control the kiss. He didn’t know if it was the age difference, or the power difference in their regular lives, but Mycroft didn’t exactly understand why Sherlock had assumed he’d be the one to bottom. He had been so delightfully surprised that it had caught the older brother a little off guard. Maybe it was just Sherlock’s inexperience? Did he just not understand that topping and bottoming were just phrases, descriptors - it wasn’t a submissive act to be penetrated and you didn’t just assume control if you were on top. Making love wasn’t about fighting for control, it was about two equals coming together as one. Introducing power plays in the bedroom could be fun, and had its benefits, but tonight would simply be an expression of their love for each other. He wanted Sherlock to feel in control simply because, as his first time it would make him more comfortable, but that was about him setting the pace and only going as far as he wanted; it wasn’t about domination.

He pushed such thoughts out of his mind, determined to not overthink this and to just enjoy it as it unfolded. He deftly undid his trousers and stepped out of them, removing his boxers at the same time. Sherlock followed suit and they moved to the bed, the younger man hovering above him. “Do you have everything we need?” he asked, nipping at Mycroft’s throat.

“Of course. Top drawer in the side table on the right.”

The detective searched through the drawer, finally pulling out a bottle of lube and a box of condoms. His hands shook as he opened the box and pulled out one of the foil wrappers. Closing the drawer, he knelt beside Mycroft, heaving in shuddering breaths. After a long moment, their eyes met and he looked absolutely lost. “I, um, I actually don’t...well, that is...um, oh fuck it, I have no idea what to do next.” He shoulders slumped in defeat.

“Hey, come here,” Mycroft said gently, pulling him down on top of him. He stroked his arms and kissed him sweetly, trying to calm his brother down. “It’s okay, Sherlock. I’ll talk you through what you have to do. It’s not all that difficult once you get a handle on it.”

“I just feel so useless,” he groaned into his shoulder. “What if I do it wrong and I hurt you?”

“You won’t break me, brother mine, I promise. Lots of lube and going slow is the most important thing. The only reason you’ll need to even stretch me is because I haven’t bottomed for quite a while. Once we’re having sex regularly we won’t have to do much prep at all. You won’t hurt me, I promise.”

He pulled his face back and smiled shyly. “How is it you always know what to say to make me feel better?”

“Years of practise I suppose.”

“I love you, Mycie.”
“And I love you, Sherlock.”

They shared another kiss and then Mycroft guided Sherlock through the process of prepping him. Once he had been opened enough for three of those long violinist fingers to slip easily in and out, he helped slide the condom on his brother. He watched Sherlock’s expression in fascination as he slipped slowly inside, his mouth falling open, the cupid’s bow forming a perfect love heart shape. He gently urged his brother on as he pushed in a little more, then a little more, finally bottoming out after a couple of minutes. There had been the expected burn at the first breach but they’d gone slow enough that he’d had more than enough time to adjust. So he hooked his legs around Sherlock’s waist and used his ankles to push against his brother’s perfect arse, urging him to move.

They shared languid kisses as they moved against each other, Mycroft’s hands busy touching Sherlock wherever he could reach, his cock trapped between them, rubbing between their sweat slick skin. He hooked his legs over his brother’s arms, changing the angle of his hips, chasing that sweet spot inside. He cried out as Sherlock’s cock brushed against his prostate, and the younger man instinctively followed up with the exact same movement, dragging across the sensitive gland on the way in and out.

“Oh, that’s it,” Mycroft gasped, the first words spoken since his brother had been fully seated. Neither were overly expressive with their passions and they shared more via looks and touches than by spoken word.

Warmth and tension and that other indescribable feeling of teetering on the edge began to build, spreading from his bollocks all the way up into his stomach and then Mycroft gasped, falling over the edge into a powerful orgasm. His seed spilled between them and the muscles of his passage contracted almost painfully around Sherlock’s cock. The younger man sped up his movement of his hips, thrusting, once, twice, and then cried out as he came after the third.

They rode out the waves of bliss together, and then Sherlock slumped down onto Mycroft, his limbs trembling and his breath coming in gasps. “Oh God, Mycie, that was amazing. Thank you, thank you so much.” He pressed butterfly kisses all over his brother’s face and neck and squeezed his arms tightly around him.

Mycroft held him close, just enjoying the warmth and the closeness. He knew that all too soon they would become sticky and uncomfortable and the moment would pass so he made sure to cherish every second of it.

Whatever happened now, they had gone beyond that line in the sand and there was no turning back.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

So I really had to figure out where I wanted this story to go. It was originally just going to be a short one shot - nothing more than 5-8K, just a brief glimpse into their lives. It's since taken on a life of its own and I kind of have to have a plan in place, otherwise it's going to turn into a rambling piece of shite. We need plot, stat! So I'm trying my hand at some case fic, whilst obviously still exploring the blooming relationship between our two fave brothers. I'm even less confident at case fic than with smut so take it with a large grain of salt. I don't know much about police procedure, I'm no the best at coming up with twisty murder mysteries and cunning deductions, so treat my lame attempts as a simple plot device to get our boys from A to B and I'll make sure there's lots of smut, fluff, cuddles, and a touch of angst along the way.

Sherlock groaned as the incessant beeping filled the room. The bed next to him dipped as Mycroft rolled over to turn off his alarm.

“ ‘s too early,” the younger Holmes grumbled, hiding his face back in the pillow.

He heard a low chuckle from beside him. “Who would have thought the secret to getting you to have a full night’s sleep was a good shag?”

He batted blindly in his brother’s direction, smirking when he connected with his arm and was rewarded with a soft oof. “Sleeping this much isn’t healthy,” he declared. “I shall surely be dead by the end of the week.”

“If a decade long drug addiction didn’t kill you, brother mine, I highly doubt a solid eight hours will.” Mycroft dipped his face and pressed a kiss to the mop of dark curls. “Enjoy a lie in for a change.”

“It’s no fun if you’re not here,” he complained.

“Yes, well, some of us have a job to get to. Speaking of, I’m going to be late if I don’t get in the shower right now.”

He heard Mycroft move into the bathroom and he wiggled over and snuggled down into the warm patch left behind by his brother. He didn’t intend to doze off again but he must have because the next thing he knew, he was being kissed softly and a goodbye was being whispered in his ear. “Bye,” he mumbled in a sleep-filled voice. “Love you.”

“Love you too.”

It was mid-morning when he woke again and he got up, feeling groggy from oversleeping. A shower and a cup of coffee roused him properly and he checked his emails, seeing he had a request from a potential client to meet. It didn’t sound too intriguing but better than what he had going right now so he replied with a time to meet after lunch. He let himself out of the house and grabbed a cab back to Baker Street. John was home, not having another shift at the clinic until later in the week, and he was on the couch, playing with Rosie. “Hi,” he said, looking up from the Pooh and Tigger plushies he
was holding in front of the baby. “Have a good night?”

Relief flooded Sherlock. It was as if the previous week hadn’t happened. John’s tone was friendly and curious, but there was no underlying malice or resentment in it. It seemed he had finally accepted the situation - for the time being at least. His moods were so unpredictable that he could be back to jealous and snarky this time next week. But Sherlock would take what he could get.

“I did, thanks.” He removed his coat and then headed to the kitchen. “Tea?” he asked.

“Yes, please.”

After making the brew, the detective came into the lounge and placed their drinks on the table. He held out his arms in a silent request and John happily handed over the baby. “Hello, my little scientist,” he greeted her. “And what have you learned today?”

John sipped his tea. “She learned that sleeping for five hours straight makes both herself and dad much more agreeable in the mornings.”

“Already analysing the effects of REM sleep on the human psyche? You are such a clever little scientist.”

The doctor chuckled, and Sherlock threw him a smile, enjoying the normality of it all. “Mark seems really nice,” John said after a while. “I can see why you like him so much. You’re good together.”

Guilt flared briefly inside him at the deception, but he knew they had no choice. To be as truthful as possible, when he replied, he spoke of Mycroft even if he used the name of Mark. “Thank you, John. It means a lot to me that you approve. Mark honestly makes me feel happy. I know it won’t always be plain sailing, especially since it’s me, and I’m sure we’ll have some terrible rows, but right at this very moment, I’m happier than I’ve ever been.” He gave him another smile. “And part of that is because things are right again between us. You are my best friend, John and I need you to be part of my life.”

“Well the universe can rest easy, because Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson are back together again.”

~~~~~~~~

John made them both sandwiches for lunch and for once, Sherlock ate his without complaint. He hadn’t bothered with breakfast and it seemed that carnal activities increased his naturally small appetite. He fed Rosie while they ate and John read over the information he’d been sent for his client.

“Is this for real? Our new client is Kitty Donaldson?” the doctor asked, looking up with wide eyes.

“What do you mean?”

“You genuinely don’t know who this woman is? Sherlock, even you couldn’t have missed reading about her in the paper! She’s the biggest recording artist in Britain.”

“I don’t read the entertainment section.”

“She doesn’t just get shoved in the celebrity gossip column. Last month there was a two page spread in the paper about her concert - they had to close down two city blocks to avoid gridlock.”

Sherlock pursed his lips. “That does ring a bell. I had the Sarchii case on at the time and the detours were atrocious.”
John sighed and gave up, knowing that even if Sherlock had read about her, he would most likely have deleted the information since it wasn’t deemed important enough. “So, she thinks someone is stalking her. Why hasn’t she gone to the police?”

“If you read the last bit you’ll see that she has. They haven’t deemed it worthy because she doesn’t have any proof that it’s the same person each time. She receives hundreds of gifts a day from fans and they think that it could be from differing people each time.”

“I don’t get it though - why would fans send her dead roses?”

Sherlock shrugged. “No idea, maybe they think it was a Reddit prank?”

The doctor rubbed at his eyes. “So you have no idea who Kitty Donaldson is, but you know what Reddit is? Honestly, Sherlock, your mind astounds me.”

“Thank you, John.”

“No compliment.”

Sherlock’s message alert pinged and he opened the app.

I’m being called out of the country for the next few days at least. I fly out in two hours. I’ve never been so upset about travelling for work before - MH

Looks like I’ve got a case so I would have been pretty busy anyway. Where are they sending you? - SH

Egypt. I’ll text you when I can - MH

Be safe. Love you - SH

You too. On both counts - MH

Before he even had a chance to feel sorry for himself, Mrs Hudson hurried into the lounge. “Oh, Sherlock! There’s a whole bunch of security men downstairs clustered around the front door. I think they have guns! They’re saying they have an appointment with you.”

“They don’t have the appointment” a sultry woman’s voice came from the doorway. “I do.”
Kitty Donaldson sauntered into the room and Sherlock could not for the life of him understand how this was considered the greatest musical talent currently in England. The most popular, yes - he could see the appeal she would hold, especially over young men and women, but that was more about the looks and lack of clothing than a musical talent. She was apparently a singer, but even if she could hold a tune now, if she continued with the two pack a day smoking habit, she’d sound like a fog horn within two years.

John fawned over her, making her a cup of tea, showing her to the chair, and even lighting a cigarette for her. She sat awkwardly, trying to rearrange her scanty clothing so she didn’t reveal what she’d had for breakfast. Sherlock was rapidly losing his patience and she hadn’t even started explaining yet about her apparent stalker.

“Congratulations on your Grammys,” John said with enthusiasm.

“Thank you,” she said, almost dismissively. “It was nice to have all my hard work recognised after missing out the past two years to those with lesser talent. I was very happy, but not surprised when Moving Up In The World won Song of the Year.”

“It definitely deserved to win,” John agreed. “Didn’t have much in the way of competition.”

“No, the rival songs were most definitely subpar. Though even if they were better, I still would have taken the title by a landslide.”

“As delightfully exciting as this conversation seems to be to you both, could we possibly move on to the actually exciting bits?” Sherlock suggested sweetly.

Kitty didn’t look impressed at being interrupted but began her story nonetheless. “Four weeks ago, Mr Holmes, I started to receive a single red rose every day. We knew it was being sent from the same person as the packaging is the same each time and it’s never delivered by courier, it just...turns up.” She brought up a photo on her phone and handed it over. It wasn’t wrapped in the traditional clear cellophane but instead it looked black.

“I didn't know they made black cellophane,” John said.

“It’s very uncommon,” Sherlock said. “Not exactly something you can pick up at the corner news stand.” He zoomed in on the photo. “Was there ever a note attached.”

“No, never. It’s not uncommon for me to receive multiple tokens from avid fans, and in those cases, my publicist will usually send them a letter with an autographed photo. We couldn’t do that with this one since there was no name and address. I didn’t think much of it, but then a week ago it changed. A single stem continued to arrive, but the flower was dead. At first we thought that it might have been an older rose, delivered late, or even just one gotten on discount, but they have continued to arrive each day and every time they are dead.”

“John said you had a concert last month. Have you been touring much?”

“I haven’t stopped. I went from London a month ago and we’ve been doing a Home Grown tour since then, traveling all over Britain.”

“I see. Wouldn’t gifts and other items normally be delivered to a central location? I’m assuming you have a postal address for fan mail?”
“Yes, I do. It’s here in town.”

“And yet you’ve been receiving a rose every day while you’ve been touring.”

She shrugged. “I get given gifts everywhere I go. The majority go to the postal address but fans will send items to my venues or the hotel if they know where I’m staying.”

“So it’s either a fan who is wealthy enough to follow you around as you tour, or it’s someone who works for you.”

“We figured that out on our own, Mr Holmes. I’d be paying you to figure out who it is.”

“All part of the process,” he told her, wondering if Mycroft could use his powers of evil to help hide her body. Obviously he’d make sure he wasn’t on camera this time…”So!” he said, jumping up. “I’ll need to see today’s offering. Has it arrived yet?”

“Not yet. I’m assuming it will be somewhere at my hotel once I get back.”

“Excellent, well, that’s where we need to go then.”

“I’ll call my driver,” Kitty said, as John crossed to the window.

“Um, Sherlock?” He pointed to the road below. “There’s press everywhere down there.”

The detective rolled his eyes. “Not again.”

“Hat?”

His shoulders slumped in defeat. “Yes, the hat.”

~~~~~~~~

It was nearing midnight by the time they got back to the flat. They’d been followed by paparazzi everywhere they’d gone, and he’d forgotten just how much that slowed them down. The local tabloids had gotten over their obsession with him several months after he came back from being ‘dead’ and it was amazing how quickly he’d forgotten how annoying it was. It took three times longer to get in or out of a building, traffic was slowed in the area, and Kitty had the annoying habit of stopping to chat with adoring fans and the odd celebrity gossip journalist. The pop diva was surprised when Sherlock was recognised by several of them, and one woman even shifted her entire focus away from Kitty to the detective. Kitty was appalled at not being the centre of everyone’s attention and had draped herself over Sherlock to insert herself into the conversation. Sherlock hadn’t minded since he’d been trying to shut the journalist up and all but threw Kitty at her. It had the added benefit of detaching her from him. His skin had been crawling from her touch and he’d longed to be held by Mycroft, to be a balm to the uncomfortable tingling under his skin.

It had been a long, frustrating day, and they were both eager to see the inside of the flat. John was exhausted and went straight to bed, but Sherlock knew he wouldn’t sleep. He lay on the couch, assumed his ‘thinking pose’ and went over the details of the case. He was pretty sure it was an ex-lover that the musician had left behind when she’d run to the big smoke to follow her dream, but he needed the last few pieces of the puzzle to be certain. His phone beeped and he scrambled to check the message, having not heard from Mycroft all night. His heart plummeted in his chest when he saw it was from Mark instead.

*Hi Sher ;-) Just letting you know I’m out of town for work so won’t be available for a bit if you require my services. Maybe work on your sad face since you’re supposed to miss me while I’m gone*
He let his phone drop to the ground and rolled over on the couch, pulling his legs up to his chest. He wouldn’t have to pretend to be sad since he was finding himself quite depressed knowing that Mycroft was away. He hadn’t expected to be so needy - he knew his brother would text as soon as he could but the silence was driving him crazy. He had debated numerous times sending a text, just to say hi, but it didn’t feel right. He was acting much more sentimental in this relationship than he’d ever expected he would, but it was different when you had the person you loved curled around you and you could whisper your thoughts into their ear. Putting it in writing, especially in a text message, made the words sound like they were from a cheap, badly written bodice ripper novel.

He didn’t even need his mind palace to access the memories of last night - he was sure they were burned into his memory forever. He could recall in precise detail the way it felt to have his brother beneath him; to slide slowly into that tight, wet, heat; to have his name lovingly murmured over and over as they moved together. He felt himself grow hard as he thought about Mycroft, and knowing how he tasted, how it felt to run fingers up his spine, to know in intimate detail how he looked as the wave of orgasm broke over him. Without even thinking about what he was doing, he unzipped his trousers and pulled his erection out, rolling onto his back for ease. He stroked idly as he remembered their lovemaking, and fantasised about what he’d do if his brother was here now. There were so many things they hadn’t yet done in their fledgling romance, so much more to explore and discover. The possibilities were endless and he pictured several different ways of making Mycroft scream out his name. It was the thought of being fucked by his brother that pushed him over the edge, spilling his seed over his shirt, Mycroft’s name on his lips.

He lay, breathing hard, his limbs trembling from his release. He reached for the tissues to clean himself up and heard his phone chirp.

_Did I forget to mention I still have eyes IN Baker Street? Just one camera, above the fireplace, and the feed is sent only to me. Thank you, brother mine - I needed that after the horrible night I’ve had - MH_

He laughed out loud, and gave a jaunty wave towards the fireplace.

_Wish I’d known you were watching, I’d have made it a much more exciting show - SH_

_Oh, I still enjoyed it. Very much - MH_

_I’m glad. My little display has made me feel like I could actually sleep. Goodnight, Mycie - SH_

_Goodnight, Sherlock. Sweet dreams - MH_
Chapter 18

There were times, Sherlock thought, when it might be prudent for him to wear a bulletproof vest. Such as when he went chasing after the deranged ex-lover of a client who had a history of violence. Especially when it turned out that said ex-lover owned a gun. And there was no doubt at all that he should consider a vest when the deranged, gun wielding spurned lover became cornered in an alleyway and turned around and fired wildly at the consulting detective giving chase.

As he lay on the cold, wet ground, his blood pooling around him, pain blooming through his chest, one final thought crossed his mind before darkness took him.

If I survive this, Mycroft is going to kill me.

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Twelve Hours Earlier

Sherlock woke to the sound of laughter in the kitchen. As far as he could tell there was no one else in the flat other than he, John and the baby (he could hear Mrs Hudson singing downstairs). The doctor was laughing heartily, and it was definitely piquing his curiosity. Pulling on his dressing gown, he made his way through to the kitchen.

Rosie was in her highchair and from the looks of it, wasn’t doing anything to elicit such a reaction. The paper was folded next to John’s plate so he deduced it must have been an article. The way John burst into a new round of giggles when he saw Sherlock told the detective it was something about him in the paper.

“What?” he demanded, a bit crossly.

Laughing too much to even answer, John simply handed the paper over. Splashed across the front page was a large photo of himself and Kitty Donaldson. It had captured the moment she had tried to ingrain herself into the discussion with the journalist, when she had plastered herself over Sherlock. The caption read Music Sensation Nabs Hat Detective!

He read the article in disbelief, wondering how the hell they came up with these things. “This is ridiculous!” he protested to his amused flatmate. “Close sources to the pop diva say the two have been inseparable for months and that wedding bells are in the air’. Close sources? Months? Since I only met her yesterday these sources must be on the event horizon of a black hole and suffering from time distortion effects!”

John looked impressed. “That was a space metaphor. Well done you for not deleting absolutely everything!”

Sherlock scowled at him, wishing his friend would finally stop bringing that up. “What passes for journalism these days is atrocious,” he said instead.

“Yes, but it sells papers. They’ve got to stay ahead of the game somehow since online news sites are killing them.”

“I’ll kill them,” he muttered, stomping over to the kettle and flipping the switch as viciously as he could.

“You’re well aware how this works, Sherlock. They’ll get bored and move on soon enough. You
just have to ride out the storm.” He smirked. “Though I’d love to be a fly on the wall when Mark sees the news.”

“He’s out of town right now, so hopefully he won’t see it.”

“Oh, where’s he gone?”

“Somewhere for work. I didn’t ask.”

John looked at him in disbelief and shook his head. “That poor bugger. I wonder how long he’ll put up with you for before he finds himself a real human?”

“Probably about the same amount of time that it’ll take you to make a joke that’s funny, so we’ll probably grow old and die together.”

“Oh, come on, Sherlock, don’t sulk. Once this has all blown over even you’ll see the funny side.”

“I doubt that very much.” He felt his phone vibrate in his pocket, the text alert sounding faintly from beneath the fabric.

Dear me. I’m gone for one day and already you’re flocking to the first pair of arms that open for you. And here I thought I meant something to you - MH

Sherlock scowled again, this time at his phone. He should have known Mycroft would keep up with the English papers while he was away.

You’re as funny as John is, which is not at all - SH

You must be upset if you’re comparing me to Doctor Watson - MH

Don’t you have secret government business to do instead of annoying me? - SH

I can always make time for annoying you, brother mine - MH

Your entire existence annoys me - SH

I love you, too. Have a good day - MH

He finished making his tea, ignoring the curious look John was giving him. Of course, John was never one to let his curiosity marinate. “Trouble in paradise?” he asked. “I’m assuming that was Mark?”

“You do know what happens when you assume things, don’t you?”

“I make an ass out of you and me?”

“No, you get it wrong. It was Mycroft, not Mark.”

“Ah, that explains the pout then.”

“I do not pout.”

“Yes you do. With those lips you could win a gold medal in pouting.”

“Is it Gang Up On Sherlock day?” he demanded.

John patted him on the shoulder. “Oh yeah. We met last night in secret to ensure a coordinated
attack.”

“I hate you all.”

Six Hours Earlier

Kitty Donaldson sat before them, dabbing at her eyes with a tissue and looking frightened. “It was waiting for me at the hotel when I got back from an interview this morning,” she explained, keeping her eyes averted from the small box at Sherlock’s feet. Inside was the single dead rose as normal but her stalker had also left a dead dove, sans head. A note had been left, written in the dove’s blood - *Time’s Up*.

“I think it’s time we called Scotland Yard,” Sherlock told her.

“What if they don’t take it seriously? Like last time,” she almost wailed. John had made her tea and he stood behind her, rubbing her back and making inane comments like ‘There there’.

“Detective Inspector Lestrade is a good man. He’ll take this seriously, I guarantee it. Besides, I’ll still be working the case. I just want him on board to help keep you safe.”

She nodded, and accepted another tissue from John. “Okay.”

Sherlock dialled the DI’s number. “Sherlock, what’s up?” came the gravelly voice. He outlined the situation quickly, relieved that Lestrade didn’t bother with pointless questions. “I’ll be right over,” was all he said before hanging up.

While they waited for their Scotland Yard backup to arrive, Sherlock questioned Kitty more about her ex-boyfriend whom she’d broken up with when she got her recording contract. The final puzzle pieces fell into place and he was positive that Justin Wright was their man.

“Why would Justin want to hurt me?” Kitty asked.

“Numerous reasons,” Sherlock replied. “He probably felt betrayed and abandoned when you left, resentful that you made something of yourself and he was left behind, jealous, angry, hurt. Lots of reasons to want to scare you and make you pay.”

“It was amicable! He agreed it was the right thing to do.”

Sherlock made a rude noise. “People often say they agree with something, even if they really don’t.”

Lestrade arrived and it was agreed to send Kitty back to her hotel with Sally as protection detail.

“Feel up to paying Mr Wright a visit?” Sherlock asked Lestrade.

“Sounds like a plan.”

One Hour Earlier

They had spent the afternoon trying to track down Justin Wright but had had no luck. His flatmate hadn’t seen him in weeks and was in the process of having his belongings removed since he’d also not being paying his rent. They called by his place of work but the manager advised he hadn’t shown up to his last four shifts. His disabled mother lived nearby so they paid her a call but he hadn’t been
to visit her for months. Neighbours they spoke to seemed happy he’d not been around, recounting how he’d grown more and more unstable over the past couple of years, culminating in the violent assault on an elderly shopkeeper. They were running out of leads, and John was running out of time before he had to be back to pick up Rosie before Mrs Hudson went to bridge. They were all frustrated as they got back in the car to head for the hotel.

“I suppose it was to be expected,” Sherlock told them. “He’d want to stay close and to keep an eye on things. None of the hotel staff remember seeing him but I wouldn’t be surprised if he’s got a room there.”

“I think the safest thing to do is to sneak Ms Donaldson out and get her set up in another hotel,” Lestrade suggested.

“Probably, but that means we might lose track of Wright altogether.”

“Would it make much difference since we have no idea where he is right now?” the silver haired DI asked wryly.

Sherlock sighed. “I guess not.” He leaned his head up against the car window and watched the traffic go by. This case was turning out to be much less interesting than he’d thought it would be, and his mind wasn’t fully occupied. Without a complete distraction, it wandered back to thoughts of his brother. He wondered if Mycroft was missing him as much as he was missing his brother?

**Ten Minutes Earlier**

They’d left Kitty to pack a bag and were waiting in the alley to the side of the hotel, standing next to Greg’s car. John was on the phone to Mrs Hudson, asking if she could watch Rosie for another thirty minutes. Lestrade was having a cigarette, glaring at Sherlock and daring the detective to make a comment about him not being able to quit. Sherlock had just finished checking his phone, feeling down when he found no new messages. He had slipped it back into his pocket when Justin Wright walked around the corner.

All four men froze for a moment, and then Wright spun on his heel and took off. Sherlock launched after him, Lestrade right behind him, with John bringing up the rear. They followed him down tiny laneways and twisting back alleys, his knowledge of the area’s little known streets almost as good as Sherlock’s. As they ran, the detective’s mind plotted the most likely route they were taking and then immediately looked for a way to head him off. It was risky, but if they split up, they would possibly intercept him before they lost him to the more crowded streets, but if he didn’t follow that path, they would still have someone on his tail.

“Keep after him,” Sherlock shouted to his two companions. He veered off to the left, and it was testament to how well all three worked together that they knew exactly what he meant to do and continued on without question.

He flew down the narrow streets as fast as his long legs would carry him, his blood pumping through his veins and his breath burning in his chest. His mind checked and rechecked his mental maps, making sure he hadn’t missed anything, but he was certain he knew which way Wright was heading.

He reached the end of an alley and threw himself at the chain link fence, climbing up and over, knowing it would have been the reason their target hadn’t come this way. He hurried down a narrow lane and around a corner, and if he was right, any second now he should see...yes! Wright skidded around a wall, his eyes widening and a curse on his lips as he saw the way forward was blocked. He
turned and darted down a different street and Sherlock ran after him. Lestrade and John weren’t far
behind, but both Wright and Sherlock were much taller than them and their longer gait put distance
between them.

Sherlock lost sight of Wright momentarily as he rounded another bend but when he came back in
line of sight, it was to see him boxed in by a dead end. He slowed and was about to tell him to give
himself up when he saw the gun.

Then there was pain, and shock, and the fear that he’d probably die before he got to see his brother.
And then his world went dark.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delay in posting - I flew to Sydney yesterday and today I'm getting on a cruise ship to go to the South Pacific! Weeeeeee! I'm going to try and continue to post each day that I'm away but if I don't, it's because I'm absolutely smashed and causing a ruckus ;-)
could so easily lose what he thought he’d never get the chance to have. If Sherlock didn’t survive, he
wasn’t sure how he would go on. His little brother was a star, and he was orbiting around him,
captured forever by the pull of his gravity. If his star died, then he’d be untethered, spinning
aimlessly out of control in the universe.

Anthea was waiting for him as promised and she gave him a genuine smile when she saw him. “He
got out of surgery two hours ago. He’s stable and resting comfortably. The bullet missed his lung so
it’s mostly just damage to his shoulder.”

He felt like kissing her, but knew it would give away too much of his secret. “Thank God,” he
uttered. They got in the car and he checked his phone as they drove to the hospital. His brain had
kick started back into action as the relief had washed over him and he knew that he’d have to involve
Mark if they wanted to maintain their ruse. He emailed some instructions to have him recalled from
the job he was currently on in the north of the county, not even bothering to feel guilty about mixing
business with personal matters. He’d sacrificed so much for this country that they owed him this
much. He then sent the man a text.

*Sherlock has been injured and is in hospital. Your presence will be required while he’s recovering.*
*I’ll brief you once you’re back in London - MH*

*No problems. Is he alright? - Mark*

*On my way to the hospital now so don’t have all the details but they tell me he’s stable - MH*

*Good to hear. I’ll speak to you soon no doubt - Mark*

They arrived at the hospital and he tried to pace himself as he made his way up to the room Sherlock
was in. All he wanted to do was run down the hallways, shoving people out the way so he could get
to his bedside quicker, but he knew he had to maintain the appearance of being just a brother - a
concerned brother, but just a brother nonetheless.

John was already in the room, as he’d expected, but so was Detective Inspector Lestrade. They
looked exhausted as they spoke quietly together, sitting next to the bed in which his brother slept.
Mycroft felt his eye twitch as he saw that John was holding Sherlock’s limp hand in his.

“Mycroft,” Lestrade greeted him. “I’m glad you got here so quickly.”

He shook the DI’s hand, returning his smile. He’d always liked and respected the detective, and
would be forever grateful for the empathy and compassion he’d shown to his little brother. “What
happened?” He moved to the opposite side of the bed as Lestrade filled him in, and took the risk of
smoothing the dark curls back from the pale face. “At least you apprehended the man responsible,”
he said after the tale. “I assume he’ll be prosecuted to the full extent of the law?”

Lestrade raised an eyebrow. “Would you expect anything less?”

He sighed and sat down in one of the uncomfortable chairs that always seemed to occupy hospital
rooms. “Of course not. Apologies, Detective Inspector.”

“It’s all good,” he said, waving off the apology. “It’s natural that you wouldn’t be thinking all that
clearly.”

“One would think I’d be used to it by now,” he replied softly, taking hold of Sherlock’s hand. “No
matter how many times I’ve been here, it never does get any easier.”

Lestrade gave him a sympathetic smile.
John, who had been quiet up until this point, cleared his throat. “Have you let Mark know? I don’t have a way of contacting him.”

He nodded. “I spoke to him on the way from the airport. He’s on his way back to London as we speak.”

“Mark?” Lestrade asked.

“Sherlock’s boyfriend,” John told him in a rather flat voice.

“Oh? I didn’t know he was seeing anyone.” A grin replaced the surprised look on the policeman’s handsome face. “Good for him! Our little Sherlock is all grown up!”

Mycroft hid his own smile at the scowl that flashed over John’s face. It was clear that although he may have accepted that his best friend was seeing someone, he still wasn’t happy about it.

Sherlock’s eyes fluttered and they opened slowly. “Mycie?” he asked, his voice hoarse.

“I’m here, Sherlock. So are John and Gregory,” he added, hopeful his brother wouldn’t say anything inappropriate to give their relationship away.

“Tho...thought you were in Egypt,” he croaked.

Mycroft picked up the glass of water from the table and held it up so his brother could take sips from the straw. “I was.”

He finished drinking and relaxed back against the pillows. “You came back?”

He gave a little shake of his head. “Of course I did. You were shot, brother mine. That’s enough to justify an early flight home.”

His brother gave him a smile and squeezed the hand that was holding his. He looked over at the other occupants in the room. “Did you get him?”

“Yeah, we got him,” Lestrade said.

“I tackled him when he tried to get away,” John said, trying to sound nonchalant. “Made sure he hit the ground extra hard.”

“Thank you, John. That was very kind of you.”

The doctor grinned and Mycroft noted he’d still not let go of his brother’s other hand. “Mark will be here as soon as he can,” he told Sherlock. “I’m sure you’ll feel much better once he’s here to comfort you.”

It was only because he knew his brother so well that he recognised the look of exasperation on his face. “You shouldn’t have bothered him,” he said. “I would have been fine until he’d concluded his business.”

“See, this is what I was talking about, Sherlock,” John told him. “Normal people do things like rush back when loved ones are hurt.”

“I’m not dying! Besides, what can he do but sit here and waste his time?”

“I’m sure he won’t consider it a waste of time, brother,” Mycroft tried to reassure him.
A nurse came into the room and gave them all a no-nonsense look. “I’m sorry gentleman but it’s almost 3am and it’s not appropriate for so many of you to be here. One of you can stay but the others will have to come back tomorrow during regular visiting hours. I’ll be back in ten minutes to do some obs and I want to see this room cleared.”

Lestrade gave Sherlock’s arm a squeeze. “I’ll pop by and see how you’re doing tomorrow,” he said, shrugging his coat on. He clapped John on the shoulder and nodded towards Mycroft and then he was gone.

Mycroft noticed that John had wriggled down into his chair, getting comfortable and he realised that on the surface, the doctor was the obvious choice to remain behind. Not wanting to cause a fuss and raise questions, he rose from the chair to go.

Sherlock’s hand clamped painfully on his and his eyes were panicked. “Don’t go!” he blurted. “Please, Mycie.”

John’s eyes widened in surprise at this and he threw the politician an incredulous look. “I think John wants to stay with you,” he told his brother gently.

Sherlock glanced over at John dismissively. “I’d feel more comfortable if it was you who stayed.”

“Oh, for crying out loud!” John blurted. “I’m not going to take advantage of your weakened state and force myself on you for Christ’s sake!”

“It has nothing to do with that, John,” Sherlock told him. “I appreciate you wanting to stay, but I have some things I have to discuss with Mycroft and now is just as good a time as any. Besides, you have Rosie to think about.”

Not at all placated by this, John huffed and got to his feet, finally letting go of his hand. “Okay, fine. It’s all fine. I’ll see you in the morning then.” He walked out without saying goodbye to Mycroft.

“That was unwise, brother mine,” Mycroft said softly once they were alone.

Sherlock shrugged, wincing as the movement pulled on his bandages. “I don’t care. I’m exhausted and hurting and I want you.”

He reached over and gently rubbed his thumb across his cheek. “You’ll always have me.”

Sherlock reached up and placed his hand over his. “I’m sorry if I scared you.”

He leaned over and pressed a soft kiss to dry lips. “It doesn’t matter - you’re alive and will be better soon enough.”

They heard the soft scuffing of shoes on linoleum outside the room and they broke apart just before the nurse came through the door. She was much more cheerful once she’d seen her instructions had been followed, and after taking Sherlock’s observations, she returned with a blanket for Mycroft. He smiled his thanks and wrapped it around his shoulders, noticing that Sherlock had drifted off to sleep. He kissed his cheek, took hold of his hand, and leaned his head on the side of the bed, hoping to catch a few hours of sleep.
Chapter 20

Sherlock woke with a start, crying out as pain shot through his shoulder. He looked around wildly, not recognising the room he was in, his memory of how he got here hazy. His heart was racing and the tattered fragments of a nightmare fluttered in his mind. He took deep breaths, trying to calm down, and glanced over to where Mycroft was just stirring from sleep.

“Sherlock?” he asked, groggily. He sat up stiffly and massaged at his neck. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. I’m okay.” He regretted the lie instantly, as his brother’s mind latched onto the falsehood.

“Tell me,” he demanded, his eyes narrowing.

Sherlock sighed. “Really, it was just a nightmare. Nothing to be concerned about.”

“I beg to differ. You don’t habitually suffer from nightmares. In fact, the only time I’ve ever known you to have them was in the months following your return from Serbia.” He sat up straighter and took hold of a slender hand. “What was it about?”

“I’m not sure. I can’t quite remember.” He rubbed at his eyes with his free hand. “It felt similar to those ones though.” He hated admitting it out loud.

“Oh, love, I’m sorry. I know how much they haunted you.”

He gave his brother a shy smile. “Say that again.”

“Say what again?”

“Love. You don’t normally do pet names, but I liked the sound of that.”

The older man’s eyes were soft as he leaned forward and kissed him gently. “Anything for you, love.”

They shared several more kisses, enjoying the time they had alone, knowing it wouldn’t last. John and Lestrade would surely be back soon, and Mycroft needed to meet with Mark and brief him on the situation. Once he was on the scene, the chances of them getting any time alone would be slim, but it was a sacrifice they had to make to ensure the continuation of their cover.

“I missed you so much while you were away,” Sherlock admitted after they broke apart.

“And I you.” Mycroft gave him a wry smile. “It’s a disconcerting feeling, is it not? We’ve both been so used to not needing anyone for most of our lives that it’s hard to become accustomed to.”

“It felt like part of me was missing. I know it sounds like a cliche, but I only felt whole again the moment you walked into this room.” Sherlock grimaced at his own sentiment.

He chuckled. “Honestly, I hardly recognise us anymore.” He raised Sherlock’s hand and kissed his knuckles. “Regrets?”

“God, no. I can live with being a sappy bastard, I can’t live without you.”

“Luckily for you, you don’t have to.” They heard the squeak of the breakfast trolley down the hall and knew their time alone was up. “Although I should probably get to work.”
Sherlock tried to lean close to kiss him, and gasped as pain shot through him. “Ow!”

“Lay back, for goodness sake! You’re supposed to be resting. You’re not to move a muscle today, and don’t think I won’t be able to tell when I come back tonight.” He stood and stooped down to give him a final kiss.

“All I cared about in that sentence was that you’re coming back tonight.”

“Of course I am. I might have to stand there and pretend that I’m not itching to cover you in kisses - which is a form of torture in its own right - but I will be here.”

“Thank you,” Sherlock murmured, more grateful than he could express.

The door swung open and the patient services attendant came into the room, smiling brightly at the younger man. “Feeling up for some breakfast today?”

Sherlock nodded absently as he watched his brother leave the room. He felt his stomach twist, and then just felt hollow. If he wasn’t a scientific man, he’d swear part of himself had detached and had left with Mycroft.

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Lestrade had just left and John was out getting coffee when Mark arrived. He grinned as he poked his head around the door, his hazel eyes twinkling. “You can calm down now that your dashing bloke has arrived to tend lovingly to your wounds. I know you must have felt lost, adrift at sea without me here, but rejoice, for I have arrived!”

Sherlock rolled his eyes but couldn’t help laughing as the young agent came to sit next to the bed. When John had heard the younger man was coming, he’d grown more and more grumpy as his visit progressed. It seemed they were almost back to square one as all he’d done was sulk all morning about Sherlock dating someone, and the fact that he’d chosen Mycroft over him the night before. It was getting tiresome, so Mark’s cheerfulness was a welcome relief. “I told Mycroft he shouldn’t have called you back.”

He shrugged. “I don’t mind. It was a pretty boring mission so I’d much rather be here keeping you company. The conversation is better and there’s little chance of anyone shooting at me here.”

“I thought you said it was boring? From personal experience I can attest that getting shot at isn’t boring.”

Mark laughed. “The surveillance and the waiting was boring. The shooting at bit might have come later. Speaking of, who did you piss off?”

“What makes you think I pissed anyone off?” Sherlock asked, indignant.

“Well, for one, someone shot you. Two - see number one.”

“Remind me again why we’re ‘dating’?”

“You like my arse.” he quipped with a wink.

“Honestly, I think I’ll have to have words with Mycroft about his poor decision making abilities. He could have chosen much better.”

“What’s he fucked up this time?” John asked, interrupting their banter as he came into the room.
Sherlock glared at him. “As usual, John, you barge in on the tail end of a conversation and have no idea of the context.”

“Then enlighten me,” he said, his eyes narrowing dangerously.

“Sher is just worried that I’ll get in trouble with my bosses for coming home early,” Mark lied. He cupped the detective’s cheek and gave him a fond smile. “He’s very thoughtful like that.”

“Thoughtful?” John barked out a laugh. “Are we talking about the same man?”

His hand dropped and clasped Sherlock’s in his. “I find him to be very considerate, but I suppose our circumstances are a bit different so it’s obvious I’d see him differently to you.”

It was hard to not grin at the chagrined expression on his best friend’s face, but Sherlock’s patience with the man was wearing thin. He was due for another dose of pain meds, he was going stir crazy being confined to a hospital bed, and as enjoyable as he found Mark’s company, he wasn’t the man he wanted sitting with him.

“Right, well since it appears I’m not needed here, I’ll be off,” he said in clipped tones.

“No need to leave on my behalf,” Mark told him. “I’m sure Sher enjoys having you here.”

John gave a cold smile, just a thin pressing together of his lips. “I really do have things to do. I’ll come see you tomorrow, Sherlock. If you want.”

“Of course I want you to come visit,” he told him. “Any chance you could bring Rosie? I miss seeing her.”

The smile John gave to that was genuine. “Of course I’ll bring her. She misses her Uncle Sherlock too.”

“Thank you, John.”

The doctor left and Mark immediately let go of his hand. “So, has your real bloke managed to come for a visit? Or would that be too suspicious?”

Sherlock sighed. He and Mycroft had spoken briefly about what to tell Mark and Elliott if they asked about their real partners but the laying of one lie on top of another was getting exhausting.

“Unfortunately he can’t be here without raising red flags. We keep in touch via text and I’m sure I’ll get to see him again once I’m out.”

“That must be tough. Do you reckon you’ll ever get to let the world know? Or will you always have to keep it hidden?”

The pain that cut through his chest was real and he was left breathless. He shook his head and a single tear rolled from his eye. “Who he is...who I am, no, we can never allow it to be known. As much as I love him, the uproar it would cause...the people it would hurt..., no. No one can ever know.”

Mark winced in sympathy. “Ouch. Forbidden love. That sounds like some real life Romeo and Juliette stuff. I’m really sorry to hear that.”

He shrugged, trying to act like he had accepted it, when all he really wanted to do was to take Mycroft and run far away, where no one knew them and they could just be together. “An apt description. But it is what it is,” he quoted what seemed to be his new motto.
“Doesn’t make it hurt any less though I bet.”

“No, no it doesn’t.”

“So what’s the story with John?” The young agent gave him a knowing look. “Things a bit awkward with you two?”

He sighed, and leaned his head back against the pillow. Strangely enough, he didn't seem to mind talking about his personal life with Mark. Maybe it was because he was a distanced outsider who didn’t have any preconceived notions about the dynamics? Or maybe it was because he was a nice bloke who seemed to genuinely care? He didn’t stop to analyse the reasons behind it, just found himself talking more about himself and his situation than he had in a long time. “People have always assumed we were together. Since the first day we met, there have been comments and knowing looks. For some reason, you can’t be friends with your flatmate these days without people assuming you’re in a sexual relationship with each other. But I’ve never been attracted to him. Physically I can see what the appeal would be for some people, but he’s too...I want to use the word unstable, for me. I’ve been on the receiving end of his fists on more than one occasion when he’s been displeased with me and that’s been solely in a friendship capacity.” He noted how Mark’s eyes narrowed at this information. “Apart from the fact I don’t find him appealing in that way, even if I suddenly found him desirable...let’s just say I’m not an easy person to get on with. Eventually I would say or do something that would cause him to lose his temper and he’d lash out at me. As challenging as the relationship I’m currently in is, that’s because of our circumstances. My partner would do anything for me. Has already done so much. He’d sooner cut off his own hand than raise it to me in anger.”

“But John has obviously expressed an interest in you? He wants something more with you and you’ve declined him.”

He nodded. “He didn’t believe me when I told him I was seeing someone. Of course, I couldn’t tell him who...which is why we resorted to this whole situation.” He waved a hand around vaguely.

“You know most people would have just accepted that you weren’t interested, right?”

“I know.” He sighed again, and wondered when the nurse would be by with his pain meds. His shoulder was starting to hurt terribly. “Eventually I’ll have to tell my parents, so it works well enough that we have this in place now. But I can’t deny I was disappointed in John. I thought he put more stock in our friendship, but he seems to care more about what’s in it for him. When he doesn’t get his own way, it seems to go downhill very fast.”

“Tell me again why you’re even friends with him?”

“To be fair to him, my bitterness about his behaviour recently is leading me to colour him in an unfavourable light. He has many good qualities, and he has been there for me when no one except for my brother has been. He was loyal very quickly. I shouldn’t be so harsh.”

Mark pulled a face. “Good qualities or not, there’s no excuse for violence.” He reached out and clasped his forearm. “I know we hardly know each other, but please, just give this some thought. I’m not saying you should move out or ditch him entirely, but I really think you need to make it clear to him that you won’t accept that kind of behaviour anymore. You’re worth more than that, Sherlock.” He gave him a small smile. “You can always call me if you need help - if a situation gets out of control. Although I guess you don’t really need me since you have your own weapon of mass destruction.”

“Oh?”
He grinned. “Your brother. It’s clear as day that Mycroft would kill anyone who hurt you, and they’d never find the body.”
Once his medication had been topped up, Sherlock and Mark moved on to discussions of a less serious nature. They discovered they had a shared passion for music, the agent saying he played the guitar, drums, and (‘If you ever tell anyone this I promise I will make you suffer’) the lute. The detective told him about his lifetime love of the violin (‘It allows me to express myself in ways I would never do through speech’) and surprised him with the knowledge that Mycroft was a talented pianist (‘I would have thought the cello’. ‘Have you seen how long his fingers are? He was born to play a piano’).

They shared who they had their first kiss with (‘Her name was Jill and she lived next door. Was the sweetest girl I knew, even though she was constantly sneezing. I got a face full of snot right afterwards’. ‘Her name was Irene and she was a blackmailing dominatrix who was working with Moriarty.’)

They spoke about who their favourite teachers were in school (‘Mr Chambers was one of those rare people who gave a crap about everyone, whilst still being the toughest mother fucker I’ve ever met’. ‘Up until he left for university, Mycroft was the best teacher I had. None of the ones at school could keep up with me, so he taught me everything, and most importantly, how to calm my mind when it just won’t stop’)

It was a vastly enjoyable afternoon, and Sherlock found himself having an odd thought. I feel like I could properly be friends with him. John had been the exception to the rule, but maybe the rule was beginning to evolve? Or disappear entirely? Maybe his definition of friendship needed to change? Because really, Lestrade, Mrs Hudson, and Molly would consider themselves his friends. Did he think of them the same way? He thought about it and then came to the decision that no, they weren’t friends. They were family. But Mark could definitely be a friend. They had much in common, he was intelligent, and funny, and respected Sherlock as a person. It would be something to ponder.

Despite how much he’d enjoyed their conversation, it was only when Mycroft walked in that he truly relaxed. He felt his whole body melt back as all the tension left him, and he couldn’t help the genuine smile that broke across his face. “Mycroft,” he greeted him.

“Hello, brother mine. Mark. How are we both?”

“We’ve had a smashing day,” the young agent told him.

“It’s been most entertaining,” Sherlock confirmed.

“I’m glad to hear that,” he said, coming to sit on the other side of the bed. “And how are you feeling?” he asked Sherlock, reaching up and placing a gentle finger on the dressing wrapped around his chest and shoulder.

“I’m going crazy being in this damn bed, but other than that, I’m fine. The pain is very manageable.”

“Excellent news. I spoke to your doctor on my way in and he seems to think you’ll only require another three days before you can go home.”

The younger brother scowled. “Three days? I’ll be fine to go home tomorrow, Mycie!”

He raised an eyebrow in amusement. “Is that so? Indulge me then, little brother. Up you get; if you’re truly well enough to go home tomorrow then you should have no trouble at all going for a leisurely stroll to the end of the hallway and back.”
His scowl turned to a glare and they began a battle of the wills via way of a staring contest, since both were perfectly aware of his inability to complete the task. Sherlock was eventually forced to concede, knowing that Mycroft would not allow him to leave before he felt he was well enough. To ignore him in this would risk his ire and he may resort to withholding his affections in order to earn his cooperation. As much as he wished to be out of hospital, the very last thing he wanted was to force Mycroft to take such drastic measures, and knowing his brother as well as he did, he was under no illusions that the older man would stoop so low. Considering they got so few opportunities to be intimate, he wouldn’t risk losing those.

Mycroft gave a small smile, but it wasn’t triumphant as may have been expected, but was simply to express he was happy that Sherlock would allow himself to get the proper care. He found he couldn’t be upset with his brother’s victory since he enjoyed seeing his brother happy. It was almost infuriating how much his feelings had changed over the last week. Once upon a time he would have lashed out with a cruel, cutting remark to show his displeasure. Now, he just longed to reach out and touch, to assure Mycroft that he would take care of himself so he would stop worrying.

“I guess your arrival signals that it’s shift change,” Mark said brightly, getting to his feet.

The two siblings were brought back down to reality, both having almost forgotten they weren’t alone. Mycroft nodded his thanks. “I appreciate your being here, Mark. Rest assured that I’ve had you officially assigned to one of my personal projects so you won’t be disadvantaged by not being at work.”

“Misappropriation of government resources? My, my, you’re breaking all the rules, brother,” Sherlock quipped.

“The sheer amount of sweat, blood, tears, and time Her Majesty has gotten from me - willingly I might add - that has been beyond the scope of my job description is incalculable. I will lose no sleep over this, Sherlock.”

“Don’t worry, they won’t hear about it from me,” the young agent said with a wink. “Sherlock, it’s been a pleasure. I’ll see you in the morning.” He gave them one last blinding smile and then he was gone.

“Are you staying the whole night?” Sherlock asked, almost shyly.

“Of course. I brought some paperwork with me so I don’t fall too far behind at work, and I’ve had Anthea collect several suits to keep at the office so I can shower and change there.” He leaned down and gave him a kiss, which quickly deepened as they took advantage of being alone. Sherlock was making small whimpering noises, and his hand clutched at Mycroft’s shirt to hold him close. Mycroft’s pants started to get uncomfortably tight, and he reluctantly pulled back. “If we keep that up, we’re going to cause a scandal,” he gasped.

“Don’t care, want you,” the younger man said, pawing at the bulge in his trousers.

“Sherlock! Stop that, please. Besides the fact we’re in a semi-public place, you have just been shot. Now is not the time for intimacy.”

His cupid’s bow formed into a perfect pout. “I’m the injured one - I should get whatever I want!”

“You’re a petulant brat who is used to getting his own way and needs to learn that there’s a time and a place for everything.”

“Gah! You’re so unreasonable at times,” he said with a glare.
“And you’re infuriating most of the time,” Mycroft replied with an answering glare.

The younger man huffed and leaned back against the pillows, but there was the hint of a smile on his lips. He couldn’t express just how glad he was that their blossoming romantic relationship hadn’t completely halted their bickering sibling rivalry. Softened it, yes, but it was still there and that was a source of comfort to him.

He fell asleep several hours later and almost instantly the nightmares started. He was running, constantly running, but they were always closing in on him. And then there was darkness and pain and pain and darkness. Always the same, a hidden foe, hurting him. He was alone with just the pain for company, bleakness falling over him like a heavy blanket, suffocating him. Pain and darkness, darkness and pain.

But then there was a brief glimpse of light and he tried desperately to reach for it. A voice in the distance, calling him. He knew that voice, recalled it from a place deep inside him. It meant warmth and love and safety and he fought to get to it, fought to escape the bonds of pain and darkness.

He gasped as he came awake and Mycroft was there on the bed, cradling him in his arms, whispering into his hair. A nurse was watching them, a worried frown on her face as she made a note of his heart rate from the monitor. He recognised her as the woman who had kicked out John and Lestrade the night before. Once she saw he was fully awake, she moved forward to take some more observations. “Are these nightmares common?” she asked Mycroft quietly.

Sherlock pressed his face against his brother’s chest as he heard him reply. “Not for a long time, but he had one last night as well.”

“He seems to be calming down at least,” she noted approvingly. “It was a good thing you were here.” She had wrapped a cuff around his upper arm and it inflated almost painfully. “His blood pressure is much higher than normal so I’ll keep a close eye on it, but it’s a common side effect from nightmares and terrors.”

“Thank you,” Mycroft murmured.

“Do you think you’ll be able to get back to sleep?” she asked.

“I doubt it now. I’ll watch over my brother so I can wake him if he starts to have another.”

“I’ll bring you in some coffee then.”

“That’s very kind of you.”

He heard the soft squeaking as the nurse left, and then felt Mycroft’s lips press against his forehead. “Rest now, Sherlock. I’m here.”

The next several days followed a similar pattern. Mycroft would arrive in the late afternoon and stay overnight. He would do paperwork and work on his laptop, and Sherlock would read or watch some of the crap television they offered. Then they would simply talk, discussing a range of topics that most people couldn’t keep up with. They both enjoyed these sessions greatly, and Sherlock would fall asleep with a smile on his lips, and Mycroft would try to get as comfortable as possible in the visitor chair. The little sleep he managed would be interrupted by a nightmare and he would wake Sherlock and then hold him until he fell back to sleep. In the morning, he would kiss his brother goodbye and then head to work to shower and change, and then make sure the government ticked along as it always did.
Mark would arrive in the morning and would stay for the whole day. John would also come at some point during the day, depending on when he had shifts at the clinic. Unless he was coming straight from work, he would bring Rosie with him. His moods were as unpredictable as always and Sherlock could never guess if he’d come in happy to see Mark there, or emanating displeasure and venom.

It was exhausting for Sherlock and he knew he would have to follow Mark’s advice and have a conversation about it, but it wasn’t something he could face right now. At least his faux partner didn’t step in and initiate an ad hoc counselling session. He could see the disapproval writ large on his face whenever John was snarky, but he held his tongue and continued to be pleasant for which Sherlock was grateful. He didn’t have the energy to get into any lengthy and heated discussions right now.

On the fourth day he was finally allowed to go home. John had been in a cheerful mood and had advised he would be getting the flat ready for his patient so he wouldn’t be in to visit that morning. He had a few days off from the clinic so he would be able to provide around the clock care for his flatmate. Sherlock was relieved, since Doctor Watson was always much more agreeable that John Watson and less likely to lose his temper.

Mark helped him pack up the few belongings that various people had brought along for him, and then Mycroft arrived with a car. He felt like kissing his brother right then and there, witnesses be damned he was so happy to be getting out of there.

“Brother,” Mycroft greeted him.

“Mycroft,” he said breathily. “Take me home.”
The car pulled up at Baker Street and Mycroft waved Mark away, preferring to be the one to support his brother as they got him up the stairs. Sherlock needed to stop halfway up to catch his breath. “Why does it seem so much harder than the last time I was shot?” he gasped.

“Perhaps because there was a last time,” Mycroft told him. “The human body isn’t designed to be damaged so often.”

“Maybe you should listen to your brother and start taking a bit more care of yourself?” Mark suggested from two steps below.

Sherlock didn’t waste breath on a scathing remark for either of them, just gritted his teeth and continued to climb up to 221B.

“Welcome home,” John greeted him as he was helped onto the couch by Mycroft.

Once he was settled, he held out an arm in a silent request, and John happily deposited the baby on his lap. He sighed and kissed the top of her head. “It is good to be home,” he murmured. Mycroft hovered over him, making sure Rosie wasn’t pressing too hard against his injuries. Sherlock waved him away. “Stop being such a mother hen. I’m perfectly fine.”

“You are most definitely not perfectly fine, Sherlock.”

“Mark!” the younger brother whined. “Make him stop!”

The young agent laughed. “Oh no, I’m not getting in the middle of this.”

“Good idea,” John told him cheerfully. “They fight more than I’ve ever known any siblings to fight. It’s pointless to try and stop them.” He cocked his head towards the kitchen. “Fancy a cuppa?”

“Sure, that would be great.”

“Urgh, my back is itchy,” Sherlock grumbled, wiggling on the couch and causing the baby to laugh. “Mycroft, scratch my back,” he demanded, leaning forward. “Just above the bandage.”

With a put upon sigh, the older man reached around and scratched gently at the area. “I thought I’d be relieved of this kind of duty once you got an inamorato of your own.” He looked pointedly at Mark, a subtle reminder of their ruse.

“Mark has much more important things to do for me,” Sherlock said dismissively.

“Oh? Such as?”

“Getting me tea.”

Mark rolled his eyes. “Pretty sure John is already making you a cup.”

John came into the lounge, carrying some mugs. “Yep, got it right here.”

“Fine, then he’s busy standing there looking all sexy for me to admire,” Sherlock said, leering at the young agent.

Mark winked. “That I can do.”
The detective turned to look at his brother. “I didn’t ask to be tickled, Mycroft. Scratch harder!” he growled.

“You are such an insufferable git,” the politician told him, but increased the pressure nonetheless.

“It’s one of my more redeeming qualities.”

“I beg to differ.”

They continued to snipe at each other as evening fell, much to the amusement of Mark and John. Eventually, the young agent stood and leaned down to give Sherlock a kiss. “I’d better get going and do some work.”

“How have you been managing that?” John asked. “You’ve spent the past four days at the hospital.”

“I can do most of it from home and the deadlines are pretty flexible so I can work at night. Once I explained the situation, my bosses were happy to let me work my own hours for the time being.”

“Nice.”

“Yeah, it’s been handy. Okay, well good to see you again John, and you Mycroft. Sher, I’ll come by again tomorrow.”

“See you then. Thanks, for everything,” the detective told him.

Once he’d left, John ordered in a takeaway from Angelo’s. Sherlock picked at his food, only eating when Mycroft encouraged him to take a little bit more. They cleared away the few dishes and John went upstairs to put Rosie to bed.

“You know I can’t stay tonight,” Mycroft said quietly once John was out of the room.

The look in Sherlock’s blue-green eyes was one of fear. “Please...Mycie, please stay. I don’t want you to go.”

He couldn’t stand the thought of leaving his brother alone with his demons and his resolve crumbled around him. “Very well, I shall stay the night, but we won’t be able to share a bed. You’ll have to make do with me simply being under the same roof.”

The younger man nodded. “That will have to do.”

“How will we explain it to John?”

“He’ll go to bed soon since he’ll be up during the night for Rosie. We’ll just tell him you fell asleep on the couch.”

“I doubt he’ll buy that.”

“I think it’s most believable. When was the last time you actually had a decent sleep? It’s not been since you got back from Egypt since you’ve spent every night at the hospital. Sleeping for a few hours in a chair isn’t what I’d consider proper rest. You’re dead on your feet, Mycroft. It’s not just believable but inevitable.”

There was no point denying it - Sherlock was right afterall. He nodded, but they couldn’t speak further as the doctor reappeared.

Mycroft made them all tea, and Sherlock took to his armchair, needing the familiarity. They spoke of
inconsequential things for the next hour and then John was yawning and excusing himself upstairs to bed. Knowing it was risky, but choosing to do it anyway, Sherlock got gingerly to his feet and crossed to the couch. He sank down next to his brother and leaned into him. Strong arms wrapped around him and he relaxed into the embrace. They didn't speak, just sat together until they were sure John would have fallen asleep. Mycroft helped Sherlock to his feet and into his bedroom, tucking the blankets in around him as if he were a child. “I don’t want you hurting yourself if have a nightmare and start thrashing about,” his brother explained when he caught sight of the amused look at his actions.

“Take the spare blanket from the bottom of my bed,” Sherlock murmured, already drowsy.

Mycroft smoothed back the curls from his face and pressed a kiss to his lips. “Sleep well, little brother.”

There was only even breathing in reply, Sherlock already having fallen asleep. The older man collected the blanket and made his way back to the living room, leaving the bedroom door open. The couch was more comfortable than it looked and it was mere moments before he fell into a much needed slumber.

The sound of the microwave beeping woke him some hours later and he rolled over to see into the kitchen. John was preparing a bottle and startled at the movement. “Christ, Mycroft! I didn’t know you were there.”

“Sorry,” he said, rubbing at his eyes. “I must have fallen asleep.”

“Yeah, well, you definitely needed it. Sorry I woke you.”

“Think nothing of it. I apologise for giving you a fright.”

“Go back to sleep. This should see Rosie through till morning so hopefully you won’t get disturbed again.”

John switched the light off behind him and Mycroft shuffled about, getting comfortable once more. He buried his face into the blanket, smelling a faint trace of his brother’s scent. It wasn’t long before he had fallen back to sleep.

He wasn’t sure how much time had passed when a scream woke him. He jumped up, tangling in the blanket, fighting to get free. He hurried towards Sherlock’s bedroom as another scream pierced the silence of the night, and there was the sound of a door opening upstairs as John was roused as well. Not bothering with the light, he ran to the bed and pulled Sherlock close to him. “Sherlock, wake up, it’s just a dream. You’re safe. Come on, wake up.”

The hall light came on and he could see John in the doorway. Thankfully the man didn’t turn on the main light as Sherlock’s eyes fluttered open and he clutched at Mycroft. ”Mycie?”

“Shhh, it’s okay, I’m here. You’re safe, I’ve got you.”

A cry spilled from his mouth and he pressed his face against Mycroft’s chest as he sobbed loudly. Mycroft rocked backwards and forwards, murmuring comfort and assurances that he was safe. John watched on from his place just inside the door, worry and curiosity on his face but he didn’t speak. After several long minutes, Sherlock’s sobs petered out and his eyes began to droop. “That’s it, go back to sleep, brother mine. It was just a dream, you’re safe.”

“Please don’t leave me,” he begged, waking a little more and giving Mycroft a pleading look.
“It’s okay, I’ll stay. I’ve got you, Sherlock.” He arranged himself with his back against the headboard and Sherlock curled up against him, drifting off to sleep almost immediately.

“What was that about?” John asked quietly once he was sure the detective wouldn’t wake.

Mycroft sighed and pressed a kiss to the top of his brother’s head. “How much did Sherlock tell you about the time he was ‘dead’?”

“Practically nothing. Just that he was dismantling Moriarty’s operation and it took his across the globe.”

“Did he say anything about where he was when I found him?” The doctor shook his head, but didn’t speak. “He was in Serbia and had been captured by the group that was harbouring the last remnants of Moriarty’s web. When I finally worked my way to where they were holding him, they’d had him for over a week. The things they did to him, John...I’m sure you’ve seen the scars. With your military background and medical knowledge, I’m sure you would have a better idea than most of what would have been inflicted on him to cause such scarring.” He looked down at his brother and gave a small smile at the almost angelic appearance of the sleeping man. “The nightmares started the first night after his rescue and continued on for months. You weren’t here and he didn’t have anyone else, so as much as it pained him, he came to me. He may have been technically living here, but he spent almost every night that he chose to sleep at my house. He would put off sleeping as long as he could, even longer than he does when he has a case, but the exhaustion would become too much. Some nights just knowing I was there was enough, but most of the time he would crawl into my bed like he did as a child. It seemed to be the only way he could evade the nightmares.”

“I didn’t know,” John uttered in a pained voice.

“He didn’t want anyone to know. As life here returned to some semblance of normality, the nightmares became less. His stopped sleeping at my house, and eventually the nightmares stopped altogether. Even after Mary shot him, they didn’t return. But then this...he had one that first night in hospital and he’s had them each night since.”

“Does he tell you what they’re about?”

He shook his head. “He’s never offered details and so I’ve never asked. He did tell me that they’re the same dreams though. For some reason, getting shot has stirred up those memories.”

“But why now? Why not the last time?”

“Perhaps because last time he knew the shooter? Perhaps Wright reminded him of one of his torturers? Perhaps it’s just the accumulative effect of all the traumas he’s suffered? I doubt we’ll ever know why.”

“Right, well, I’ll leave you to try and get some sleep.”

“Thank you, John.”

The doctor nodded, and then turned off the hall light, the stairs creaking as he made his way up them. The baby had remained asleep during the incident and for that, Mycroft was grateful. He was still exhausted and would have found it difficult to sleep with the sound of a baby crying. He wriggled down until he was lying flat and pulled Sherlock closer to him. As much as he hated to see his brother suffer, he was grateful for the opportunity to sleep in the same bed without raising suspicions. It had been too long since they’d fallen asleep curled up together and he took comfort in their closeness. The slumber he fell into was deep and dreamless.
Mycroft woke a few minutes before his alarm went off and he reached for his phone with his free hand to silence it before it could wake his brother. He then spent those spare minutes watching Sherlock sleep. Mycroft hadn’t wiggled around like he normally did so they were still in the same position they’d fallen asleep in. Sherlock’s face was pressed against his brother’s chest, and the damp patch on his shirt was evident he’d been drooling a little. Instead of finding it distasteful, the older man just found it endearing. He ran his hands gently through ebony curls, indulging in the feel of their satiny softness beneath his fingertips.

He heard voices from the front of the flat and knew that Mark must have arrived. He shifted, intending to get up but Sherlock stirred and clung to him even tighter. “Not yet,” he pleaded in a sleep filled voice.

“Sherlock, I really need to get up. You have a visitor and I have to get to work.”

“Just another minute.”

Mycroft sighed, and slumped back onto the bed. He didn’t know why he bothered since he always gave in to Sherlock’s demands. His brother nuzzled his face closer against his neck and made a noise that sounded suspiciously like a purr. His arm was numb from being trapped under his brother’s weight all night and he knew it was going to hurt once the blood flow was returned in full force. He was just about to put his foot down and get out of bed when the bedroom door swung open and John waltzed in.

Their saving grace was that John knew Mycroft had held Sherlock after his nightmare. He threw them an odd look as he realised they were still - for want of a better word - cuddling, but otherwise he didn’t say anything as he put a tray of tea down on the table next to the bed. A head poked around the door and Mark gave them a wave. “Morning.”

Sherlock groaned, and burrowed down further into the blankets, and Mycroft was sure his brother would be able to hear how fast his heart was beating from his position next to his chest. His first instinct was to panic but he knew that if they really had nothing to hide, he would not be embarrassed, nor think it a big deal that he had comforted his brother. “Good morning,” Mycroft greeted them both. “Sherlock, really, can you not let me up now? Mark is here and I’m sure you’d much rather act like an octopus with him.”

There was more grumbling but the hold on him was released and he was able to climb out of bed. Gathering what remained of his dignity around him like a shield, he stood tall and straight, his face a calm mask.

“He’s still having nightmares?” Mark asked, aware of them as he and Sherlock had discussed them during his stay at the hospital.

“Yes, and they seem to be getting worse I’m afraid.”

“Maybe he should see someone to discuss them? A counsellor perhaps.”

“I’ve suggested many times, but he’s not seemed too keen. Though he did speak to someone after the death of Mary so maybe he’ll change his mind?”

“I’m right here, you know,” came a gruff voice from beneath the covers.

“Forgive us, brother, but from our vantage point it appears that a badger has taken up residence in your bed. Why don’t you come out and grace your partner with your presence?”
A head of curls poked itself out from under the blankets but he made no attempt to get up. Instead, he flipped the edge of the blanket back, inviting the young agent in. Mycroft hid a smile, overjoyed that Sherlock was showing a genuine attachment to the man.

“Before you bed down for the rest of the day, I need to check your dressings,” John told him.

“I’ll take that as my cue to leave then,” the politician said.

‘Will you be back to stay with me tonight?” Sherlock asked, his head poking all the way out as he looked at his brother, worry in his eyes.

“It might get a bit crowded in the bed if Mark decides to stay,” John said pointedly.

“Unfortunately, I have to work,” Mark told them. “The schedule we have worked out now to keep an eye on Sher seems to be working well though, so as long as it’s not a bother for you, Mycroft?”

A wave of gratitude for the man washed over Mycroft. He had a knack for knowing exactly what to say, just for different reasons. He had been immeasurably helpful in managing Doctor Watson. “I was there for my brother when he was last ravaged by these dreams, and I’m happy to be here for him again.”

“Mummy Holmes must be so proud,” John said with the hint of a sneer.

“I think it’s a good thing that they’re getting along so well,” Mark countered. “I’d have thought you’d be happy about it too since it’s usually your living room they argue in.”

John had no response to that and Mycroft used the silence to make his departure. He collected his briefcase and coat from near the front door and called for the car, advising the driver he would need to stop for coffee along the way.
Once John had checked Sherlock’s bandages, Mark whipped up some breakfast and then set up his laptop on the bed. He handed over a plate of eggs and toast, climbed in next to Sherlock, and popped on a movie for them to watch. Sherlock relaxed, not overly interested in the film but finding the activity soothing anyway. His phone chimed and he smiled as he saw it was a text from Mycroft.

*I find it hard to believe that this country actually functions since the majority of people working in the government don’t appear to have brains - MH*

*That’s probably a good thing right now. You’ve had so little sleep lately that I think you could be officially classified as a zombie - SH*

*I shall certainly starve to death then - MH*

*You’re getting too skinny. I’ll find you some delicious brains to eat to keep you healthy - SH*

*You do realise how disconcerting it is to have you commenting on my weight being too low, don’t you? - MH*

*You do realise I was only ever poking fun and have never honestly thought you were fat, don’t you? - SH*

Several minutes went by without a reply. Then fifteen minutes. Then half an hour.

*Mycroft? - SH*

*I’m a damn fool. You took all those comments to heart, didn’t you? - SH*

*Please answer me - SH*

*I always took what you said as truth because I knew it to be the truth. But I’ve worked hard to lose the excess weight, and will continue until I’ve hit my goal weight - MH*

*You don’t need to lose anymore! You didn’t have to lose any in the first place! - SH*

*Don’t be ridiculous, of course I did. It wasn’t only your jibes that convinced me. Besides, red hair and freckles are not attractive on anyone, let alone when you’re carrying extra pounds. I’m not blessed with your good looks, Sherlock - MH*

Sherlock huffed and rubbed at his face with his hands.

“What’s wrong?” Mark asked, pausing the movie. He’d been aware that the detective wasn’t paying it any attention but didn’t seem to mind.

“How do you convince someone that they’re the most gorgeous thing on the planet when they think the very opposite?”

“Your bloke have a bit of a self esteem issue?”

“More than just a bit. He’s an absolute imbecile! He thinks he needs to lose weight, and he thinks
he’s undesirable, and he seems to think he’s the one who got lucky with me when it’s the other way round!”

“Most people don’t see themselves how others do, Sher. Past experiences, comments people have made, rejection - it all adds up and can paint an entirely different picture in their mind. You just have to keep telling them how you see them, and show them as well.”

“He’s stubborn,” he said, chewing on his thumb nail. “I’m not sure he’ll believe me.”

Mark shrugged. “You can’t force him to see himself through your eyes. All you can do is continue to make the effort and keep your patience. My sister had an eating disorder when she was younger and thought such horrible things about herself. It was really frustrating at times for us when she just would refuse to accept what we were saying. But eventually she accepted the help that was offered and started to think about herself differently. It’s a fine line to walk - balancing between supporting them and not pushing them, but I’m sure you’ll manage.”

He nodded, and fell silent as he contemplated this advice. Mark started the film and settled in to watch, giving Sherlock a friendly pat on the knee to show he was there to help. Eventually he picked up his phone.

_I adore your red hair and freckles. You’re not daft - you know exactly what reaction my body has to you. I prefer the finer things in life and so it only makes sense that I would only fall in love with the sexiest man alive. Seeing as I fell in love with you, that title belongs to you. I don’t care if it takes me till my dying breath, I will do all that I can to make you see yourself the way I see you. And I’ll start as soon as I get you in my bed tonight - SH_

He didn’t get a reply, but he hadn’t expected one. He knew it would take a lot of work on his behalf to try and make Mycroft see just how gorgeous he was, but he was willing to do whatever it took. He felt horrible knowing that he had in some way contributed to his brother feeling bad about himself. Guilt wasn’t an emotion he had much experience with but he was feeling it in troves now. It was a horrible feeling and he didn’t like it much at all - he was actually feeling slightly sick in his stomach.

In an attempt to distract himself from the new emotion, he put his phone aside and concentrated on the movie. It appeared Mark had as bad taste in films as John did if this piece of trash was anything to go by. Falling back into comfortable familiarity, he began to attack the giant plot holes viciously, and soon they were in a fierce debate as Mark valiantly tried to defend one of his favourite pieces of cinema.

There was a brief knock on the door and John entered, carrying a glass of water and several pills. Sherlock felt a brief flicker of annoyance that he’d knocked when he thought he was alone with his partner but hadn’t bothered when it was Mycroft with him. Of course, that just meant their deception was working, but he was still annoyed anyway. “Time for your medicine,” John announced, handing everything over. He glanced at the laptop. “Ooh! I love this film! It’s one of my favourites.”

An evil grin spread across Mark’s lips and he patted the bed. “Is that so? Why don’t you have a seat and watch it with us then? Sher and I have just been discussing the finer points of the story.”

“Need backup?” the doctor asked knowingly.

“It would be helpful, yes. Surely between the two of us we can make him see reason.”

“Doubtful but I’m happy to give it a try.” He made himself comfortable against the headboard.
The day passed in a rather pleasant way. The bed wasn’t made quite wide enough for three to fit comfortably so it was a little squishy, but the upside was Sherlock didn’t have to bother remembering to make the odd affectionate overture to Mark as they were already essentially cuddling. The other two ganged up on Sherlock but he didn’t have a problem debating against the both of them. Once the movie had finished, they had some lunch and spent a couple of hours chatting and playing with the baby, all from the comfort of Sherlock’s bed. They put on another movie in the afternoon and the debates grew long and loud, all three of them enjoying themselves immensely. Sherlock was adamant in his stance, and even if the other two agreed with him, they took the polar opposite view just to irk him. Sherlock had just hit Mark in the face with a pillow to shut him up when Mycroft walked in.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t realise we were hosting a sleepover for teenage girls today,” he quipped, an amused smile on his lips.

“Finally! The voice of reason arrives,” Sherlock declared. “Mycroft, come and tell them just why they’re wrong.”

“If you can’t manage that by yourself, baby brother, I obviously didn’t teach you as well as I thought.”

“I can manage it well enough but they’re both lacking in intelligence so perhaps if we both bombard them with reason it might sink into their neanderthal skulls.”

“Oi!” John protested. “We’re not neanderthals!”

“Yeah, we’re more Cro-Magnon thank you very little!” Mark said with a grin.

“See what I have to put up with?” Sherlock whined.

“Come and join us, Mycroft,” Mark offered.

“I don’t think I’ll fit,” the older man said, looking at the limited space dubiously.

“We can all budge up enough for you to fit your skinny arse on,” the young agent assured him. He wiggled over towards John and then helped Sherlock shuffle over so there was a small amount of room on the edge for him to perch. Looking resigned, Mycroft slipped out of his jacket, undid his waistcoat, and rolled up his sleeves. Once he was adequately prepared he sat, uncertain, on the edge. Sherlock huffed and grabbed his arm, pulling him onto the bed properly and pressing their legs close.

“How was your day?” he asked quietly, as Mark and John began yet another debate, this time about which firearms were being most realistically portrayed during the film.

“Nothing out of the ordinary,” Mycroft replied with a shrug. “How are you feeling?”

“Better now.” He reached down and quickly squeezed his hand, hoping his body would obstruct the view.

The older man gave him a small smile. “That’s good to hear. How are your pain levels?”

“John has been keeping me adequately dosed with the pain medication so it’s been manageable. Considering my two gaolers have refused to allow me out of bed, except for a bathroom break, I haven’t had any opportunity to cause myself further damage.”

“It’s for your own good,” John told him. “You won’t be complaining when you’re up and about sooner because of some tough love now.”
“He has a point, brother dear.”

“You’re supposed to take my side,” the younger Holmes complained.

“Whatever makes you think that?”

“I’m sure it’s written in the sibling rules somewhere. You must have gotten a copy on the day I was born.”

“I fear I must have misplaced that document somewhere along the way.”

“Well it’s not my fault that you’re an absent minded, pathetic attempt for an older brother.”

“Is it also written in the rules that you have to be an annoying, ill tempered brat? Or do you do that especially for me?”

“I make an extra special effort just for you, brother mine.”

“I’m flattered.”

“As you should be.”

“Perhaps I’ll have a merit certificate made up for you to put on your fridge?”

“Make sure it has a gold star on it. I deserve a gold star.”

“I wouldn’t go that far...I was thinking maybe silver, or even just bronze.”

“Another example of your pathetic excuse for good judgement. How on earth have you kept this country running?”

“Blind luck, mostly. And a little bit of fairy dust.”

“So that’s what the tutu in your drawer is for.”

“And you were rummaging in my drawers why?”

“I’m always on the lookout for items to pilfer and also blackmail material.”

“I suppose I did teach you well enough after all.”

There was a snort of laughter from next to Sherlock and both brothers looked over to see Mark giggling. “You two are insane.”

“Reckon you can keep the bickering to minimum while we finish the movie?” John asked.

They fell silent and watched the remainder of the film. Sherlock concentrated enough to continue to make sarcastic remarks, but his heart wasn’t in it. Most of his attention was focused on the points of contact between he and Mycroft. Their legs and arms were pressed close together and he found it was both reassuring and also exasperating. He enjoyed having him so close, and to have even this much contact while they weren’t alone, but at the same time, he wished to do nothing more than snuggle against him and have those gorgeous freckle covered arms wrapped around him. The hours since his last text had only strengthened his resolve to convince Mycroft how attractive he was and that would require a physical demonstration.

The film came to a finish and Mark stretched theatrically, slinging an arm over the back of the bed,
making sure he didn’t actually put any weight on Sherlock’s injured shoulder. “I should probably be going, Sher.”

“Alright, thanks for coming round today.”

Mark leaned in to give him a kiss, and Sherlock felt Mycroft tense up so quickly it was almost a flinch. The agent paused, and then continued to press a quick peck to his cheek. “I’ll see you tomorrow. Night.” John moved up out of the way and he climbed off the bed. “Thanks for the company, John. See you again, Mycroft.”

They both said goodbye, and Mark waved off John’s offer to walk him out. “Do you fancy a wash?” the doctor asked the detective. “I can give you a sponge bath if you want? A shower is probably still out of the question for the next few days until you get your stitches out.”

“Oh...er, well I was thinking...um, well...” he glanced towards Mycroft and John immediately got the message.

The blonde rolled his eyes. “Fine, I get it. Apparently your brother washing your bits is less awkward than me washing your bits. But whatever, it’s entirely up to you.”

“John, I...”

He held up a hand and stopped him. “No, Sherlock, it’s okay, really it is. I won’t lie and say that it doesn’t hurt a little bit, but I don’t want to do anything to make you uncomfortable. I just really hope that one of these days we can get back to how things used to be.”

“To be fair, John, you’ve never washed my ‘bits’ before.”

“You know what I mean.”

“I do, and I’m sure we will. It’ll just take me a little time to process all the new things going on right now.”

“I can deal with that. I’ll go and get a basin and a cloth for Mycroft. That is if you’re actually okay with this?” He leaned over to see around Sherlock to his brother. “I notice His Nibbs didn’t actually ask you if this is something you were prepared to do.”

Mycroft gave him a thin smile. “I’m sure I’ll manage, John. I used to help Mummy bathe him as a child so it’s not like it’s anything I haven’t seen before. He did like playing with the rubber duck, so if you have one of those, it may make it somewhat easier for me.”

“No duck sorry.”

“Ah well, it was worth a shot.”

John ducked out and returned shortly with a basin of warm water, a flannel, soap, and numerous towels. He left, closing the door behind him and they soon heard the T.V. come on.

“You might need to allow him to do some of this soon, elsewise he may start to get suspicious,” the older man warned as he began to undress Sherlock.

“I know, but did you really think I was going to let him wash me when I could have your hands on my wet, naked body instead?”

“Fair point. I probably would have reacted poorly to that.” His deft hands quickly divested Sherlock
of his trousers, pants, and the loose shirt they had fastened over his bandages. Having his lover standing over him, fully dressed made a certain part of his anatomy start to stand up and take notice. Mycroft tutted at him as he dunked the flannel in the basin and wrung it out. “Really, Sherlock. Is this really the time?”

“I can’t help it, Mycie. Do you have any idea of what you do to me? I know you don’t believe me but I find you so incredibly sexy. Everytime you walk in the room my heart starts to beat faster, I get hard, and my body screams at me to hold you and never let go.”

“Aren’t you over exaggerating a little?”

He reached up and grabbed his wrist. “No, not in the least. Look at me, read me, deduce me. Then tell me if you still think I’m exaggerating.” He kept himself as open as possible, allowing his brother to see exactly what he felt. It pained him to see shock, disbelief, and surprise in Mycroft’s eyes when he saw Sherlock was being one hundred percent honest.

“You deserve so much better than me,” the older man said, brokenly. He looked away, unable to meet his eyes.

Sherlock huffed. “If we were playing a karmic game of ‘Who Deserves Better’ it would be you who deserved better than me. You’ve done so much for me, Mycie. You’re always bailing me out of trouble, and putting up with me, and you still love me. You’re the one who should have the very best.”

“You make me sound like some kind of saint, Sherlock. I’m not. Look at what I hid from you, and from Mummy and Father for all those years.”

“You hid the truth about our sister because you were protecting us, not for selfish reasons. You know I don’t approve of everything you do, and your over protective streak could definitely be toned down at times, but you’re a better man that I will ever be.”

“Don’t say that, little brother. Don’t you ever say that! You are passionate, and kind, and perfect and you deserve someone who is all those things and more.”

He reached up with his good arm and cupped his brother’s cheek. “You just described yourself, you idiot. Now will you please stop beating yourself up and get those damn hands on me.” He tilted his head, silently asking for a kiss and Mycroft obliged.

“I love you,” Mycroft whispered as they broke apart.

“Love you too.”

The older man dipped the now cold flannel back into the water and wrung it out. He soaped it up and ran it down the lean planes of Sherlock’s torso, effectively cleaning and worshipping his brother in one action. He worked his way across to each arm and then skipped down to his legs, working quietly, a frown of concentration between his eyes. Sherlock’s erection had wilted during their discussion but took interest again at the touch and by the time Mycroft had reached his crotch, he was as hard as a rock. Mycroft dragged one long finger across the hot, silky flesh, causing his brother to hiss in pleasure. A bead of pre come was glistening at the tip and he swiped it up with his finger and brought it to his lips, sucking it into his mouth.

Sherlock let out a low moan and Mycroft stooped down to kiss him into silence. “Do you want John barging in here?” he asked as his hand returned to the younger man’s erection.

“Sorry, sorry, I just want you so much,” he murmured against his lips.
“Just let me take care of you,” Mycroft told him.

Sherlock shook his head. “Please. I need to touch you. To taste you. To show you how much I want you.”

“Well you can’t have me until you’re healed a little more, love. But I can take care of you in the meantime.”

He whimpered, knowing it was useless to argue, and Mycroft kissed him again. He then pushed Sherlock backwards so he was laying on his back and kissed his way down the soft skin of his stomach. His brother wriggled as his kisses tickled the sensitive skin at his hip, and he moved quickly past the area, no wanting to tease but to give him as much pleasure as possible. Soon those long fingers were tracing teasing patterns over his balls and perineum as he lapped at the dripping slit. Sherlock moaned again, trying to keep the volume down but knowing he wasn’t succeeding. It just felt so good but he hoped if John overheard anything he would assume it was a groan of pain.

Mycroft’s tongue was wet and warm and he swirled it around and around the head and frenulum, ignoring the shaft for now. His brother tried to buck upwards but he held him down by one protruding hipbone, continuing his ministrations only to the very tip. The younger man whimpered and gasped as he grew more and more frantic for more. Mycroft waited until Sherlock was positively writhing beneath him and then he swallowed him down in one go. The younger man actually cried out, clapping a hand over his mouth afterwards. He heard the sudden silence as the television muted and held his breath as Mycroft continued to suck greedily on his cock.

“Sherlock? Are you okay?” John called.

“I’m fine,” he called back, trying to keep his voice steady. “Just jolted my shoulder.”

“Do you need a hand?”

“No! It’s all good, we’re fine!”

“Okay, if you’re sure.”

A long moment passed until the sound of the program John was watching could be heard again and the detective relaxed back. Mycroft pulled off his cock and climbed upwards. “Why can you not keep quiet when you’re told?” he asked. “I’m going to have to keep that mouth of yours occupied so he doesn’t hear you again.” He then captured him in a deep kiss, his tongue slipping inside to twine with the younger man’s. He dropped his hand down and grasped his brother’s shaft, pumping it firmly as he continued to kiss him deeply. Sherlock bucked and moaned beneath him but the sounds were muffled by the mouth over his. Mycroft’s hand sped up and soon his felt his brother tense as he came in hot spurts, coating both hand and stomach. He continued to kiss Sherlock, but it was gentler, less frantic.

“Oh, Mycie,” the younger man murmured against kiss swollen lips.

“Feeling better?” he asked.

“God, yes.” He said, and then yawned widely.

“Good. I think your first full day back home has exhausted you. Maybe you should get some sleep?”

“I suppose so. Will you stay with me? Maybe I won’t have the nightmares if you’re with me the whole night.”
“Of course. I should probably get you cleaned up though so your clothes don’t become glued to your stomach.” He collected the flannel and rinsed it out, wiping over the sticky parts quickly. He then patted him dry and helped him into pyjamas and his robe. Once Sherlock was settled up against the headboard, Mycroft collected the basin and dirty towels. “I’ll empty this and then we can get you to the bathroom to brush your teeth.”

“Thank you,” the younger man said simply.

Mycroft looked surprised and paused by the door. “For what?”

“For looking after me.”

“Sherlock, I’ll always look after you. Never doubt that.”

Chapter End Notes

You get a lovely long chapter today since I probably won’t get a chance to post tomorrow :( (Please don't cry, I feel bad enough as it is ;-)}
Chapter 24

Traffic seemed lighter than usual this morning and it took Mark less time than he had anticipated to get across town to Baker Street. He stopped at Speedy’s before going up, thinking it would be a good idea to grab some cappuccinos. He was actually rather worried about Mr Holmes (Mycroft...get used to calling him Mycroft unless you want to give it away). The man was exhausted, and Mark was sure he hadn’t had a proper night’s sleep in almost a week. Caffeine might only keep him on his feet for a limited time, but he thought it would be nice to send him on his way with a strong coffee. He ordered three regular cappuccinos for himself, Sherlock, and John and made sure to get a double shot for Mycroft. He waited patiently for their beverages and found that he was rather looking forward to his day. He enjoyed Sherlock’s company immensely as he was strongly reminded of one of his cousins. He had absolutely no objections to being utilised in such a manner, and only wished more of his assignments could be as fun. He would need to speak to Mycroft at some point however and find out if the normal rules applied, or if they didn’t because of the personal nature of this job. He really felt like he and Sherlock were developing a real friendship and he would need to know if that would be allowed to continue or not.

He collected the drinks and as luck had it, Mrs Hudson was coming out as he was going in. She greeted him cheerfully and held open the door so he could step inside. He wasn’t sure how much Sherlock had shared with his landlady so he made sure to keep their conversation vague. Once she had said goodbye, he made his way up the stairs to 221B and let himself in. There was no one in the living room or kitchen but he could hear Rosie crying upstairs. Leaving the drinks on the table, he went down to Sherlock’s room and knocked gently and heard Mycroft’s voice calling quietly to enter.

He stopped dead as he took in the scene before him. He had expected to pass Mycroft on his way out as he usually left for the office around this time but instead he was leaning against the headboard with Sherlock cradled in his arms. The detective was out like a light and snoring softly. The elder Holmes was sporting a painful looking black eye and two long scratches down one cheek. He looked exhausted, both physically and emotionally.

“What the hell happened?” Mark asked, aghast at the injuries.

“The nightmare he had last night was his worst one yet. It took me more than five minutes to wake him and he came up fighting. He won’t say but I’m sure he’s reliving his time in Serbia.”

The young agent ran a hand through his hair, wincing as he imagined what the younger brother was going through. He knew the details of what had happened in Serbia and it was a lot more severe than most seasoned agents went through. To have a civilian, with no training or preparation go through that and come out the other side was remarkable. It was no wonder that he was reliving the experience whilst asleep. “What can I do?”

“I have a meeting I simply cannot miss,” Mycroft told him. “I know it’s asking above and beyond what was agreed, but would you take my place and hold him while he sleeps? He’s completely wrecked after last night.”

“Of course. But, sir - ” He glanced out into the hallway and saw that John was still absent, “ - you also need to get some proper rest at some point. You simply can’t keep this up.”

He nodded. “I know. But not yet. I need to be there for him, Mark. It’s essential. You haven’t seen him like that yet...”
“I know. You have to do what you have to do. But you also need to take care of yourself. You’d never forgive yourself if you missed something at work because you were exhausted.” Mycroft didn’t reply but he knew the older man was well aware of the responsibilities he had to uphold. He held up a hand, indicating he’d be a moment and ducked out to grab three of the coffees. He place them on the bedside table and indicted to one of them. “This is for you.”

“Thank you.”

He knelt on the edge of the bed and gently pulled Sherlock forward so his brother could shuffle out from beneath him. They then juggled the sleeping detective so Mark could slip in underneath him.

“Comfortable?” Mycroft asked.

Mark smiled and nodded. “He’s as bony as you look but I’ll manage.”

The politician brushed a curl back from Sherlock’s brow and nodded at Mark. “Have a good day. I’ll try and get off as early as possible.”

“We’ll be fine, I’m sure. I’m going to let him onto the couch today so he has a change of scenery. Hope your meeting goes well.”

Mycroft picked up his coffee and after one last worried glance at his brother, ducked from the room.

Mark sat there, listening to the soft breathing of the man he held in his arms, lost in thought. After a while, John came in on silent feet, holding a handful of supplies. “Morning,” he said. “I need to check his dressings. He pulled a few stitches last night and I was half asleep when I re-did them. I need to make sure they’re okay.” Mark nodded his understanding and helped the doctor peel back the dressing gown to reveal the pale shoulder beneath. After a quick inspection, John made a happy noise and covered the wound again. “As long as he doesn’t get too physical again, that should heal nicely.”

“Did you check over Mycroft?”

“Yeah, as much as he’d let me. He’s even more stubborn than this one. He’ll have a nasty bruiser for a while and as long as the scratches don’t get infected, he’ll be fine. I’m glad it’s him settling Sherlock down after a nightmare and not me. It’s a painful business.”

“Yeah, it looked pretty nasty.”

“Will you be okay with him for a while by yourself? We’re running low on groceries and I figured I’d take the chance now to run out to the shops.”

“Yeah, we’ll be fine. There’s a coffee in the kitchen for you, by the way.”

“If Sherlock wouldn’t kill me painfully, I’d kiss you.”

“Better not take the chance then. I’m happy with your thanks.”

They laughed and John left the room but it was still another ten minutes until he had gotten the baby supplies organised and he left the flat proper. It was about fifteen minutes later that Sherlock began to stir. He woke slowly, as if his body was protesting coming out of the healing sleep it was in. At one point he turned and snuggled into Mark’s chest, freezing when it was more muscular than he was expecting. One blue-green eye opened and he looked up at the agent. “Mark?” he asked groggily.

“Yep, the one and only. Mycroft had to go to work and he wanted to make sure you stayed sleeping as long as possible. He’ll be back as soon as he can.”
He helped the injured man sit up and noticed the exact moment that Sherlock remembered what had happened during the night. “Was Mycie okay?” he asked, worry and regret heavy in his voice.

“Yeah, he’ll be okay, Sher. I don’t think you’ve caused any serious damage.”

There was no relief there, only regret for causing his brother harm. “John’s gone out,” Mark told him, hoping a change of subject would break him from his funk. “Should we get you out of this room and onto the couch?”

It didn’t take them long to get the lanky man resituated and Mark fetched their drinks from the bedroom. They sat on the couch, silently drinking their coffee when Mark decided to bring something up he’d been pondering for a while. He didn’t know when the next time would be that John was out so he needed to take the opportunity now. “Hey, Sher?”

“Mmm?” came the rumbling reply.

“Can I ask you something?”

“You just did,” he said with a smirk. “But I’m feeling benevolent today so I’ll allow you to ask something else.”

“You’re too kind,” he said with a playful push at his arm. “I don’t mean this to upset you, but I’ve always found that being blunt and straightforward is better in the long run than beating around the bush.”

“I agree.” Sherlock gave him a look somewhere between amusement and exasperation. “I promise not to take offense. Ask away.”

“Your partner...you said that you would never be able to show your love for each other because it wouldn’t be accepted.” The detective went very still but didn’t react otherwise. Mark took a deep breath and just blurted out his suspicions. “It’s Mycroft, isn’t it?”

He heard Sherlock swallow from across the couch. Looking over he saw that the detective was actively avoiding looking at him, staring at the takeaway cup in his hand. He was silent a long time and just when Mark thought he wouldn’t get a response, he finally spoke. “What if it is?” He looked up and his eyes were clouded with pain.

“I’m not judging you, Sher. I promise,” he was quick to assure him. “I just wanted to understand, I suppose.”

“How did you guess?” he asked quietly. “We thought we were so careful.”

Mark surprised him by laughing. “I’d be a pretty terrible MI5 agent if I wasn’t observant, Sher. And to be honest, there were just a few things here and there, which by themselves would be brushed off I think. It’s only because I’ve spent so much time with you both recently, in a stressful situation no less, which allowed me to put it together. Just the odd look or touch or something you’ve said.”

Sherlock looked down at his lap again. “Are you going to tell anyone?”

The agent shuffled over on the couch and lay a hand on his arm. “No, not at all. As far as I’m concerned, it’s no one’s business. You’re not hurting anyone, and it’s not like you can reproduce.” He gave him what he hoped was a reassuring smile. “I want you to know that I don’t think any less of you, Sher. You are both brilliant men and I know how hard it is to relate to us lesser mortals. It makes sense that you’d develop a deeper connection with each other. I really feel like we’ve developed a real friendship and I’d like to continue that. Now I’ll just be able to cover for you both
that little bit more because I’ll know what’s going on.”

Sherlock’s eyes were wide with surprise. “Really? You’d do that for us?”

“Of course.” He winked. “I gotta take care of my boyfriend after all.”

The detective’s laugh was music to his ears and it looked like he was finally relaxing. “You’re the best fake boyfriend I could hope for.”

“Only the best for you.”

Sherlock’s grin faded as he sobered. “Do you want to tell Mycie you’ve figured it out, or should I?”

“Hmmm, that’s a hard one. Maybe both of us together? I want to be upfront and honest with him, since he’s the one paying me at the moment so technically he’s my boss. However, and I know this will irritate him, but I kind of feel like we’re kind of friends now. I want him to know that I’m not going to tell anyone his secret because I’m worried about my job, but because I genuinely care about him.”

“You’re one hundred percent right - that is going to irritate him to no end. But, yes, maybe together would be best.”

“This afternoon then when he arrives?”

“Yep, sounds good.” Of course, the worried look on his face told Mark it sounded anything but good, but they all needed to be on the same page. He just hoped that Mycroft wouldn’t react badly. There weren’t many people on the planet who would be able to outsmart him in a fight and take him out, but the elder Holmes was one of them. And who wanted to die horribly now when life was just getting interesting?
Chapter 25

It had been a long, long day. The morning’s meeting had blown out due to the discovery of a potential threat that no one had seen coming which had left them scrambling to find the moment their protocols had failed. After that, the PM had wanted to meet with him regarding the function on the weekend with the Asian-Pacific heads of state (which he’d been hoping to get out of, but his fate appeared sealed), and then finally Mycroft found some time to take for himself at the Diogenes Club. So much had happened over the last two weeks and he’d had so little time to sit and process it. He had desperately needed just one hour to himself- sixty minutes to be able to sit, in silence, and to just think. It had cleared his head immensely and he had been much invigorated when he’d returned to the office in the afternoon to tackle that latest stack of reports. He had a faint headache - a side effect of the blow to the face he’d taken during the night - but two paracetamol took the edge off that.

It was mid-afternoon when a text came through from Sherlock that left him perplexed.

*Dinner tonight at Mark’s place - come straight from work - SH*

A tiny tendril of worry curled in his gut but he brushed the feeling aside and tried to think with his head. Obviously, he needed to discuss something with Mycroft that required privacy and the absence of one moody flatmate. In order to continue their ruse, meeting at Mark’s place would be the best option, and the cheerful young agent was certainly amicable. But what would Sherlock need to discuss?

He finished up the last of the urgent work for the day and popped everything else back into his to-do tray. After freshening up in his private bathroom, he called his driver and gave Mark’s address. He knocked at the door and it was opened by Mark shortly afterwards. “Hi. Come on in. Can I take your coat?”

He shrugged out of his outer coat but left his suit jacket on, then followed the younger man into the kitchen. Sherlock was there, perched on a bar stool which he slid off as they entered. He stepped towards them, smiling. ‘Brother,” he greeted him.

Before Mycroft could reply, Sherlock had wrapped his arms around his neck and pulled him in for a deep kiss. He spluttered and tried to pull away but the detective’s arms were stronger than they looked and held him tight.

Behind them, Mark laughed. “Honestly, Sher, I thought we were going to break it to him gently.”

Sherlock finally released Mycroft, a smirk on his lips. “Yes, well, I figured a demonstration might be better.”

“What are you doing?” the older Holmes asked in a panic.

“Don’t worry, brother - Mark knows.”

“He does?” His eyes flew to the agent, wide and worried.

“He didn’t tell me,” Mark assured him. “I figured it out and asked him about it. I have absolutely no problems with it. I really don’t. I know it’s not conventional but you guys obviously love each other very much. And you might find it actually convenient to have someone in the know.”

“In what way?”
“Well,” Sherlock began, hooking his arms around his neck again and nuzzling at his jaw, “We told John that I would be staying here tonight so I’m free to come back to yours.”

His eyes went wide again, but this time with the possibilities. “Oh.”

“Exactly.”

“But you don’t get to escape before dinner,” their host told him. “I have actually cooked for you.”

“You didn’t have to go out of your way,” Mycroft told him over Sherlock’s shoulder since his brother hadn’t yet let go of him. He circled an arm around his waist, enjoying the fact they didn’t have to hide their affections.

“It’s my pleasure. It’s not often I actually get to use my kitchen for more than just two minute noodles. It’s good to keep the few culinary skills I have. Besides, although I know it’s not exactly protocol, I feel like I’m forming proper friendships with the both of you and I honestly enjoy your company. It would be nice to share a meal with you without it being under the guise of a fake relationship.”

“Since this entire situation defies protocol, I’ll just say ‘thank you’ and graciously accept your invitation for dinner.”

Mark beamed at him and crossed to the fridge. “I believe this calls for a toast. Wine?”

“Please,” Sherlock said. While the young agent got a bottle of wine out of the fridge and found glasses, he took the opportunity to kiss Mycroft again. Allowing his aversion to public displays of affection to slide, the older man kissed him back, licking his way past the perfect cupid’s bow to slide his tongue against his brother’s. All his senses honed in on the man he held in his arms - the taste of his lips, the warmth of his skin through his shirt, the soft sound of their shared breaths, the sight of dark eyelashes fluttering against a pale cheek, the spicy scent of his cologne. It all washed over Mycroft, enveloping him, saturating him, until he didn’t know where he finished and Sherlock began. He felt like he could kiss him for all eternity and never get tired of it.

Eventually his manners nudged through the haze of passion, and he broke the kiss, resting their foreheads together. “I didn’t realise how good it would feel to be able to do that in front of someone who accepts us.”

Sherlock hummed in agreement. “I feel like I’ve been able to properly claim you as my own.”

“I’ve always been yours, brother mine.”

“Yes, but now that one other person knows, it doesn’t feel like a dream anymore. For the past two weeks I’ve often thought that perhaps I’ve been sleeping and when I wake up it’ll have gone back to how it was.”

“As an outsider looking in, I can tell you that it’s definitely real,” Mark said, holding out two glasses. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen two people more in love before. It’s sweet.”

“Sweet?” Mycroft asked with a raised eyebrow.

“Mmm, I don’t think I’d ever have described us as sweet,” Sherlock agreed with his brother.

“Well you’d be wrong,” their new conspirator told them. “You’re sweet, sappy, romantic, and so in love that it should be illegal. Oh wait - it is!” He grinned at the twin scowls sent his way. “Now stop arguing with me so I can toast us all.” Feeling only a little silly, Mycroft raised his glass and clinked
it against the other two. “To new friendships, new love, and family,” Mark declared.

They all drank, and Mycroft couldn’t keep the smile off his face. He pressed a kiss to Sherlock’s
cheek, just because he could, and then settled himself onto a bar stool, more relaxed than he’d been
in years.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

Sexy times are here again! I'm arriving back in Sydney today and then flying home so thought I'd post this chapter while I still had access to wifi on my laptop to give you all your fix ;-)
used the extra lubrication to his advantage. He could hear soft gasps and moans coming from above, and slender fingers sank into his curls, gripping hard. He nudged his brother’s legs a little wider apart so he could duck down to lick at his heavy balls. They were hard and hot beneath the fuzz and he knew that Mycroft was close. He pressed one final kiss to the tip of his cock and then stood back up.

“Take me to bed?” he whispered.

Mycroft could only nod, and leaving his clothes where they had fallen, he took Sherlock by the hand and led him upstairs. Once in the bedroom the older man helped his brother shed his own clothes. Sherlock didn’t miss the surreptitious check of his dressing, but it obviously passed muster as Mycroft proceeded to remove his trousers. As soon as he was naked, Sherlock pushed Mycroft onto the bed and straddled him. He gazed down at him in adoration, trailing his fingers in teasing circles over his stomach. “So gorgeous,” he murmured. He saw the doubt flicker over Mycroft’s eyes and he leaned over, kissing him hard, pouring everything he felt into the action, hoping to prove the truth of his words. His erection pressed hard against his brother’s stomach, and he was dripping so much already that it slipped against his skin. “Look what you do to me, brother mine. I want you so much. You are everything to me.”

In lieu of a verbal response, Mycroft reached over and pulled the lube from the drawer. Sherlock knew instinctively that his brother must have seen blood results from them both, making a condom moot. He smiled and kissed him again, wondering what he’d ever do if he ever stopped looking out for him. He remembered that Mycroft had said he wouldn’t need much prep, if any, once they were having regular sex but since they hadn’t been intimate since before he was shot, he didn’t want to risk hurting his brother. He lubed up his fingers and slid one into the tight passage. There was no resistance and so he added a second, and soon Mycroft was bucking against the digits. “Now,” he whispered.

Sherlock let his fingers slip out and he added extra lube to his cock. Mycroft wrapped his legs around his brother’s waist and helped line him up. Pressing firmly but gently, he began to sink slowly in, pausing once the head had breached so he could read any signs of discomfort on his brother’s face. Once he was sure Mycroft was okay, Sherlock pressed in slowly further, kissing up and down the pale column of throat.

Eventually he was fully seated and they took a moment to just kiss languidly and hold each other. “I love you so much,” Sherlock whispered. “More than you will ever know.” He kissed away his brother’s reply, wanting this to be all about him – an undeniable demonstration of how he felt. He began to move, rolling his hips slowly and rhythmically, his mouth never ceasing as he licked and kissed every inch of skin he could reach whilst keeping his arms wrapped tightly around Mycroft.

As much as they could read each other and communicate so much clearer than most siblings, Sherlock wished that Mycroft could read his mind. See right inside so he knew without a doubt that the love, desire, and need for the beautiful man beneath him was pure and genuine. To make him see that he was the most gorgeous creature to ever walk the earth, a god amongst men, not only in appearance but in mind and spirit as well. If it took him until the end of time, he would do all he could to prove all this and more to his beloved brother.

Sherlock allowed himself to slip out of his brother and urged him up onto his knees. Once he had slid back inside, he guided Mycroft to lie down on his stomach. Following along with him, until he was lying almost flat against him, he blanketed Mycroft with a comforting weight. He wrapped his arms around his shoulders and chest, holding him close. He gasped as Mycroft squeezed the muscles of his passage so he constricted tightly around Sherlock’s cock. “You feel amazing,” he murmured, pressing kisses to the nape of his neck.
Their lovemaking was slow and unhurried, more of a merging of flesh than a rush for pleasure. Sherlock would rock his hips every now and then, and Mycroft would squeeze around him, but both were more than happy with the press of flesh against flesh; of sweet kisses and a loving embrace. It was by far the closest and most intimate that Sherlock had felt with his brother, almost as if they were truly one, and he poured every ounce of love and affection into his touch.

Mycroft began to squeeze for longer, and a delicious pressure began to build in Sherlock’s stomach and balls. He rolled them to the side so he was spooning Mycroft and reached around, taking a firm hold on his brother’s cock. He didn’t move, just allowed himself to bask in the feeling of Mycroft’s passage constricting around him. The build of pleasure was slower, but more intense, a feeling of teetering on the edge. He matched his strokes to each squeeze, and sucked lightly at the sensitive spot just behind Mycroft’s ear. “I love you, Mycie” he whispered. “I love you, I love you, I love you,” he repeated, again and again, breathlessly as their pleasure built and built. And soon he felt Mycroft clamp down hard around his cock as he spilled his release over Sherlock’s hand and he followed his brother over the edge, gasping out his name and his love, tears streaming down his cheeks.

He felt Mycroft’s body tremble in his arms and heard a choked sob. He cradled him gently and pressed soft kisses to his neck and shoulders, allowing his brother the emotional release he needed. His own cheeks were still damp as he was overcome for the sheer depth of his devotion for his lover. He knew that he would never give this up. No matter who found out, the consequences they faced, or the retribution rained down upon them, he would never, ever let him go. He was Mycroft’s, and Mycroft was his and so it would be until the end of their days.
Mycroft came awake to the feeling of someone watching him. He opened his eyes and found Sherlock was lying on his side, gazing at him. A flicker of pain flashed across his perfect face as blue-green eyes settled on the purple bruise and angry scratches. He lifted a hand and placed a finger delicately just below the black eye. “I never did apologise,” he whispered.

Mycroft moved his head so he could kiss the finger, sucking it into his mouth and laving it with his tongue. Once he released it he said, “There is no need to apologise, brother mine. I only wish I could save you from your nightmares.”

“You did exactly that last night. Have you not noticed we both slept through till morning?”

His eyes widened slightly as he realised the truth of this. “That’s heartening news.”

Sherlock smiled at him. “You needed the rest, so most definitely.”

“I would argue that you were in greater need of a proper night’s sleep than I.”

“Of course you would. But that’s because you’re an over-protective mother hen,” he sniped gently.

“And you’re a stubborn arsehat who doesn’t understand the meaning of resting to aid recovery,” Mycroft retorted before pulling him in for a chaste kiss.

“Let me brush my teeth so I can kiss you properly,” Sherlock rumbled.

“I need to have a shower,” the older man told him. “I wish I could linger in bed with you.”

“Perhaps I can stay here for the weekend?”

“You’re welcome to stay here whenever you like,” Mycroft told him. “Tomorrow night I do have a function I have to attend so I won’t be home until late.” He pulled a face, displaying his displeasure at being forced to attend.

“What sort of function?”

“Some black tie ball for foreign dignitaries,” he said, dismissively. “It will be a painful night of dancing, drinking, and abysmal small talk.”

“However will you manage?”

He shrugged. “I won’t have to weather it alone - Elliott has agreed to accompany me as my ‘date’ so at least I shall have someone agreeable to pass the time with.”

Sherlock felt a stab of jealousy roil through his gut. Mine! He hated the way the older agent looked at Mycroft and would openly display his lust for him. To have him be the man who would get to hold Mycroft in his arms as they waltzed around the dance floor, to hand him champagne and laugh at meaningless jokes, to be able to openly ogle the tall man in his impeccable tuxedo...it made the blood boil in his veins. “I see.” He rolled onto his back, forcing the bile back down his throat.

“I’ll be home as soon as it’s decent to excuse myself.”
“I’m sure you will,” he replied, somewhat coldly.

“Sherlock? What’s wrong?”

He shook his head, unable to bring himself to answer and rolled out of bed. He picked up his clothes and hurried to the bathroom, locking the door behind him so he could dress in privacy. Looking in the mirror he saw he looked pale and drawn, the sick feeling in his gut showing on his features. He knew that Mycroft felt nothing for Elliott but it still didn’t stop the unreasonable rage from simmering inside. It should be him who got to accompany his brother, it should be him that people looked at and saw belonged to Mycroft, it should be him that they stared at in jealousy, knowing that he would get to take the gorgeous politician home once the night had finished.

Sherlock splashed his face with cold water, but it did nothing to cool down the white hot rage simmering inside. He almost yanked the door off its hinges and stormed past his bewildered brother, grabbing his phone and heading for the door.

“Sherlock?” Mycroft cried, grabbing at his arm as he tried to leave the bedroom. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing,” he said, shaking his head. He knew it was pointless to be angry at Mycroft but his feelings were making him irrational.

“Sherlock, don’t do this. Something has clearly upset you and I need to know what I’ve done.” The anguish in his voice tore at Sherlock’s heart and he resisted the urge to scoop him into his arms and kiss the pain from his face. He knew he should but his stubbornness would not allow him to. “It’s all fine, Mycroft. Go and have fun, dance the night away. I’ll be waiting for you here when you get back.”

He heard the exasperated sigh behind him. “It’s for work, Sherlock. I tried to get out of it but the PM has given me no option but to attend. Don’t you think I’d rather be here with you?”

“And yet you won’t be - you’ll be with him,” he spat.

There was the tentative touch of a hand on his arm and he automatically turned towards it. “You silly, silly man. You know he means nothing to me, just as I know that you harbour no romantic feelings for Mark.”

“It should be me with you,” he said, brokenly. “It should be you and me, always.”

Arms wrapped around him and he sank back against Mycroft’s chest, suddenly exhausted. “I know that’s how it should be, brother, but we both know that the world will never accept us being together in that way. It’s a heavy burden we have to bear but if we want to be together, it is one we must accept.”

“What if no one knew we were brothers?”

“What do you mean?”

“We could go somewhere far away, somewhere where no one knew who we were, or that we have the same parents. We could start over, begin again, where we are Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes - husbands, partners, lovers.”

“Do you really think you wouldn’t be discovered? You are an internationally renowned detective, Sherlock, with a rather memorable name. It would take the town gossip five minutes on Google to discover our secret.”
“Then we take on new names!” he cried, taking Mycroft’s hands in his own and squeezing them. “Whole new identities. I would do that for you, for us - I would give up everything I have if it meant I could be with you.”

“Sherlock, you can’t be serious...you’re talking about your career, your friends, John…”

“I would give it all away in an instant, Mycroft! Would you not do the same for me? Would you not want to have a life with me where we can be together as we should be?”

The question hung in the air, heavy between them. Mycroft’s eyes were anguished but he could not say the words that his brother so desperately longed to hear. His work, his responsibilities, the sacrifices he had made for Queen and country - they were not things that he could so easily part with. He knew that Sherlock was upset and as much as he romanticised a new beginning, the reality would be much harder to bear. He had come to rely on his friends, and the work, and he would not survive in a new place without them. “Sherlock, think about what you’re saying…”

The younger man let go of his hands and stepped back, hurt flashing across his face. “I see. I guess I overestimated how much I mean to you. I won’t make that mistake again. Enjoy your ball tomorrow night, brother.”

And then he was gone. Mycroft stood frozen, but once his legs had started to work again and he had gone after him, it was in time to see his brother’s lithe figure stepping into a cab. His shoulder’s slumped and he turned back into the house, wondering how it had gone wrong so quickly.

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Sherlock did not respond to any of Mycroft’s texts or calls the whole day. He stopped by 221B after work but it was to find John there alone. The man was grumpy and stone faced when he told him that Sherlock had gone to Mark’s and was expected to be away for the entirety of the weekend. “I get that he’s seeing someone but every Friday night we meet up with Greg and have a pint. It’s something we’ve done together for years now and as soon as he gets a bloke, he ditches us,” the doctor raged.

Mycroft considered calling by Mark’s house but did not want to intrude upon the young agent. He called him instead, relieved when he answered after the first ring.

“Mycroft,” Mark greeted him quietly.

“Mark. Is my brother with you?” he asked, a catch in his voice.

“He is, but -” There was the sound of a door opening and closing and then he began speaking again, louder this time, “- he has said he doesn’t want to speak to you. He’s not told me why he’s here sulking instead of at your place like it’s obvious he wants to be though.”

He sighed. “He’s upset with me because I have to go to that bloody function tomorrow night.”

“The one for the Asian-Pacific digs?”

“Yes, that’s the one.”

“Let me guess - black tie and you’re expected to bring a plus one. Taking Elliott?”

“What else was I supposed to do?” Mycroft asked in frustration.

“You’re doing exactly what you should be doing - it’s the whole reason you’re paying us. Look,
he’s obviously jealous and hurt and we both know he has no experience in these matters. My advice is just give him some time to get over his sulk. I’ve heard his phone pinging, he knows you’re trying to reach him. Once he’s calmed down I’m sure he’ll see reason.”

“I hope so. I can’t lose him over something like this.”

“You won’t. He loves you too much to throw this away. Try not to worry - I’ll keep an eye on him and I’ll call if there’s any need to be worried.”

“Thank you.”

“No problems. I hope tomorrow night isn’t too boring.”

They said goodbye and Mycroft went home to his empty house, feeling the loneliness crushing him. He undressed and lay on the bed, hugging a pillow to his chest and burying his nose in it. Sherlock’s scent still lingered and he breathed it in. He considered phoning the PM and begging to be excused from tomorrow night’s festivities but he knew he would have to prove there had been a death in the family or something else just as horrific for him to be granted one.

He curled into as small a ball as possible and eventually fell into a restless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I am back home with reliable WiFi - woot! The cruise was amazing but it's always nice to come home. Of course now I need to adult and adulting is hard but I shall try my very best to continue posting a chapter a day!
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Tags have been added so please check before continuing. Additional notes at the end.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The following night Mycroft dressed for the ball on auto-pilot. Anthea arrived an hour before he was due to leave with a freshly dry cleaned tux and enough makeup for the Miss Universe pageant. She forced him to sit while she covered as much of his black eye as possible and he had to concede she did a stellar job. There was only the faintest hint of bruising remaining and no one would be able to tell he was wearing a pound of foundation.

Once she had left and he was dressed, he checked his phone for the fiftieth time and found there was still no response from his brother. He typed out one final text and sent it off.

*I will be be home by midnight. I hope you will be here when I get home. I miss you, and I love you - MH*

Once the message had sent, he headed for his bar and poured a generous measure of scotch into a glass. Sitting in his favourite armchair, he brooded over this rift with his brother, not even aware that he’d finished the alcohol almost as soon as he’d started it. He poured another, and was just finishing it when the doorbell rang.

Elliott’s eye widened as he took in Mycroft’s appearance and he grinned, almost ferally. “Looking good, boss,” he told him as he was gestured inside.

“Thank you,” he replied, ever polite. “You look nice as well.”

The buff agent had obviously gone to some effort with his appearance for the evening. He hair was slicked back, his teeth were freshly whitened, and his tuxedo, although clearly a rental, was of high quality. Mycroft didn’t find him even remotely appealing, but he was aware the man would turn heads tonight.

He called for his driver and collected his phone and wallet, aware that the scotch was going straight to his head. He wasn’t worried, knowing he was more than able to perform the necessary diplomatic tasks flawlessly, even whilst drunk. He desperately wanted another drink, something to distract him from the pain he felt in his chest at Sherlock’s avoidance of him. The car arrived and they climbed in the back, and Mycroft spent the first few minutes staring out the window dejectedly.

“Is everything okay?” Elliott asked.

He pulled his attention back inside the vehicle. “Apologies, I didn’t mean to be rude. My mind is on other matters.”

“I know things are pretty quiet at work right now so I’m guessing it’s personal? Trouble with your man?”

He gave a thin smile, not overly impressed with the man’s increasingly familiar tone, but he knew that it was the price he had to pay to sell their act. “Something like that.”
“It’s hard when things don’t go well, but you never know what - or who - is around the corner.”

“It’s nothing quite so dire,” he said, checking his phone. When he saw there was still no reply, he reached over to the minibar and pulled out the bottle of scotch. “Drink?” he asked.

“Sure.”

He poured them two measures and sat back, sipping at the amber liquid as the streets of London flew past. It wasn’t much longer and they were arriving at the venue and being escorted inside. There were several political journalists present with their photographers but they paid little attention to the two of them as they passed, waiting for the bigger fish to arrive. Once inside, Mycroft made a beeline for the bar but was stopped halfway over by the PM.

“Mycroft! I’m so glad you came,” he said jovially, shaking his hand.

Knowing there was little point in mentioning his lack of choice in the matter, he plastered on a smile and introduced Elliott.

“I had heard rumours someone had finally taken your fancy,” the PM said, shaking hands with the large agent. “Good to know you’re not the total Iceman people say you are.”

“Oh, I assure you, sir, I do have a heart. It’s not very big, but it’s there.”

The man laughed and slapped him on the back, then left them to go and greet more guests. Mycroft led Elliott to the bar and ordered them more drinks, and they stood to the side, watching the crowd as it grew. He checked his phone one last time, but the screen remained lifeless. He downed his drink in one go, ignoring the thoughtful look on Elliott’s face and tried to prepare himself for a long, painful evening.

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It was nearing midnight and all the necessary tasks had been completed so Mycroft called for his driver, more than ready to go home. He finished the last of his drink that Elliott had gotten for him graciously and went to bid the PM goodnight. He was sure his eye twitched when the onerous man noticed that the happy couple hadn’t taken a spin on the dance floor. “Come on, Mycroft - Elliott looks like he’d love a dance. Can’t let your man down, can you? Especially when they’re playing a nice, slow number.”

Elliott grinned and held out a hand. Resigned to his fate, Mycroft allowed himself to be led to the dance floor and didn’t even bother fighting for the lead. The only arms he wanted to be held in whilst dancing were Sherlock’s, but it wasn’t to be tonight. He tried to keep a polite smile on his face, hoping the lack of enthusiasm came off as sheer exhaustion. He wasn’t feeling well as it was, a little dizzy and out of sorts so he allowed himself to be maneuvered around the floor.

“You look miserable,” Elliott whispered in his ear.

He grimaced. “Apologies once again. I’m usually much better at keeping my emotions hidden.”

“You’re too precious to be this upset.” The agent’s arms tightened around him and his breath was hot in Mycroft’s ear. “Take me home tonight and I’ll guarantee you’ll be smiling.”

Mycroft froze as he felt Elliott’s tongue lick along the shell of his ear. Kicking himself into action, he stepped back, breaking their embrace. “I’m flattered, Elliott, I really am, but I will have to decline your...generous offer. I am more than happy with my current partner and am not looking for anything else. What I am looking forward to is getting home to sleep.”
Elliott stepped back into his personal space and pulled him back against him, and when Mycroft tried to fight it, he found his arms had gone like jelly. His knees were beginning to tremble and against his will his body sagged against the big agent. “Pity,” the man told him, an ambiguous smile on his lips. “Somehow I don’t think you have much of a choice. Did you enjoy that last drink?”

As much as his brain screamed at his body to object, he found he didn’t have the strength to push away. His mind recoiled in horror as he felt lips at his throat, nipping at the delicate flesh, while his traitorous body slumped unmoving and pliant against him. “Why?” he managed to stutter.

“Because I want you, Mycroft. And what I want, I get. I’m going to have this gorgeous body of yours however I want it tonight, as many times as I want. I’m going to show you what it’s like to be with a real man.” He leaned over and pressed a sloppy kiss to the politician’s lips, his tongue plundering his mouth, making it hard to breathe. Mycroft was losing more and more feeling in his extremities, but his mind continued to tick along as normal. The obvious thing to do would be raise an alarm with a member of staff, but he just didn’t have the strength to make a signal. Elliott broke the kiss and then half carried, half dragged him across to the exit. He tried to call out to a waiter as he went past, but his tongue was heavy and large in his mouth and his lips wouldn’t form the words. His driver was waiting for them out the front and a flash of concern crossed his face as he saw his boss. “Had a little too much to drink,” Elliott whispered conspiratorially to the man with a wink.

Mycroft tried to move his head to meet the driver’s eye, to give some indication that he was in trouble, but Elliott let go of him right at that moment and he stumbled, appearing to all to be too intoxicated to walk. The driver nodded discreetly and held the rear door open so the big man could manhandle Mycroft into the car.

“Once I get him home and poured into bed I’ll be feeling much better,” he heard Elliott say.

“Of course, sir. And will I be returning you to your own residence afterwards?”

“No, I think I’ll stay. I don’t want to leave him alone when he’s like this.”

“Of course. Very good, sir.”

His head lolled back on the seat and he felt the agent slide into place next to him. A large hand settled high on his thigh, kneading at the flesh and he felt hot breath once again at his ear. “Oh the fun we’re going to have tonight.” The hand moved upwards and he squeezed Mycroft’s flaccid cock harshly.

As the streets sped past them, Mycroft’s only thoughts were of Sherlock. His only salvation would be if Sherlock had calmed down enough to be waiting for him when he got home.

Chapter End Notes

So, we’ve gotten a little bit darker as you can see. Don’t worry too much though - I am most definitely a happy ending person so this is just a speed bump in the road. Gotta have some angst and tears to appreciate the sweetness of a happily ever after. For those who are not sure if they’ll continue past this point (I know this direction can be a deal breaker for some), I’ll say now that there are no graphic descriptions or rape/non-con ahead if that helps. If you are getting off the train here, thanks for coming along on this journey with me. If you’re continuing on, I hope you enjoy the ride :)
A big thanks to everyone for all your love and support so far. It's been so very welcome and heartening xxx
Chapter 29

Sherlock had taken over Mark’s couch and was lying across it, hands steepled beneath his chin, lost in his mind palace. He hadn’t been looking for anything in particular, just wandering the corridors, lost in thought. He came to a T junction and felt the strong desire to turn left. The pull was so strong that a shudder went through his corporeal body as he resisted it. Mycroft’s room was that way and he wasn’t sure if he felt ready to delve into it.

He made to turn right but the tug was almost overpowering from the left and he stood rooted to the spot, wavering in his indecision.

Eventually he gave in and took the hallway that was calling to him. The feeling of calm and peace that settled over him almost immediately assured him that he’d made the right decision. Warm light, brighter than ever before spilled from beneath the doorway, guiding his steps. He reached the entry and could feel the warmth and love emanating from the room beyond. He didn’t push the door open but brought his hand up to touch his chest, right above his heart, and the door swung open of its own volition.

He stepped over the threshold and almost staggered at the memories of his brother that washed over him. He had stored and catalogued every smile, laugh, kiss, and touch that had ever been shared between himself and Mycroft. Here, with pure data swirling around him, there could be absolutely no doubt that Mycroft loved him with the entirety of his being. He felt a pang in his stomach as he realised how selfish he had been to demand that his brother give up all he’d ever worked for to run away with Sherlock. If he gave it all up, threw it all away, he would cease to be the man he loved. It was so crystal clear that he couldn’t believe he had failed to see it sooner. His new found emotions were clouding his judgement, making him unreasonable, and he knew he would have to learn mastery over his feelings if he was ever going to think clearly again. He took one last look around the room, allowing himself to be infused with the devotion that his sibling felt for him, before he turned and left.

Sherlock’s eyes fluttered open as he left his mind palace, and he saw Mark sitting in an armchair across from him. He didn’t say anything, just slid a cup of tea across the coffee table, giving him time to come back to reality and gather his thoughts.

“I think I’ve been a giant fool,” he finally admitted softly.

Mark shrugged. “Happens to the best of us from time to time. Don’t waste time dwelling on what’s been and gone - concentrate on what you’re going to do to put it right.”

Sherlock nodded, sipping absently at his tea, eyes distant. He came to a decision and plonked his cup down on the table. “I need to go,” he declared. “Any idea what the time is?”

“It’s just gone midnight,” the young agent told him.
“I need to call for a cab.”

“That’ll take forever at this time of night on a Saturday,” Mark said, standing up. “Come on, I’ll give you a lift.”

“Are you sure?” He couldn’t keep the surprise from his voice, still not used to people offering to do things for him without wanting something in return.

“If it gets your brooding arse off my couch, then I’m all for it,” he replied with a laugh. He reached out and rested a hand on Sherlock’s shoulder. “Seriously though, let’s get you back to that brother of yours. He’s really worried and has missed you terribly.”

Sherlock nodded, unable to reply over the sudden lump in his throat. It physically hurt he missed Mycroft so much. He didn’t think it would have been so bad if they’d been parted due to work or just due to time constraints, but the argument they’d had left a bitterness behind that made it so much worse. Paired with the manic desperation to find Mycroft and beg for his forgiveness, the whirlwind of emotions were threatening to spill down his cheeks.

It only took fifteen minutes to drive over to where his brother lived. Mark pulled up in an empty spot along the curb a hundred or so metres down from Mycroft’s house. A black town car was pulling away from directly outside the house and they could make out Mycroft and Elliott on the front step. Alarm bells started ringing in Sherlock’s head as he took in the slumped form of his brother and the furtive looks the big agent shot up and down the street before he pulled the door shut. “Mark?” he said urgently, hurrying to undo his seatbelt.

“Yeah, I noticed too,” he replied, his voice tense.

They shared a worried look and jumped from the car, running up to the house. Sherlock swore as he realised he’d left his key behind but Mark pulled out a set of lock picks from his jacket and handed them over. “Boy scout,” he drawled at the surprised look on the detective’s face.

Mycroft’s locks were state of the art and it took several minutes for Sherlock to jimmy them open. The door clicked open a fraction and he pushed it gently, ducking his head inside to survey the area.

It was clear so he stepped inside, followed by Mark who silently closed the door. A glance at the alarm system told Sherlock that Mycroft wasn’t in his right state of mind since he hadn’t reactivated it. The MI5 agent scouted the ground floor and returned, shaking his head. Sherlock looked at the long flight of dark stairs and paused at the bottom. His mind was screaming at him to hurry, but a small part of him was frozen in terror at what they might find at the top. He felt a reassuring touch to the base of his spine and it spurred him to action. He crept up the stairs, motioning to Mark to be careful of the ninth one as it creaked.

There was light coming from under the door at the end of the hall - Mycroft’s bedroom. They headed for it on stealthy feet, the only sounds the thundering of their heartbeats in their chests. As they passed a hall table, Mark picked up a weighty bronze figurine since neither of them had a weapon. They stilled outside the closed door, listening for any clue as to what was going on behind it. Sherlock’s hand ghosted over the handle, his ears pricking for the smallest of sounds. So quiet that he almost missed it, he heard a whimper. Then, over the cracking of his heart as it broke, he heard his brother cry, “Please, don’t. No, please, no.”

His vision went red and he burst through the door.
Please don't yell at me...I know you all hate cliffhangers. Yes, I am evil, I concede this.
Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

Perhaps not so evil after all :D

Mycroft was crying. It registered dimly in his periphery, the soft, anguished sobs of a man who should never have any reason to cry. Something deep down in Sherlock’s core screamed at him that it was wrong, unnatural, awry and that it needed to be fixed immediately. The best way to accomplish that would be to wrap his arms around his brother, hold him close, and never, ever let go again. Spend eternity whispering his love over and over and to keep him safe. He needed to make it right, to stop Mycroft’s weeping, to wrap him up in the safety and security of his embrace.

But he couldn’t.

He couldn’t hold his brother and wipe the tears away from his cheeks because his hands were currently busy. They were, in fact, beating the absolute crap out of the shitty excuse for a human being who had dared attempt to violate his brother.

He felt something tugging on his arm but he wrenched it free and continued to reign down blow after blow, feeling the satisfying crunch of bone and cartilage beneath his knuckles. He could feel flecks of blood splattering back up onto his face but he disregarded it, intent only on inflicting the maximum amount of damage on the cretin beneath him. He dimly registered the pain that was flaring in his shoulder but he pushed it away, ignored it as it was not important, something to be dealt with later. For now he was fully absorbed in a single task.

His arm was tiring and Mark was finally successful in pulling him off of Elliott. “Enough, Sher! He’s had enough.”

A feral growl ripped from his throat as he fought to break free from Mark’s hold, wanting - no, needing - to continue to dole out the punishment. The young agent regarded him with sympathetic eyes but did not let him go. “Mycroft, Sher. Concentrate on Mycroft. He needs you.”

He surfaced from the fog of rage and his eyes darted across to where Mycroft was slumped on the floor next to the bed, his shirt hanging open where buttons had been ripped off, trousers tugged partway down his thighs. He crossed to him in long strides and crouched before him. “Mycie?” he said, gently taking hold of his brother’s hand.

Jerking his head up at the touch, Mycroft looked like a caged animal, ready to bolt. “Sh...Sher...Sherlock?”

“It’s me, I’m here, brother mine. You’re safe now.”

The older man tried to lift his arm to touch him but he seemed to be unable to do so. “Don’t. I don...don’t work,” he stammered. His head lolled back on his neck. “Dr...drugged.”

Sherlock’s head whipped round but Mark held up a hand, indicating he was already on the phone, calling for help. After a brief conversation, he rang off, glancing down at the bloodied heap that was his colleague, disgust on his face. “Anthea is taking care of things,” he told them, keeping his
distance so as not to startle his boss. “She’s sending medical aid which will be here within minutes.”

“What about him?” Sherlock spat, glaring at Elliott.

“She’ll take care of it, too. What he has done will not be tolerated by the agency. The less you know about his repercussions, the better, but it will be handled discretely. I know Mycroft would want that.”

Sherlock grunted in agreement and turned back to his brother. He gently wiped tears from his face and tugged his trousers up and fastened the two buttons that remained attached to the shirt. He then sat down with his back against the bed and held open his arms, a silent offer to his brother. Mycroft managed to nod and Sherlock scooped him up, pulling him against his chest, ignoring the pain that shot through his shoulder at the action, reminding him that he had further exacerbated his wound. He buried his face into the auburn hair and pressed kisses against the strands.

Across the room, Mark rolled Elliott onto his side to prevent him from choking on his blood, but didn’t bother with any further first aid. The front door opened downstairs and the agent went down the hall to direct the medics upstairs. When they appeared, Sherlock saw that they weren’t public paramedics but army medics that were utilised by the government. Hot on their heels was Anthea, looking furious as she took in the state of her boss.

While the enraged PA arranged for Elliott to be taken away (hopefully to burn in hell, Sherlock thought viciously), the medics checked over the elder Holmes. He was slowly regaining the ability to move and speak and he managed to refuse all requests to be taken to hospital. When one of the medics tried to insist, he became panicked, pushing the man away from him and scrambling back into Sherlock’s arms.

“Although the drug is wearing off, he really needs blood work done to confirm there will be no long lasting effects,” the man explained, a worried frown on his face. “We should probably do a rape kit as well.”

Sherlock scowled. “Take the blood samples now then. I can assure you that we arrived in time to not require the ra...last test.” The words burned his mouth and he couldn’t bring himself to utter the words to describe what almost had happened. “There’s no need for you to take him to hospital when it’s only going to aggravate him further. I can look after him here.”

The medic looked over to Anthea who gave a small nod, and he pulled out several vials to fill. Once he was done he gave Sherlock several instructions to help care for his brother, and strongly advised that Mycroft needed to seek proper medical treatment. Before they left, Anthea insisted they examine Sherlock, and the medic huffed, exasperated when he saw the wound. “I assume stubbornness is a family trait?” he asked as he applied butterfly clips.

“Something like that,” Sherlock replied.

“I also assume that if I tell you that you should seek more thorough medical attention, that will fall on deaf ears as well?”

“Almost certainly.”

“I guess all I can say then is I wish you the best of luck.” He then packed up the rest of their belongings and he and his partner left.

Mark came back into the room and spoke quietly to Anthea. He seemed happy with what she had wrangled to deal with Elliott and Sherlock overheard the brunette saying she would arrange matters
so there would be no need for Mycroft to come in for several days. He felt an overwhelming wave of
gratitude for the PA, knowing that after everything that had happened recently, his brother would
need time to recover. He may have escaped the physical assault tonight, but the emotional scarring
would be severe. Mycroft was used to being in total control and to have that ripped away, to be
vulnerable and bent to someone else’s will - it would take time for him to overcome that.

Anthea crossed the room and crouched down in front of them. Her eyes were full of worry and
concern, but not pity. She respected her boss and knew how much he could take, and to see him
broken like this only indicated the sheer amount of pain he had suffered. The silver lining was that
she didn’t even question the closeness of the two brothers, assuming the elder just needed comfort
from the younger due to the trauma. “I’ll be going,” she told Sherlock, knowing that Mycroft was in
no state to communicate. “I’ll call you tomorrow to check up on him. Do you want me to call your
parents?”

“No!” Sherlock shook his head vigorously. “That’s the last thing Mycroft would want.” He knew
that things were still tense between his brother and parents after they had discovered the truth about
Eurus.

“Very well. Call me if you need anything. Anything, Sherlock.”

“I will.”

She gave him a small smile and left. It was only once she was gone that Sherlock realised that
besides a single call, she hadn’t been on her mobile at all during her visit. That in itself spoke louder
than words how worried she was for Mycroft.

Mark walked Anthea out and the two brothers were left alone. Mycroft’s body was trembling and his
breathing uneven, but he seemed calm enough for now. Sherlock knew that at some point they
would have to move, but for now he was content to just sit there and hold his brother.

Mark eventually made his way back into the room. “I found the linen cupboard and made up the
spare bed,” he told the detective. “I figured he probably wouldn’t want to sleep in here.”

“Thank you,” he said, overwhelmed at the thoughtfulness of the young agent.

Between the two of them, they managed to get Mycroft to his feet and down the hallway. The drugs
were still affecting his ability to move, but what concerned Sherlock more was the way Mycroft
seemed to have retreated inwards. He no longer even acknowledged that either man was there, just
allowed himself to be supported as they walked. He remained calm though so perhaps he just trusted
them enough to know he’d be taken care of?

They lay him down on top of the bed after Sherlock told Mark he’d manage getting Mycroft into
pyjamas on his own. The young agent gave the detective a pointed look. “You might want to have a
shower before you go to bed,” he suggested. “You’re covered in blood,”

He looked down in surprise, seeing that his shirt was splattered with crimson stains. “Oh. Yes, that
could be a good idea.” He didn’t think his brother would react well if he woke in the middle of the
night to see him in this state.

“I’ll stay with him while you shower if you want.”

“I would appreciate that.”

He ducked into Mycroft’s room and pulled a spare pair of sleep pants and a t shirt from the
wardrobe, then had a quick shower, standing awkwardly to the side of the spray to keep his shoulder
clear. He collected a pair of silk pyjamas on the way back, along with a packet of wet wipes so he could clean Mycroft up without disturbing his rest.

“I’ll come round tomorrow if you want?” Mark offered when he returned.

“You don’t have to do that if it’s too much trouble. You have your own life to live.”

He gave him a warm smile. “You’re my friends, Sher. I’m happy to help. But I also don’t want to intrude. If you think you’d prefer to spend the day with just the two of you, I’ll stay away.”

“I’m not sure how Mycroft will be feeling tomorrow. Can I text you?”

“Of course you can. Try and get some sleep, okay.”

He left and Sherlock sat on the bed next to his brother, who was curled up in a tight little ball.

“Mycie? Are you awake?” There was the barest nod of his head. “I’m going to undress you and clean you up so I can get you into some pyjamas. Is that okay?” Another nod. He placed a hand on his shoulder and helped him roll over onto his back. He leaned down and pressed a kiss to his cheek and stroked at his hair. “Just let me take care of you, brother mine. You’ve always been there for me and now it’s my turn. I’ve got you.” He unbuttoned the shirt and worked it off his torso, and did the same for the trousers, but left his underwear on. He took out several wipes and gently worked them over his face, neck, and chest, knowing it wouldn’t wipe away the feeling of unwanted hands and lips on his skin, but hoping it would help him feel a little fresher. Once he was done, he dressed him in the pyjamas and helped him climb under the covers. Mycroft made a distressed sound as he stood and he hurried to reassure him he was simply turning out the light before coming to bed.

They lay there, his older brother clinging to him as if he was the only thing holding him in reality, and he fought the urge to go back after Elliott and finish beating him to death. The man deserved all that and more for doing this to Mycroft and Sherlock swore if he ever came across the man again, he wouldn’t survive. With dark thoughts of revenge on his mind, he fell into an uneasy sleep.
Chapter 31

The feeling of being wrapped in the warmth of a secure and loving embrace washed over Mycroft as he slowly came awake. As he lay there in the predawn darkness, listening to the deep, even breathing of his brother, the memories from the previous night intruded upon his thoughts. Almost immediately he was flooded with shame. A deeply humiliating, all encompassing shame at what he had failed to prevent.

He was Mycroft Fucking Holmes for Christ’s sake. His intelligence surpassed that of 99% of people on the planet, he had had extensive training in espionage, he had taught himself the art of deduction and could read the innermost thoughts of everyone around him. So how the fuck had he missed this?

Looking back now, the signs were so clear they may as well have had neon flashing lights above them. He didn’t understand why or how, but for some reason he had allowed himself to think only of Elliott’s exemplary service history and his loyalty, and to ignore the clear signs of his dangerous narcissism and sense of entitlement. He had even dismissed Sherlock’s reactions as pure jealousy, which was completely unforgivable. His brother had a keen sense of character but was not easily cowered. If Elliott had been causing warning signals to be set off in Sherlock’s mind, he should have paid it more heed.

But he had not and he had failed spectacularly. If it wasn’t for Sherlock and Mark’s intervention, he would have been powerless to stop Elliott from taking what he wanted. And he would have deserved every bit of it for his complete and utter failure to see it coming.

How would his brother ever be able to look at him again? He was surprised he was still here. By all rights he should have left in disgust by now - it was all Mycroft’s fault and he had it coming. Not only had he not had the balls to attend the function by himself, but the whole cover up had been his idea. He was the one who had suggested it, he was the one who had hand picked Elliott and Mark, he was the one who had told Sherlock to trust him on this. And look how it had ended. And he’d gotten off lightly. A few gropes and kisses…but he could still remember the fear and panic that had stabbed through him as his trousers had been yanked down his thighs, when his shirt had been torn away. Immobile and unable to stop it from happening. All he’d managed was to utter a plea to stop, but of course it had fallen on deaf ears. If Sherlock hadn’t come…

With momentous effort he pulled his mind back to the present, concentrating on the sensation of Sherlock’s arms around him. It wouldn’t take long after his brother woke to realise that he was much better off without this pathetic example of a man. If this was to be the last time he would feel the warmth enveloping him, then he would cherish every second, even if his heart was shattering into a thousand pieces at the mere thought of losing Sherlock.

There had been times in his life before when he thought he’d lost his baby brother - the darker days of his addiction, the years he was gone after The Fall - but this was so much worse than either of those. Because now he had touched, and tasted, and shared, and loved, deeper and more purely than he’d ever thought possible. And it had been returned. Hesitant and bashful at times, but his enthusiasm had more than made up for his lack of experience. Mycroft had so very much to lose now and it made it that much harder than the previous times. Before he would have lost his brother, and his best friend (for even though Sherlock had had Victor, and then John, Mycroft had always considered Sherlock to be his best friend), but now he would lose not only that but also his lover, his confidante, his soul mate, his everything.

Black despair settled over him at the thought and unable to stop it, a sob escaped him. His throat burned, his jaw ached, and his eyes began to shed tears faster than they could fall. His body
shuddered as he heaved in breaths, only for them to be choked back out.

The strong arms around him tightened and he felt Sherlock shift. He instinctively clung to him, his body sure that if he didn’t let go, he could never leave him. He felt the last moments of slumber leave his brother and he waited for the moment to come, the moment when he would flinch and shie away from the wretched and worthless lump laying next to him.

The moment never came. Sherlock pulled him even closer and he felt that perfect Cupid’s bow brush his forehead as he was kissed gently. “I’m here, Mycie. You’re safe, I’m here.”

He cried even harder at the genuine kindness behind the words and he buried his face against his brother’s chest. A distant part of his mind cringed at his deplorable behaviour - the embarrassment when it hit later was going to be overwhelming, but for now he dismissed it. Sherlock started to rock him gently, and slowly his weeping ceased. He lay, exhausted, against him, listening to the rhythmic thud of Sherlock’s heartbeat. A hand reached up to stroke his cheek and he caught it, turning it over in his hands, aghast at the state of his knuckles. “Sherlock, what happened?”

“I had a feeling you didn’t remember much after I burst into the room,” his brother rumbled.

He shook his head. “As cliched as it sounds, it’s all a bit of a blur.”

“After I’d pulled that bastard off you, I couldn’t help but throw a few punches.”

“A few?” he exclaimed. “I think some of these might be broken.” He pressed a gentle kiss to the bruised and swollen knuckles. “Have you had medical attention? Oh God! Your shoulder!” He scrambled to check underneath the t shirt but his brother gently held him at bay.

“I’m fine, Mycie. Must you always worry for me? Now is a perfectly acceptable time for you to put yourself first.”

“I got what I deserved,” he whispered, hiding his face again.

Sherlock stiffened beneath him and he was pushed backwards until he was being held at arm’s length. “Don’t you ever say that!” he cried, his glorious eyes fierce. “No one deserves what Elliott tried to do to you. The blame lies solely at his feet. And perhaps at mine.”

“No! You are not to blame for this, Sherlock.”

He nodded, his face grim. “Yes, I am. If I hadn’t been so childish...if I had been here, waiting for you when you got home, I could have stopped it going as far as it did.”

“I was the one who put this whole thing in motion to begin with. You could not have foreseen what would happen. That responsibility lies with me.”

Sherlock sighed and slumped back against the pillow, pulling Mycroft back against him. “I refuse to get into a blame game over this when ultimately we wouldn’t be here if Elliott was a decent human being. Both of us have been blindsided by this and there’s a lesson there somewhere I’m sure, but I don’t care to think on that right now. What I care about is being here for you.”

“I’m fine, Sherlock. You don’t have to worry.”

“You are not fine, brother dear. As much as you hide behind the Iceman persona, I know better. You are hurting, and you are scared, and you are off footed. But I’m here for you, no matter what it takes.”
Mycroft had nothing to say to that. Of course Sherlock would see through him, see the truth. What surprised him was the fact he was willing to stay, to remain by his side. It was more than he deserved, and beyond what he expected. He was not used to being the one who needed to be ‘taken care of’. He had always been strong, capable, independent. It felt odd to rely on someone else to get through a tough time. But of everyone who walked the earth, he could think of no one he would rather place his faith in than his brother. He loved Sherlock, but he also trusted him. He knew that if he said he would be there, then he would. And he found great comfort in that.

Mycroft closed his eyes, and breathed in the scent of his brother’s skin. He was tired, so very tired, and sleep beckoned. He feared the images that would cross his mind once he lost consciousness so to ward them off, he concentrated on memories of Sherlock. The way the skin of his stomach felt as he caressed it. The taste of hot skin under his lips. The low, rumble of his laugh. The look in his eyes as he told Mycroft he loved him.

When sleep did finally take him, against all odds, Mycroft had a smile on his lips.
Once he was sure his brother was asleep, Sherlock gently extracted himself from their embrace and slipped out of bed. He stood for a few moments just gazing down on Mycroft, noticing how he appeared so much younger whilst sleeping. All his worries and cares disappeared from his face and he seemed calm and serene. The love he felt for him threatened to bubble over and overwhelm him and he took steadying breaths until it passed. He had never imagined just how powerful emotions could be but now that he was fully experiencing them for the first time since his childhood, he could better appreciate the masses. He’d always been so dismissive of people who had been motivated by their base emotions but now, now he understood.

He headed for the kitchen and put the kettle on, debating with himself over what to do next. He needed to be here for Mycroft and didn’t want to leave to gather enough belongings to see him through. Mark had already done so much for them that he didn’t want to impose any more than he already had. His best bet was to ask John, since not only would he be able to bring what was needed, Sherlock could also have his shoulder checked over again. The pain was immense this morning and he winced at every small movement and jolt. The doctor would obviously ask questions and so he would need to walk a fine line between being truthful enough to explain why he would be staying here, whilst keeping Mycroft’s secret. Sherlock knew that John would not think any less of Mycroft for his assault - no one in their right mind would - but his brother would find that level of scrutiny upsetting and he didn’t want that.

Deciding to call instead of text, he picked up his phone. It would not only be more expedient to explain, but breaking from his preferred method would instill a weight to the conversation which should convince John of the importance of it.

“Sherlock?” John answered, his voice quiet given the early hour. “Is everything okay?”

“No, John, it’s not. Mycroft was drugged and attacked last night. I’m going to stay with him until he’s recovered so I’ll need some things. I was wondering if you could bring them round for me?”

“Um, sure, I guess. Though I thought Mycroft would have sent one of his minions for this sort of thing.”

“What? Sherlock, what do you mean, patched you up? How did you get injured? I thought you were with Mark?”

Oh. Oops. He hadn’t thought this through very well. “Mycroft managed to get a message to me and I knew he was in trouble. Mark and I intervened, but during the course of this I managed to aggravate my shoulder.”

He heard the doctor sigh. “It’s never going to heal if you keep tearing the wound open.”

“I’m aware of how the healing process works, John. But it wasn’t exactly a priority at the time.”

“No, of course not, sorry. Is Mycroft okay?”

Surprised at the genuine concern in John’s voice, it took Sherlock a moment to respond. “He’s sleeping at the moment, but I’m hoping he’ll recover.”
“Okay, well I’ll pack you some clothes and whatnot and come round now. Mrs Hudson is up so I’m sure she’ll watch Rosie for me.”

“Thank you, John.”

“That’s just weird.”

“What is?”

John laughed. “You saying thank you. I guess Mark is having a bigger influence on you than I thought.”

“Oh, right, well I suppose he is. I’ll see you soon.” He hung up, reminded once again why he preferred to text than talk. The kettle boiled and he made a cup of tea, then ducked upstairs to check on Mycroft. He was still out like a light and he hoped he would stay that way for some time to come. Sherlock didn’t want him to wake up alone but until John had come and gone, he couldn’t get back into bed with him. He brushed his lips softly against his forehead and then crept from the room.

The doctor arrived shortly and Sherlock ushered him into the kitchen. He made him a cup of tea and then perched on one of the breakfast stools while John examined the wound.

“It’s quite swollen and inflamed, but otherwise, it looks okay,” he said, wiping over it with an antibacterial wipe. “The butterfly clips are doing a good job holding it closed so I’m going to leave them on instead of stitching it. I’ve got some anti-inflammatories and pain pills you can take for the next couple of days which should help as well.” He handed over the medications and then the t shirt so Sherlock could slip it back on. “Want me to check your knuckles?” he asked once his patient was dressed.

The detective flexed his hand, wincing slightly but then shook his head. “No, I think they’re okay.”

“Just be careful with them. It’ll hurt like a bitch if you knock them against a cupboard or wall.”

You’d know Sherlock thought bitterly. Even though John had come at the end and saved him from Culverton Smith, it hadn’t nullified the beating he’d given him in the morgue. Mycroft had helped him see that he hadn’t been responsible for the death of Mary, but he knew John still blamed him. The violence he’d shown him that day had frozen something inside of him. John was still his best friend, but he no longer trusted him as much as he once did. Now didn’t seem to be the time to get into an argument so he kept his thoughts to himself. “I’ll be sure to be careful.”

“Want me to examine your brother?”

“No, he’s still resting. If he requires further medical aid I’m sure Anthea will arrange it.”

“Right, well I’ll be off then. Mrs Hudson is going out to meet friends soon so I promised I wouldn’t be long.” He pointed to a bag he’d set down next to the table. “I didn’t pack you any suits since they’d just crinkle, but there’s a few changes of clothes and your toiletries.”

“I appreciate your help, John.”

He shook his head. “Still weird. But you’re welcome. Let me know when you’ll be coming home.”

“I will. Give Rosie a cuddle from me?”

John gave him a warm smile. “I will. See you later.”
Once he’d left, Sherlock set about making a simple breakfast for Mycroft. He had a feeling his brother wouldn’t want to eat anything but hopefully he could be encouraged to have a few bites of toast at the very least. He made up a pot of tea and popped it on a tray, along with the toast and Mycroft’s favourite apricot jam, then carried it upstairs.

His brother was awake when he arrived and he cursed himself for dallying with breakfast. There was a haunted look in Mycroft’s eyes and it broke Sherlock’s heart. His brother was the strongest person he knew and he should never feel broken and doubtful. He placed the tray on the side table and climbed onto the bed. “Morning,” he said, pressing a kiss to his temple.

“Sherlock,” he replied. He left unsaid his surprise at his younger brother still being there but Sherlock read it in his face anyway.

“I’m not going anywhere, Mycie,” he assured him. “Will you have some breakfast?”

“Just tea, please.”

He smiled, and didn’t push the matter, just got up and made him a cup the way he liked it. He got a piece of toast for himself and slathered it in jam. “Anthea will probably ring sometime this morning,” he said as he sat down again.

Mycroft nodded. “I’ll need to speak to her about some things I’ll require for meetings I have tomorrow.”

“You don’t have any meetings tomorrow. She’s cancelled everything so you can stay at home and rest.”

“I don’t need rest, Sherlock. I have things I need to do.”

“And you can do things, but they will not be work related.”

Mycroft glared at him. “This is unacceptable, Sherlock.”

“Look at it this way,” he said, trying a different approach. “Instead of sitting in boring meetings, you will have a couple of days to lounge around with me. Alone. Uninterrupted. And we can do whatever we want.” Mycroft opened his mouth to protest and Sherlock snatched the opportunity to push a bite of toast inside. “You’ll not getting out of this, Mycie. May as well accept it.”

“It appears making me do things against my will is a running theme this weekend,” he snapped after he had swallowed the toast.

Sherlock’s eyes went wide and he hastily back peddled. “No! No, no, no, that’s not what I meant. I’m sorry, Mycie, so sorry, I promise, I didn’t mean it like that.” He reached forward to touch his brother but pulled back, unsure if contact would be appreciated. All he’d wanted to do was to give Mycroft time to get over the trauma he’d been through, without the added stress of work, but it had backfired horribly.

“I think I’d prefer to be alone now,” Mycroft said, turning over and putting his back to him.

He wanted to protest, to push closer and hold him, to never let go, but he knew that that was the very worst thing he could do right now. Mycroft needed time to process what had happened and Sherlock had to respect that. If it meant being alone, then as much as he hated it, he had to do it. For once, this wasn’t about himself.

On quiet feet, Sherlock crossed to the door and closed it gently behind him.
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Mycroft remained closeted away in the spare room for the majority of the day. He hated himself for pushing Sherlock away, for accusing him of trying to force him to do something he didn’t want to do when he knew he was only trying to help. But it was all too much right now. He needed time to just come to terms with what had almost happened so he could move on. Being vulnerable was not a feeling he was familiar with and it was not one he was enjoying. The sooner he could get back in control of his life, the sooner he could put this unfortunate event behind him.

He knew that both Anthea and Sherlock were correct however - a few days away from the office would be of great benefit. He phoned his PA before she could call him to discuss how to cover his workload during his absence, discovering that she had already sorted it. She informed him that she had told the PM that Mycroft had come down with a bad case of laryngitis and would be unavailable, even for phone calls. Anything that simply could not be handled by anyone other than the elder Holmes would have to be managed via email.

With extreme effort, Mycroft kept his voice calm and asked what had been done with Elliott. With the knowledge he had gained from his work, it was not viable to cut him loose by terminating his contract. The risk that he would resort to blackmail or turning double agent as revenge was too high to take. He would have to be kept under tight scrutiny but to have him incarcerated would ask too many questions that Mycroft was not willing to answer. It was a conundrum and a half but Anthea seemed confident that she had found the best fix for the situation.

“He’s been volunteered for human trials at Baskerville. I’ve had a word with Major Barrymore and he’s aware that Elliott is considered a traitor and is to be treated as such. He won’t be leaving there anytime soon.” There was a hardness to her voice and he was certain that she had probably given some additional clandestine instructions to Barrymore to ensure the agent was subjected to the nastiest trials possible. Surviving said trials would be optional.

Relief washed over Mycroft at knowing that he would never have to come face to face with the man again. “Thank you, Anthea,” he said with genuine gratitude.

“My pleasure, sir. Do you require anything else?”

“No, I believe that will be all for now.”

He rang off and then sat quietly, looking out the window. The sky was covered in dark grey clouds and threatened rain, fitting weather for his mood. Christmas was only weeks away and he wondered idly if they might have a white Christmas. He normally didn’t care about such things but the vision of Sherlock standing outside in their parent’s garden, a scarf snug around his neck, white flakes melting as they fell on the mop of dark curls was enough for him to long for such a thing. He wished he could take Sherlock away somewhere for a private holiday but knew it was impossible. Their parents were quite lenient with birthdays and such but insisted they all spent Christmas together as a family. The only variation this year would most likely be a trip to Sherrinford to visit Eurus. And that was another issue he would have to put his mind to at some point in the near future. As much as he had no concerns of keeping their relationship a secret from their parents, the chances of their deranged sister having the wool pulled over her eyes was much less. But that dilemma could wait for another day.
He stood and went in search of his brother, now suddenly craving his contact. Sherlock had knocked on the door several times during the day, leaving out cups of tea and a sandwich at lunchtime. The small gestures had meant much to the elder brother. The fact that he was giving him space but still taking care of him had warmed him to the core. He found him in the study, flipping through a pile of files that were stacked on his desk. “Those are classified,” Mycroft chided from the doorway.

Sherlock grinned impishly at him. “And yet you left them out. Don’t worry, I’ve left post it notes on each one with information you’ll require. I’ve identified at least three terror suspects.”

“England thanks you.”

“I didn’t do it for England.” He got to his feet but then stood there, hesitant.

“I’m sorry,” Mycroft said before he could speak. “About before. It wasn’t fair of me.”

His brother shook his head. “You have nothing to apologise for.” He took a step forward, then paused. “I don’t want to do anything that makes you uncomfortable.”

“I just want you close,” he said, his voice cracking a little. It was enough assurance to make Sherlock take the final steps separating them and he was folded into his arms. “I’m sorry for being so needy.”

Sherlock huffed against his neck. “Stop being so ridiculous. You’re not being needy, and I’m more than happy to do whatever it is that will make you feel better.”

“I just feel like I’m being so very childish,” he admitted. “Nothing even happened and yet I’ve fallen apart at the seams.”

“You were drugged and threatened, and that bastard put his hands on you. That’s not ‘nothing’, Mycie. You’re allowed to be upset over this.”

He sighed and lay his head against Sherlock’s chest. “I suppose so. I just feel...I don’t know how I feel, actually. It’s all a mess in my head right now. I need a distraction.”

“I think that can be arranged,” Sherlock rumbled. “Dance with me?”

“Pardon?”

“You need a distraction, and I didn’t get to dance with you last night. Will you dance with me?”

He felt himself smile as he looked into the blue-green nebula of Sherlock’s eyes. “I would love to dance with you.”

Sherlock beamed and pulled his phone from his pocket. He scrolled through until he found the song he wanted and set the phone on the side table. He hit play and the first notes of a piano drifted across the room. He held out a hand and Mycroft took it, slotting himself against his brother’s lithe figure. The lyrics began and Sherlock started humming along, low and deep so it could be felt vibrating through his chest. Mycroft wasn’t familiar with the song, just swayed along with his brother, listening to him hum. The chorus began and Sherlock began to sing quietly, almost breathing the words against Mycroft’s auburn hair. “Oh oh, oh oh, be my baby, I’ll look after you.”

“What song is this?” he asked, surprised to find something like this on Sherlock’s playlist.

“Look After You by The Fray,” he replied, twirling them around the room. “Mrs Hudson has all of their albums and listens to them constantly. I developed quite a liking for them.”
He just nodded, listening to the words that his brother sang into his ear. “There now, steady love, so few come and don’t go, will you won’t you, be the one I always know? When I’m losing my control, the city spins around, you’re the only one who knows, you slow it down.”

“How very fitting,” he murmured, tightening his arms around his brother.

“You are my tether, Mycie. The only one who understands what it’s like in our heads, the only one who has ever been able to help me find some measure of peace.” He pressed a kiss to his forehead. “You’ve always been there for me, please let me be there for you now. Let me look after you?”

He nodded, feeling a tear trickle down his cheek. How could he deny this perfect angel anything he asked. “Yes.”

Sherlock pulled him tightly against him and buried his face in his hair. “God I love you so much, Mycie. I am so utterly, head over heels in love with you.”

His heart swelled at his brother’s emotional admission. “I love you too, Sherlock.”

“Just don’t ever tell anyone how much of a sap I’ve turned into.”

Mycroft laughed. “No one would believe me. Just as they wouldn’t believe you if you told them how sentimental I’ve become.”

“Not so much The Iceman and The Virgin anymore, are we?”

“No, no we’re not. But as long as I have you, I wouldn’t change it for the world.”

“Neither would I.”

They continued to dance, Sherlock humming along and occasionally singing a lyric. The song came to an end and the room fell silent. Their eyes met and Mycroft was almost overwhelmed by the depth of the feeling that was reflected back at him. Sherlock reached up and cupped his cheeks, leaning forward and laying a gentle kiss on Mycroft’s lips, and then another. He licked across the seam of Mycroft’s lips, pushing his tongue inside, deepening the kiss, his hands remaining firm on either side of Mycroft’s head. The older man froze, and then pulled back. “Oh, God,” he said, jerking away from his touch. “Oh fuck, I think I’m going to be sick.”

And he ran from the room.

Chapter End Notes

For a very long time now I’ve had the idea of these two dancing to this song. It just seems to fit them perfectly. Of course I’d originally planned for Mycroft to play it for Sherlock but it seemed so very fitting here.

If you’re not familiar with it, you can check it out here - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iYOoJLuay
Chapter 34

Sherlock hovered outside the bathroom, listening to the sounds of his brother vomiting inside. Worry churned in his gut at the knowledge that it was his touch, his kiss, that had caused this reaction. He silently berated himself for taking things too fast - it was only last night that his brother had been assaulted and already he had tried to snog him! Could he have been any stupider? More selfish?

There came the sound of the toilet flushing and a moment later Mycroft emerged, pale and drawn. “I’m so sorry, brother,” he said with a shaky voice. “I’m not sure what came over me, but it seems to have passed now.”

Sensing that he didn’t want to talk further about it, Sherlock gave him a smile and offered his hand. That Mycroft took willingly buoyed his spirits immensely and he led him through to the kitchen. He sat him on one of the breakfast stools and filled a glass with cool water. “Can I get you anything else?” he asked as his brother gulped down the liquid.

Wiping a finger over his bottom lip to catch a stray drop of water, Mycroft shook his head. “I’m fine, thank you.”

“Would you like anything to eat?” Other than a single bite of toast, he knew that Mycroft had not eaten that day since he’d not touched the sandwich he’d made him.

“No, I don’t think I’d keep anything down right now.” He bit his lip, seeing immediately the concern on the younger man’s face. “Perhaps something later?”

“Of course. What would you like to do?” Sherlock’s preference was to go to bed and hold Mycroft close but he knew that that wasn’t going to happen.

“Would you play for me?” his brother asked, a little shy.

“I don’t have my violin with me.”

“I have one here. In the music room...would that be okay?”

He nodded, not going to deny him anything and followed Mycroft through to the room in question. There were numerous instruments in the room but what drew the eye was the baby grand piano in the very centre. It was covered in a dust cloth and looked as if it hadn’t been used in many years. He bit back the desire to urge Mycroft to sit and play, longing to hear the beautiful music his brother created but knowing that it wasn’t the time for what he wanted right now. He picked up the violin from the stand, noting the quality of the instrument. “Why on earth do you have this anyway?” he asked as he plucked a few strings, finding it well tuned.

“On the off chance you wanted to play of course.”

“Why did you not just ask me?”

Mycroft gave him a sad smile. “Have you forgotten already, brother dear, that it was only mere weeks ago that we would rather gripe at each other than have a civilised conversation? I first bought it when you were in rehab the first time. I hoped that once you had completed the course, you would stay with me and it would help you acclimatise back into the real world. Alas, we both know that that never happened.”

A lump rose in Sherlock’s throat as he remembered the events. He had left rehab, bitter and resentful
of his brother’s ‘meddling’ and had refused to speak to him for a whole year. The next time he’d seen him was when Mycroft had found him, close to death in a drug den. He had hurled abuse at his brother as he’d been taken to rehab once again, ignoring the fact he would most certainly be dead if not for his intervention. It was only once he’d gotten clean and had started helping Lestrade with cases that he had seen his brother again. They had never gone back to the easy friendship from their childhood, falling into a pattern of arguing and petty bickering.

Feeling that he could never convey the depth of his apology using mere words, he silently lifted the violin to his shoulder and began to play. Mycroft took a seat on the piano stool, facing Sherlock, and his eyes closed as he allowed the music to wash over him. Sherlock didn’t know how long he played for, but he worked his way through every piece he knew to be favourites of his brother’s, and played several that he thought he may like. Little by little he saw the tension start to ebb from Mycroft’s shoulders as he started to relax.

While he played, he couldn’t quite keep his fears from lurking in the background of his mind. Was this aversion to his kiss just a once off? Or would Mycroft shun any form of intimate touches on a more permanent basis? He had been okay with being held and contact that gave comfort, but was that his limit now? Or would it pass once he had dealt with what had happened to him? As worried as he was for his brother, he couldn’t help but admit to himself that he was grieving for the potential loss of their intimate relationship. It had only just begun, and although he would do whatever Mycroft needed, would be whatever Mycroft needed, he couldn’t hide from the fact that he would miss the physical aspect immensely. If his brother did want to change their relationship back to a purely platonic, brotherly one then he would need to ensure that nothing of his feelings on the matter showed through. He would not add fuel to the bonfire of guilt that Mycroft had built. As selfish and self-absorbed as he was, when it came to Mycroft’s well being he was more than willing to put himself dead last.

He finished his current piece and allowed the instrument to drop from his shoulder. Mycroft’s eyes fluttered open and he managed to gift him with a smile. “Beautiful as always, brother mine,” he complimented. “Thank you for indulging me.”

“You only have to ask,” Sherlock said, placing the violin back on its stand. He gave into temptation and asked a favour of his own. “Would you by any chance indulge a whim of mine?” He crossed the space to the piano and lay a hand on top of the dust cover. “I’ve missed your playing.”

Mycroft twisted to look over his shoulder at his brother. “I haven’t played in years. I’m not sure if I even remember how.”

“They’re two entirely different instruments, brother. That would be like comparing apples and oranges, even if my skill was not up to par.”

“If? I find it likely that it most certainly isn’t if you’re too cowardly to try.”

The older man’s eyes narrowed dangerously and he swung around on the stool, ripping the dust cover towards him so it slipped from the surface. He didn’t speak, just lifted the lid and settled his
fingers over the keys. With a withering glance at Sherlock he began to play, his hands moving rapidly from side to side as the angry notes of Chopin’s *Revolutionary* rang out.

Sherlock looked on in awe, not only at his brother’s talent after so long a hiatus, but at the emotion he was pouring into the piece. He knew from his own experience that playing helped him immensely when he had to deal with difficult situations and complicated emotions and he hoped it would be the same with Mycroft. If he could purge some of the anger, frustration, and helplessness through a healthy avenue like this, then perhaps it would enable him to heal more quickly.

As the piece continued, tears began to fall down Mycroft’s cheeks. His fingers began to falter as the drops grew heavier and by the time he let his hands lift from the keys to cradle his face, Sherlock had straddled the stool, gathering his brother into his arms and holding him close. He knew Mycroft would be horrified at how often he had broken out into fits of weeping over the course of the last twenty four hours, but it was what he needed to do. He rocked the trembling figure, whispering words of love and comfort and swore to himself that he would do whatever it took to help Mycroft find himself again.
Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

They spent the night in the spare room again since Mycroft wasn’t quite ready to return to his own bedroom. He strongly encouraged Sherlock to take one of the pain pills that John had left as he could tell his baby brother was in quite a lot of discomfort. The detective had resisted of course - they were a strong dose and he would be knocked out for a solid six hours, but eventually he had listened when Mycroft had assured him that he would be fine. The older man was exhausted after his emotionally draining day and he was looking forward to a good night’s sleep. He hadn’t mentioned that the medication should result in a dreamless sleep - as selfish as it was, he didn’t think he could cope if Sherlock had a nightmare during the night, but he also didn’t want Sherlock to feel forced into taking drugs of any kind, even if they had been prescribed by a doctor.

He noticed that as they settled in for the night, Sherlock was very careful to avoid any intimate touches or kisses. He was grateful, not knowing how he would react. He still found his brother incredibly attractive and alluring, and he still wanted a physical relationship with him, but he just couldn’t do it right now. He doubted he’d be able to get aroused at all and he didn’t want Sherlock to feel rejected if he tried to initiate something, only to have Mycroft fail him.

He was still very receptive however to being comforted by the younger man and he snuggled in close to his chest, enjoying being held. He was not easily frightened or scared and he honestly wouldn’t have described what he was feeling as either of those, but he couldn’t deny he felt safe in Sherlock’s arms. He relaxed into the hold, listening to the rhythmic beat of his brother’s heart, feeling his chest rise and fall as his breathing began to even out. He dimly realised that Sherlock had fallen asleep but by that point he was on the cusp as well so he made a passing note of it before allowing himself to succumb to sleep.

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To keep his brother happy, Mycroft managed to eat some fruit and yoghurt the following morning. He made a pointed remark about the shoe being on the other foot now as he had spent most of his life trying to get his brother to eat. Sherlock had just rolled his eyes and pushed a late harvested blackberry into the older man’s mouth.

They retired to the living room for a quiet morning of reading but the peace was interrupted not long afterwards by a pounding at the front door. Sherlock waved Mycroft back to the couch as he got up to answer it. He didn’t bother to check the video feed and within minutes, both brothers would wish he had so they could have hidden and pretended no one was home.

“Mummy?” he heard Sherlock exclaim from the hallway.

“I wasn’t expecting you here,” his mother’s voice floated down into the living room. “Is your brother home?”

“Yes, but he’s -”

“Good. I need to have words with him.” She sounded furious and Mycroft seriously considered hiding behind the curtain to avoid her. It was mere moments before she was storming into the room, a scowl on her face, and a folded newspaper in her hands. Sherlock hurried in after her, throwing Mycroft a worried look. “What on earth is the meaning of this, Mycroft Charles Siger Holmes?” she
demanded, holding up the paper.

He looked at it in bewilderment. “I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he told her honestly.

“I just don’t understand, Myc,” she continued, pacing the room and waving the newspaper around. “At what point did you start to distrust your father and I so much? Did you just wake up one morning and decide that we weren’t worthy? Or do you just feel so much contempt for us that you think we’re beneath you now?”

“Mummy!” he exclaimed, aghast. “I -”

“Or perhaps having lied to us about your sister it was just so much easier to continue lying to us? But I assume that even that became too much effort so you just began to withhold information from us. It can’t be considered an outright lie if the information was never passed on in the first place, can it? I thought you were better than that. I thought you respected your father and I but I see now that I was wrong. You’ve disappointed us yet again, Mycroft.”

“Mummy!” Sherlock cut in, sharply. “What are you on about?”

“And you!” she cried, turning on her younger son, finger prodding his chest. “You didn’t feel the need to tell us either, did you? Do you two have meetings to decide what you’ll tell us and what you’ll keep from us?”

“You’re not making any sense,” Sherlock told her.

“What’s the matter?” she asked, her voice hard. “Can neither of you figure out which of your deceptions I’ve uncovered? Are there so very many of them?”

Mycroft felt his blood go cold but there was no way, simply no way that she could have discovered the truth. He could read the same thoughts flashing through Sherlock’s mind and he took a calming breath. “Mummy, perhaps if you calmed down and -”

“Calm down? Calm down? Don’t you dare tell me to calm down, young man! How exactly do you want me to react when I find out that my son has a fiance that he’s been keeping from his parents?”

“What?” Sherlock demanded.

“Oh really?” Mummy said, thrusting the paper at him. “I guess the man in this picture with his arm around you is a figment of my imagination then?”

He took the paper with shaky hands and gazed down upon an article about the function he had attended on Saturday night. There were several photos of various dignitaries and officials with their dates, one of them which showed Mycroft and Elliott. It had been captured upon their arrival and he was making a beeline for the bar. Elliott had his arm around him, helping him maneuver through the crowd and underneath was the caption ‘Lead negotiator and government official, Mycroft Holmes with his fiance’.

He fought down the bile that was rising in his throat as he stared at the picture. Flashes of those hands on him, squeezing his cock, tearing at his clothes flickered through his mind and he felt his breath hitch as he fought to take a breath. Sherlock gently pulled the paper from his hands and placed himself between his mother and brother. “Mummy, you’ve been taken in by the inaccurate reporting of a low level political journalist. Mycroft doesn’t have a fiance, and isn’t seeing anyone at all,” he lied smoothly. “He was expected to take a plus one to the event, and even asked me if I would
accompany him. I was unavailable and so he asked a co-worker to attend with him. Why they reported him as being his betrothed I have no idea but it’s incorrect.”

“It is?” she asked, the wind taken out of her sails.

“I can assure you that my brother is still the same man who is acerbically derisive towards those who believe in true love. Can you really see Mycroft leaving the office for long enough to even meet someone, let alone maintain a relationship?”

“Well I did find it a little odd,” she mused, not seeming to notice her eldest’s state of distress.

“It’s been a complete misunderstanding,” he promised her. “If he ever did find someone, I’m sure he would lord it over me for weeks and you’d hear me complaining about it from home.”

“Yes, you boys are very competitive, aren’t you.”

Mycroft caught Sherlock’s eye and he knew his brother understood that he was still reeling from this latest development. His brother slowly guided their mother towards the door without her noticing. “I do hope you haven’t wasted an entire day coming here just to chase phantoms, Mummy.”

“Oh, no, I’m meeting some old colleagues for lunch. I just came here on my way.”

“It’s a lovely day for it, I’m sure you’ll have a wonderful time catching up.”

He’d gotten her out of the living room and into the hallway before she stopped and turned to look at the both of them. “Hang on, it’s Monday. Why are you not at work, Myc?”

“He’s helping me out with a case,” Sherlock told her, directing her attention back to him. “Last time I visited him at the office I almost caused World War Three so he tries to keep me away from the place whenever possible.”

“Oh, Sherlock - are you causing trouble again?”

He grinned at her and winked. “That’s what little brothers are for. Now, we don’t want you being late for lunch, do we?” He placed a hand on her lower back and propelled her towards the front door. Soon Mycroft could only hear the murmuring sounds of their voices but his brother must have been successful in bidding her goodbye as there came the sound of the door opening and closing and he returned, alone. He crouched in front of his brother and reached up to cup his cheek. “Are you okay?” he murmured.

He could only shrug. “I seem to have upset our parents once again but that seems to be the norm lately so…”

“I’ve been disappointing them for years,” Sherlock told him. “You have a lot of catching up to do.”

Mycroft surprised himself as he chuckled at this. “I’m not used to being the black sheep.”

“I can give you lessons.” The younger man stood, the newspaper still in his hand. He glared across at the gas fire, as if it was the most offensive thing he had ever seen. “How is it that with a job such as yours, you don’t have an open fire to burn incriminating documents?”

“Because this is the twenty first century, brother mine, and we have shredders and confidential recycling services. I’m very sorry if that doesn’t live up to your flair for the dramatic.”

Sherlock huffed. “You should have a word with the higher ups to make some changes. The
government could use a bit of my flair.” He said it with such pique that Mycroft could not resist the urge to poke fun, and was relieved he still could.

“Certainly. Next time we meet in our secret underground lair I’ll be sure to raise the matter. I’ll slot it into the agenda between debating the need for hooded cloaks and the budget for hunched servants.”

“Both are equally worthy requirements,” his brother declared. “Make sure you use every ounce of your considerable influence to push for them.”

“Anything to make you happy, dear.”

Sherlock leaned down and placed a kiss on his temple. “It’s good to see you smile, brother mine.” He straightened and turned for the door. “I’m going to dispose of this, and then make us a cup of tea. Back soon.”

Mycroft watched as his lithe figure stalked gracefully from the room, feeling confident that with Sherlock at his side, it wouldn’t be long before he would be back to his normal self.

Chapter End Notes

Guys, I just want to say a big THANK YOU for your ongoing love and support with this story. I'm a bit overwhelmed with the reception its had but I'm so happy you're all continuing to enjoy it. I read every single comment but sometimes it's as I'm running out the door for work so if I don't reply, please know that they're very much appreciated. You guys rock and I'm so glad you're along for this ride with me xxx
Chapter 36

Both Anthea and Mark texted them for regular updates but neither brother felt up for company so they were left alone. Sherlock announced he would be making dinner and disappeared into the cavernous kitchen, instructing Mycroft to wait in the living room. He made himself comfortable with a book, and eyed the whiskey decanter. After a long internal debate, he decided against a drink. Given the family predilection for addictions, the last thing he wanted was to become dependant on something to help cope with the situation. Well, other than Sherlock of course. That was an addiction he’d given into long ago.

There were a series of bangs and crashes from the kitchen and he could hear his brother curse and mutter to himself. Mycroft couldn’t keep the smile off his face as he listened to the unusual symphony being produced. He knew the younger man had few culinary skills, not from lack of ability, but from lack of desire. He’d never been one to enjoy food and ate only when necessary. When his body demanded to be given fuel, he was more than content to give it toast or, if something more substantial was required, a takeaway. Mycroft was very curious as to what his brother would emerge with.

As it turned out, the cacophony did not appear to be in scale to the meal produced. As Sherlock plonked two plates of beans on toast down in front of him, Mycroft worried as to the state his kitchen had been left in. He decided that given the stress of the past couple of days, he would be forgiven for shelving that worry for now and dealing with it later.

Shoving a fork into his hands, Sherlock demanded that he eat. “You’ve had even less than I have today.”

He didn’t argue, just commenced eating, but a small, hidden part of his mind noted that the silver lining of this whole debacle was he appeared to have lost a few pounds. As much as Sherlock assured him lately that he found him desirable, all the comments from the years previously still held sway over him. He was acutely aware of the small paunch he carried around his midsection that he was unable to lose no matter how far he ran on the treadmill or how many crunches he did. It seemed even more obvious now that his ribs were starting to show, a contrast between the hard fought leanness and the stubborn middle aged spread. His bespoke suits hid it well but when he was laying naked next to his brother, all his flaws were there for the younger man to see. Compared to the hard, flat planes of Sherlock’s torso, he was more than aware he was lacking.

He allowed his eyes to dart across to his brother, sitting next to him. He was dressed in jeans and a hoodie, looking like a supermodel even when dressed so casually. His masculine beauty quite literally took his breath away at times. Sherlock could have his pick of anyone - wherever he went heads turned and eyes roamed appreciatively over him. Even straight men did a double take at times. He could have anyone he wanted, but he seemed to only want Mycroft. Never before had the older man been so happy of something in his life. The thought of his brother being with someone else, even just desiring someone else was too horrible to contemplate.

As he took in Sherlock’s perfection, he felt the slow stirrings of desire in his stomach. It took him completely by surprise as he had thought it would be a long time until he could be intimate again. Sherlock made him feel so safe and loved that it seemed to be able to break through the walls his mind had thrown up on Saturday night. It was a relief in some ways. He had been worried that the experience would forever taint what he had with his brother, but it seemed to have escaped relatively unscathed. Of course, he wouldn’t know until he actually tried anything - the disaster after their kiss yesterday was still fresh in his mind.
Sherlock cleared away their plates, beaming at Mycroft when he saw he’d eaten half of what he’d been served. He came back from the kitchen and curled up on the couch, tucking his bare feet underneath his legs. “What would you like to do now?” he asked.

Mycroft reached out a hand and took hold of those long violinist fingers. “I’m not sure how I’ll go but I would very much like to kiss you. Would you mind trying?”

A flicker of surprised passed over his features. “Are you sure? You don’t have to rush into anything on my account, brother mine.”

He smiled and gave a nod. “I’m very sure. As I said, I can’t guarantee I won’t have a similar reaction as yesterday, but please believe me when I say that it is not a reflection on my feelings for you.”

“I must admit to being a tad worried about that,” the younger man admitted. “That maybe you wouldn’t want a physical relationship with me anymore. I think giving that up would be the hardest thing I’d ever have to do.”

“Why would you think I’d end what we have together?”

Sherlock blushed and looked away, fiddling with the cuff of his jeans. “I just thought that maybe what he did would taint everything...that even though it would be me, you might not be comfortable being intimate anymore, that you’d prefer to go back to just being brothers.”

Mycroft reached up and touched his cheek. “And you’d have done that, for me?”

“Of course!” He looked shocked that he’d even asked. “I’ll do anything for you, Mycie. Surely you know that?”

Mycroft was suddenly overwhelmed by such a fierce love for his brother that he pulled him close and hugged him till the younger man couldn’t breathe. “I don’t know what I did to deserve you, brother mine, but I’ll thank every deity ever imagined by man that I have you.”

“It’s me who’s the lucky one,” Sherlock replied when he caught his breath back.

“We’re not having this argument again,” he said with a roll of his eyes.

“We’ll have it over and over until you concede!”

“How likely do you think that will be?”

Sherlock pouted. “Why must you be so stubborn?”

“It’s a defense mechanism from putting up with you for so many years.”

“It’s my job as the younger sibling to be as annoying as possible.”

“Now that is something I’ll concede.” Feeling himself relax with their banter, Mycroft closed his eyes and allowed himself to lean forward and brush their lips together. He kept it chaste for the time being, just a simple press of mouth on mouth and that seemed to be okay. He lifted his hand and lay it against Sherlock’s chest, feeling the erratic heartbeat beneath. He felt a momentary pang of regret for causing his brother to be so nervous about kissing him and swore he would try his best to get over this obstacle.

Of course, that proved to be harder in reality. As soon as he tried to deepen the kiss, he felt his stomach roil and it suddenly got very difficult to breathe. He held up a hand and pulled back slightly,
just enough to get some air. “Just give me a second,” he said, breathing hard through his nose, trying to keep the beans and toast in his gut.

Sherlock nodded, his blue-green eyes full of concern. As soon as Mycroft’s breathing started to calm, his brother reached out slowly with his hand and lay it on his knee, rubbing gentle circles over the skin. After a few minutes, the sick feeling subsided and he felt like he could continue. He closed his eyes and leaned forward, only to be stopped by Sherlock.

“Open your eyes, Mycie. Keep them open so you can see that it’s me.”

It made perfect sense and he wondered why he hadn’t thought of it before. This time as their lips met, his eyes remained locked with Sherlock’s, even if he had to go a little cross-eyed to do so. He opened his mouth slightly and felt the tip of his brother’s tongue swipe over his bottom lip and this time his stomach remained calm.

They continued to kiss, gently and slowly for several minutes and when they broke the kiss, Sherlock pulled him against him for a hug. “I love you,” he whispered.

“I love you too,” Mycroft replied. “Always.” He was suddenly overcome by a yawn and he heard his jaw cracking. “Sorry,” he said, interrupted by a second yawn. “I’m more tired than I thought, but it’s too early to go to bed just yet.”

“How about I run you a bath?” Sherlock suggested. “A nice soak should help you relax.”

Mycroft couldn’t remember the last time he’d had an actual bath. “That sounds heavenly,” he told him.

“You stay here then while I get it ready.” He uncurled and jumped up from the couch, pausing to kiss the tip of Mycroft’s nose. “Thank you,” he said quietly.

“For what?”

“For trusting me to take care of you.”

“I trust you with my heart, Sherlock. Surely you must know that means I trust you more than anyone on the planet.”

“I do, but I’m still grateful.” He took his hands in his. “Now, I have to ask you something very, very important.”

“Alright.”

“It’s very likely it will be the most important decision you ever make.”

Sherlock’s face was serious and Mycroft couldn’t read his thoughts at all. He wondered what on earth could be so dire. “Okay.”

“You need to promise me that you’ll give this the consideration it deserves. Promise me, Mycie?”

He was getting nervous now. “I promise, Sherlock. What is it?”

His brother suddenly gave him an impish grin. “Bubbles or no bubbles?”
Chapter 37

While Mycroft soaked, Sherlock went down to the second bathroom and had a shower. Once he was done he got fresh sheets from the linen closet and made the bed up in Mycroft’s bedroom. The bed in the spare room wasn’t anywhere near as comfortable as Mycroft’s regular one and he noticed the small telltale signs that the older man’s back was beginning to hurt. Hopefully the bath, followed by a night’s sleep on the firmer mattress would ease his aches. He also hoped that with himself there, he could banish the bad memories from the room.

Once everything was ready, he got a fresh pair of silk pyjamas out and knocked on the bathroom door. “Come in,” Mycroft called.

His brother looked calmer than he’d done since the attack. His face was flushed pink from the warm water and was cushioned on a bath pillow, his eyes closed. Almost all the bubbles had dissipated and Sherlock found his eyes drawn to Mycroft’s cock that was bobbing gently in the water. His own grew harder just from that quick glimpse and he averted his eyes, knowing now was not the time to get aroused. “I brought you some pyjamas,” he told him in a soft voice, not wanting to disturb him too much, as he placed them on the counter.

Mycroft’s mouth turned up into a gentle smile. “Thank you.”

“I’ll leave you to it,” Sherlock said, turning to go.

“Stay,” his brother called, water sloshing as he sat up a little. “I’m enjoying this too much to get out just yet but I’d like it if you stayed and kept me company.”

“Of course.” He perched on the closed toilet seat and watched as Mycroft slid back down into the water. The loo was right next to the bath and so he could easily reach over and run his fingers through his brother’s hair. Mycroft let out a soft sigh, his eyes fluttering closed at the sensation and Sherlock allowed his long fingers to drop down and massage his temple as well as his scalp. “I can give you a proper massage before bed if you’d like,” he offered. He’d never actually given a massage to anyone before but he figured his anatomical knowledge would help him locate the right muscles to knead and Mycroft’s reactions would indicate if he was doing it correctly.

“I don’t want to be a bother.”

He sighed. “For the last time, you’re not a bother, Mycie. As horrible as this situation is, I’m enjoying being the one to take care of you.”

“And you’re doing a wonderful job of it.”

“Yes, well who knew I had it in me?”

Mycroft’s eyes cracked open and his pale blue gaze was earnest. “I did. I’ve always been able to see your potential, brother. I hate to be the one to break it to you but you’re as far from a high functioning sociopath as you can get.”

He snorted. “Tell that to Magnussen.”

“You didn’t kill him because you were bored, Sherlock. You did it to protect your friends. That’s not the behaviour of a sociopath.”

He grunted but otherwise didn't respond. Mycroft seemed happy to leave the conversation there and
his eyes closed again. Sherlock twisted around a little so he could reach further, working his hand down Mycroft’s neck. His fingers dipped into the water and he noticed it was getting cold. “Shall I empty it out a little and top it up with hot water?” he asked.

“I’ve probably lingered too long as it is in here,” his brother answered, holding up a pruned hand.

“But are you enjoying it?”

“Very much so.”

“Then you can linger a little longer. Just let me make it more comfortable for you.” He knelt down on the bathmat and reached into the tub to find the plug. Once he’d let out some water he turned on the hot tap and Mycroft drew his knees up a little to avoid getting his feet scalded. In doing so, Sherlock’s arm brushed against his cock. The younger man opened his mouth to apologise but faltered as his eyes were drawn to the sight of his brother’s growing erection. He swallowed hard, the urge to touch and taste almost overwhelming. He looked up and saw that Mycroft was watching him, his eyes darkened with desire. “I can take care of that...if you want, that is,” he offered.

A flicker of doubt crossed his brother’s face while at the same time his cock twitched at the proposal. Eventually, Mycroft gave a small nod.

Sherlock turned off the tap and then dipped his hand back under the water, trailing his fingers up Mycroft’s leg, over his knee and up his thigh. “If it’s too much, just say the word and I’ll stop right away.” He took hold of his cock, feeling it harden the rest of the way in his hand. He reached in with his other hand and cupped Mycroft’s balls, rolling them around in his fingers, relishing how different they felt whilst buoyant in the water. The shower gel he’d used to create the bubbles helped his hand slide up and down the shaft easier than if it had been plain water and he set up a steady pace. He didn’t want to tease his brother, or draw it out, worrying that either of those actions would cause Mycroft’s anxieties to spike, instead he aimed to pleasure and relax him. Ignoring his own building desire - he could always take care of himself later - he continued to stroke up and down the silky flesh of Mycroft’s cock.

Mycroft let out a small moan of pleasure and his head fell back against the small, foam pillow. “Oh, Sherlock,” he said in a breathy voice.

“Does it feel good?” he couldn’t help but ask, still not confident with his abilities.

“Oh, God, yes .”

“Can I kiss you?” he asked, not wanting to do it without getting permission in case he spooked him.

“Mmm, please.”

He ducked his head down and captured his brother’s mouth in a sweet kiss, almost moaning himself at how good it felt. He had to let go of Mycroft’s balls so he could balance (since faceplanting in the bath would probably ruin the moment), but he curled that arm around his brother’s shoulders, holding him close. Suddenly he felt the tip of Mycroft’s tongue pushing into his mouth and he accepted it inside, almost greedy for the intimacy. He felt heady with a combination of relief, arousal, and love, more intoxicating than any drug.

Mycroft’s breaths started to come in short gasps and his whole body tensed. He cried out as he came, and Sherlock swallowed the sound down, keeping their mouths connected the entire time. His whole body shook and shuddered for almost an entire minute afterwards as he came down from his orgasm, until finally he pressed his face against Sherlock’s chest. The detective stroked the hair back from his
older sibling’s sweaty forehead and pressed a kiss to his temple, murmuring his love over and over. His cock ached and his balls felt so very heavy, needing to come, but he pushed the urge away, trying to get control over his body.

Mycroft pulled back so he could kiss him and saw straight through him. “Touch yourself,” he pleaded. “I want you to come all over me, Sherlock. Mark me as yours, please.”

He was on his feet in an instant, shucking his pyjama bottoms down and grasping his cock. It was over in an embarrassingly short amount of time, the sight of his brother, debauched and trusting below him, begging him to cover him in his seed, was more than he could handle. He cried out Mycroft’s name as he came, painting his brother’s chest and neck with thick, white stripes.

He sank back down to his knees, the sleep pants still tangled around his ankles. Mycroft pulled him in and kissed him desperately, and Sherlock understood that in his own way, he was laying claim to him. It wasn’t needed since every sliver of his heart and soul already belonged to him, but if it made his brother feel better than he wasn’t going to say anything.

The bath water was turning cold once again and Mycroft rinsed himself off and climbed out of the tub. He allowed Sherlock to indulge and stood still as the younger man dried him off with a fluffy towel. Once he was dressed in his pyjamas, Sherlock took him by the hand and led him to bed, watching for any adverse reaction to finding himself in his own bedroom. There was none and so he pulled back the blankets and helped Mycroft slip under the covers. Turning off the light, he made his way to the bed and climbed into his own side, pulling his brother close until he was plastered along the length of him. He kissed him and then nuzzled into his neck, and very soon both of them were drifting off to sleep.
They were jolted awake early the next morning by Sherlock’s phone ringing. Mycroft buried his face into the pillow as Sherlock rolled over to answer it, knowing he wouldn’t be able to go back to sleep now but enjoying the fact he could stay in bed just for the heck of it. The idea of doing this deliberately - taking a few days off just so they could spend time together - was very appealing and something he’d have to think about. Right now his attention was captured by Sherlock’s side of the conversation.

“John,” he’d said as he answered, sitting up with his back against the headboard. “What’s wrong? I see, and is she alright?” As he listened to the reply, Sherlock reached down and carded his fingers through Mycroft’s hair with his free hand. Mycroft sighed quietly and shuffled backwards until his back was pressed up against his brother’s legs. “No, of course she wouldn’t be able to. Drop her round on your way in, just remember there’s nothing here so I’ll need her whole bag. No, he’ll be fine with it, see you soon. Bye.”

Mycroft turned his head to peer up at his brother. “Is my house about to become a daycare centre?” he asked accusingly.

“She’s seven months old, Mycie. It’s not like she’s walking yet, or even crawling. The most she manages is a sort of shuffling around on her bottom. It’s very cute.”

“Cute?” It was official - Sherlock had gone insane.

“Once you get to know her you’ll change your mind.”

Mycroft groaned and threw back the covers. After their successful foray last night, he’d hoped they could spend today in bed. He was determined not to let Elliott’s actions taint his relationship with Sherlock, and he’d wanted to spend the whole day immersing himself in his brother’s touch. It didn’t appear that would be the case and as he was returning to work tomorrow, he knew this had been his last chance. At least they’d have tonight, small solace that it was. He dressed and headed down to the kitchen, requiring a minimum of two cups of coffee before the child was inflicted upon him.

John arrived just after 7am and was running late. Mycroft was grateful as it gave the doctor little opportunity to question him about the events of the weekend. He sat and finished his coffee as he watched Sherlock eagerly reach for the child, cradling her on his hip and beaming down at her. Rosie babbled at him in gibberish that almost sounded like words but not quite.

“She’s had a bottle already but there’s jars of food in there which she’ll be ready for soon,” John was saying as he hefted a large nappy bag up onto the kitchen table. “Everything else you’ll need is in the bag. It’s just a short shift today so I should be back by two.”

“No worries,” Sherlock told him, ducking his head down so he could kiss the baby on the cheek.
She giggled and reached up to touch his face. He moved his head to kiss at her fingers and she giggled again. Mycroft was fascinated, not with the child but with Sherlock’s reactions. He’d only seen him interact with her a handful of times and yet he was constantly surprised by how enthusiastic his sibling was. He wondered if a child of his own would be something Sherlock would hope for one day and felt a pang go through him as it was something he’d never be able to give him. Like a wedding ring. Or a relationship he could announce publicly.

There were so many obstacles in their way and it frustrated him to no end. He could understand the taboo of incest when it came to producing offspring but for same sex relationships and those on birth control it seemed a pointless social convention. They were of age, consenting, and in love - did it matter that they had the same parents? Who were they possibly hurting?

John was leaving and he gave him a small nod and smile in farewell, glad to see the back of him. As much as he’d approved of the friendship at the start, the man’s tendency for violence and his anger at Sherlock’s refusal of his advances had placed a black mark against his name in Mycroft’s mind. If it wasn’t for the bond his brother had formed with the baby, he might have been tempted to have John removed from the picture permanently, especially considering the friendship forming between Sherlock and Mark. But those were thoughts for another time. For now he was having a small human thrust at him.

“Hold her while I heat up some food,” Sherlock demanded.

He took her rather gingerly, still not comfortable with something that seemed so breakable and drooly. “Does she actually need feeding yet?” he enquired.

“Best to have it ready since she’ll be hungry soon. It’s almost like she has a switch and I didn’t think you’d appreciate her screaming for her breakfast.”

He winced at the thought. “No, not particularly.” He had the baby sitting on his lap, facing away from him and she tilted her head back to look up at him. Her eyes were large and bright blue and he had to admit that for a baby, she was rather...cute. He smiled down at her and murmured a hello and she babbled back at him.

“Hmmm, this is a rather paltry selection,” Sherlock said, holding up three jars of food in his large hand. “None of them are really brain food. Apple and pear, apple and mango, apple and blueberry. Was there an oversupply of apples?” He shook his head and opened the blueberry one, putting the others in the fridge. “Honestly, how does John expect her brain to develop if he’s not going to feed her the right foods. I’d have thought as a doctor he’d be right onto that.”

“You seemed to survive on carrot sticks and biscuits as a child and your brain turned out fine,” Mycroft told him.

“Yes, but maybe if I’d eaten better I’d be more like you.”

“I think genetics may have had something to do with it,” he said, feeling the need to poke his tongue out at Rosie. He did and she giggled hysterically.

“But we’ll never know for sure.”

The baby wriggled around and he interpreted the movement to mean she wanted to face him. He helped her turn around and she leaned against his chest, clutching at the front of his shirt. He winced as she pulled a button towards her and tried to suck on it. “Oh no you don’t,” he told her as he gently extracted the garment from her mouth. “This shirt is worth more than I’d get for you if I sold you on the black market.”
“You will not be selling my God daughter on the black market,” Sherlock told him primly, scooping the baby food into a microwave proof bowl.

“It wasn’t your shirt in her gob.”

“That’s not the point.”

Rosie reached for the button again and he held her hand away. Her face crumpled and she immediately started crying. He felt terrible and looked to Sherlock for support. “What do I do?” he asked.

“Either let her have your button or let her cry.”

“But it’s a micro-diamond cotton-jacquard shirt!”

“Best close your ears then,” Sherlock told him with a smirk.

“Don’t cry,” he begged the baby, bouncing her up and down on his knee. “You’ll have some breakfast soon so there’s no need to eat my shirt.” She continued to cry and he pulled her against his chest, hoping to calm her down. She reached up to his face and took hold of his nose, tugging on it. He grimaced but allowed her to continue and soon her sobs stopped and she was laughing gleefully. He looked over to see Sherlock watching in amusement and he glared at him. “Is her food ready yet?” he asked.

His brother held up a bowl but didn’t make a move for the table. “This is most entertaining.”

“That’s because it’s not your nose she’s pulling.”

“It’s such a nice, long nose,” Sherlock said with a grin.

“Not how it usually gets described I must admit.”

“I’d pull on it myself but I prefer to pull on another nice, long appendage of yours.”

“Sherlock!” Mycroft admonished. “Not in front of the baby!”

He laughed and finally came across to the table. “Turn her around so I can feed her.”

“I’m not a high chair.”

“Actually, considering the complete lack of a high chair in your house, today you are, brother mine.”

He sighed but did as he was told. “When did my life turn into this?” he lamented.

Sherlock went to reply but was cut short by Rosie pawing at the spoon and then shoving her blueberry covered fist into his mouth. Watching the affronted expression on his face made Mycroft reconsider. Perhaps this wasn’t the worst way to spend the day.
Chapter 39

The three of them shared a rather relaxing morning. Sherlock appeared to be very hands on when it came to caring for the baby, and Mycroft was exhausted just watching him. He would hold her on his knee and read to her - science journals mostly - and Rosie appeared to be fascinated. Mycroft knew it wasn’t the content but the way Sherlock’s voice would rumble as he read, and the way he interacted with her, asking questions and making comments between tickles. After their reading session, the baby had some floor time, but Sherlock didn’t just dump her down there and go and do something else. He got down with her, played with toys and encouraged her to begin to crawl. The eldest brother hadn’t understood what Sherlock had meant by a ‘bum shuffle’ but he soon saw it in action. It was indeed rather cute.

Mycroft had pictured himself spending the morning catching up on some reading or even the never ending reports that arrived in his email inbox. Instead, he spent the entire time just watching Sherlock. Every now and then he would have Rosie deposited on his lap so his brother could use the bathroom or just fulfill his need to see Mycroft with the child. He didn’t understand what Sherlock was hoping to prove, but he didn’t argue and took her in his arms when she was held out to him. By the time John came to pick her up, Mycroft was confident that he couldn’t break her by accident and he noticed Sherlock’s satisfied nod.

“Everything go okay?” John asked when he arrived.

“She was an angel as usual,” Sherlock replied. Mycroft bit his cheek to stop himself from commenting that it was Sherlock who was the angel. That might have given them away.

“Good to hear,” the doctor replied opening the nappy bag and making sure everything was packed away. “How are you, Mycroft?” he asked after he’d zipped it back up. “You were drugged?”

“Yes, but I’m feeling much better now. Thank you.” He hoped the man wouldn’t ask for details.

“So does that mean you’ll be back home tonight?” John asked Sherlock. “I’ve got the car with me so I can give you a lift if you want?”

Realising his mistake too late, Mycroft’s eyes flicked across to his brother, hoping his panic wasn’t too obvious. What John was suggesting made sense and it would be suspicious if he didn’t take him up on the offer. His own desire for one more night with Sherlock beside him didn’t outweigh their need to keep their secret.

“I think I’ll stay just one more night,” the detective told his flatmate, echoing Mycroft’s thoughts.

“Is that really necessary?” the blonde asked. “He says he’s fine.”

“My brother has a tendency to say he’s fine when he’s not,” Sherlock said with a pointed look at Mycroft. “I want to be sure.”

“I would have thought Elliott would be better suited to that role.” John’s eyes narrowed. “Speaking of, where is Elliott? I’d have thought he’d have been here.”

Their new relationship was definitely dulling their brains. Mycroft cursed yet another aspect they’d failed to take into consideration. Sherlock was calm though as he regarded him. “Do you mind if I tell him?” he asked. Mycroft wasn’t sure what exactly he was referring to but knew his brother wouldn’t give away the nature of their relationship. So he just nodded, and put his trust in him. “It was Elliott who attacked Mycroft,” Sherlock explained.

“I didn’t stop to ask,” the younger man admitted. “After I’d pulled him off Mycroft, I was too busy punching him to care about his excuses. Both he and Mycroft are alpha males so perhaps he wanted to subdue my brother, make him not so commanding? Who knows?”

John slipped into doctor mode. “Have you spoken to someone, Mycroft? A counsellor? The psychological aspects of such an attack can be severe, even more so than when you don’t know the person. You’re dealing not only with the attack itself but also the breach of trust.”

“I have the matter under control,” he assured him, not wanting to discuss the matter with the ex-soldier.

“You might think you do but I must advise you seek professional help.”

“And now you see why I am hesitant to leave him,” Sherlock said. “I’ll be home tomorrow but I might come and stay here again this weekend.”

“There’s really no need,” Mycroft told him to keep up appearances. “I am more than capable of coping myself.”

“You’re a stubborn git, brother mine. In this I feel I must insist. I’m only looking out for your safety.”

“I do have access to a extremely competent security service, Sherlock. I will be quite safe.”

“Oh, and where were they on Saturday night? Considering Elliott was one of them, can you see why I’m not too inclined to trust them?” The anger in his words was genuine and not just for John’s benefit.

He sighed. “Whatever makes you happy, Sherlock. The spare bed here is yours whenever you want it, you know that.” Not that he’d be using the spare bed.

John had watched the back and forth between them and spoke when it appeared to be over. “Right, well I’d better get Rosie home. Thanks again for watching her.” He held out his hands and Sherlock gave her a kiss on the cheek and then handed her over.

The baby started crying as soon as her father took her and he bounced her up and down on her hip. “Looks like someone needs a nap,” he said. Rosie twisted and reached out for Sherlock, her cries getting louder and louder.

“I don’t think she wants to leave you,” Mycroft said to Sherlock in wonder.

“She’s just tired,” John assured him, picking up the nappy bag. “Right, we’ll be off.”

As he turned to the door, Rosie started screaming in earnest and reached again for the younger man. “Sher Sher!” she cried. Both John and Sherlock froze, leaving Mycroft confused. The child struggled so much trying to get to his brother that Mycroft was worried she’d fall from John’s arms. “Sher Sher,” she cried again, which seemed to spurn Sherlock into action. He pulled her from John’s arms and looked at her in amazement.

“She said my name,” he whispered in awe.

“Huh,” John grunted.

“I don’t understand,” Mycroft admitted, looking between the two men.
“She said my name,” his brother repeated.

“Those were her first words,” John muttered, looking dejected.

“Oh. Oh.” Well, this wasn’t going to go down well.

Sherlock obviously thought the same thing and looked over at his flatmate. “John, I’m sorry,” he began, but trailed off. Really, what could he possibly say to make it any better?

“It’s fine,” John said, shaking his head as if to clear it. He held out his arms in a silent demand for the baby and Sherlock didn’t protest.

“See you soon, my little genius,” he said, kissing Rosie on the cheek.

“I’ll see you tomorrow then,” John said, turning and leaving before anyone could reply. They could hear Roise crying out for Sherlock as they left, and John assuring her she’d see him again soon.

“So... that’s going to make things awkward,” Sherlock said with a sigh.

“It’s not like you’ve been deliberately coaching her to say your name,” Mycroft said. He paused at the guilty look on his brother’s face. “Oh, or maybe you have been.”

“I didn’t think she’d actually say it!” he protested, throwing his arms in the air. “It’s a much more complicated sound than ‘da da’. I was just trying to get her used to the sound so once she was saying a few words she might pick it up easier.”

“Perhaps it would be best if you kept that tidbit from John for now.”

“Since the last thing I want you to be doing is avenging my death, I definitely won’t be telling him that.”

“That’s very considerate of you. Thank you.”

Sherlock reached up to cup Mycroft’s cheek. “Only for you, brother mine.”

Mycroft smiled and leaned in for a kiss. “Perhaps I should reward you for your efforts,” he said between kisses.

“What did you have in mind?” Sherlock murmured, turning his head to nuzzle at his jaw.

“I thought an afternoon spent in bed might be nice.”

“You do know that’s as much as a reward for you as it is for me?”

“Of course. No one has ever accused me of being selfless.”

“To be fair, you deserve a reward as much as I do,”

“Oh? For what exactly?”

Sherlock captured him in a passionate kiss, his tongue dipping inside to dance with his, large hands tangling in Mycroft’s hair. They were both breathing heavily when they broke apart. “For putting up with me of course,” he answered.

Mycroft reached down and groped his brother’s pert arse. “Because it’s such an effort,” he said with a wink. He pulled his hips against his own, grinding their erections together. “Come on, Sherlock. I
don’t want to waste a minute more of this day not having you naked beside me.”

The younger man slipped from his grasp and headed for the door, already beginning to undress.
It had been a very long time since Mycroft had dreaded going into work. As stressful and hectic as his job could be, he thoroughly enjoyed it. He was perfectly suited to working behind the scenes, manipulating politicians and governments, fluctuating power dynamics, and making it all balance out at the end of the day. And yet here he stood, in the foyer looking at his umbrella in its stand, knowing his driver was waiting for him but not wanting to go.

The reason for his reluctance was still bundled up, toasty and warm in bed, dark curls tousled from their afternoon of lovemaking the day before. As horrible as the circumstances had been, Mycroft had cherished spending so much time alone with his brother. Real life had knocked forcefully at the door, reminding them both that the world was plodding along without them and soon people would begin to note their absences. But perhaps one day he could arrange for them to have a small holiday, just the two of them? It would be something he’d have to work on. Of course they’d be at the family home in a couple of weeks for Christmas, but Mycroft was pretty sure their parents would extend an invitation to John and Rosie. At least they’d be away from work though, and as faint a silver lining as it was, it was still silver.

He sighed, picked up his umbrella and then left, knowing he’d need to work long hours to catch up over the next two days if he was to have any chance at having the weekend off. Considering the incentive was having more time to spend with his gorgeous younger brother, he would willingly work for 48 hours straight if it meant having the time free. Of course he’d then be too exhausted to participate in the strenuous activities they’d most likely be engaging in...it was definitely a conundrum.

He arrived at work to find a slightly flustered Anthea. The relief on her face when he walked in showed just how hard a time she’d had trying to keep the higher ups off his case while he recovered. He rang for tea for them both, made a mental note to arrange a nice bonus for her as way of thanks, and then proceeded to catch up on everything he’d missed.

It took a good two hours until he felt like he was up to speed and then he sat to tackle his emails. A lot of them didn’t require a reply or any action, he just had to be aware of the situation to know how it fit into the bigger picture. He opened the room in his mind palace that was dedicated to such things, ready to add to the collection. It was a rather plain room, empty in the middle but each wall was covered in pinup boards. String connected the dots and it looked very much like an intricate spider’s web, with Mycroft being the arachnid at the centre. Keeping half his focus in his mind palace, and the other half on the emails, he began the transfer of data.

An hour later he was disturbed by his internal phone ringing. He hit the speaker button and answered, somewhat distractedly as he was still following a thread in his palace.

“Sorry to disturb you, sir, but your brother is here to see you,” came Anthea’s voice.

The thread snapped and his attention was solely on his office door. “Send him in,” he replied, then ended the call. A moment later the door swung open and Sherlock strode in. “Brother? Is everything
alright?” He stood and came out from around his desk.

Sherlock waited for the door to close and then closed the distance between them. “Yes,” he assured him, reaching out to pull Mycroft close. “I was passing by and just wanted to call in and say hello.”

“Okay. Hello?”

Sherlock smirked and gave him a kiss. “Maybe it was for a little more than just a hello.”

Mycroft allowed himself to be kissed again but then reluctantly pulled back. “Sherlock, I’m sorry but I have work…”

The younger man gave him a sweet smile. “I know. I didn’t come to try and get in your pants…although having said that, one of these days I do want to fuck you over your desk. I honestly just came to see you for a minute, and steal a kiss. Or maybe three. I’ll be going now.”

He turned to go but stopped as Mycroft caught his arm. “That was only two kisses,” he said. “I believe you have one more to steal.”

Sherlock grinned and took his face gently between his hands, kissing him deeply. It was warm and wet and left Mycroft’s trousers uncomfortably tight. A glance down told him his brother was in the same boat. “Thank you,” the detective murmured. “I needed that to get me through to when I see you next.”

“Thank you for dropping by. I do love you, you know.”

“Love you too, Mycie.”

He watched as his brother left and then returned to his desk, feeling lighter about the day ahead. With his lips still tingling from their kiss, he delved back into his mind palace.

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Sherlock stepped out of the cab in front of 221B and wondered what mood John would be in. He hadn’t heard from the man since he’d picked up the baby yesterday and he worried he was still in the dog house after being the recipient of Rosie’s first words. It would make it very uncomfortable at Baker Street for a while and he wasn’t looking forward to it.

The flat was quiet when he let himself in and he found the doctor in the living room, Rosie asleep in her bassinet. The smile he gave John was returned immediately and he breathed a sigh of relief. Perhaps he wasn’t holding a grudge after all. Sherlock felt a small pang of guilt go through him at jumping to the worst possible conclusion. Maybe he had to start giving his best friend the benefit of the doubt.

He put his bag into his room and came back out to make them both tea. He sank gratefully down into his armchair, having missed it’s familiar comfort while staying at Mycroft’s. It was a small price to pay for being able to spend time with his brother he knew, but still, it made coming home that little bit nicer.

“How’s Mycroft doing?” John asked in a quiet voice.

“He says he’s fine but I’m still worried about him,” Sherlock admitted. “After everything that went on in Sherrinford, and then with me getting injured again, he’s been rather stressed. Having Elliott betray him like that has shaken him more than he’ll let on.”
“I know I only met him the once but he seemed like a stand up guy. I’d not have guessed he’d turn out to be such a prick. And I just don’t see why he’d feel he had to resort to something like that? I mean, I’ve never seen Mycroft be that affectionate with someone before. They were all over each other! If he could get it willingly, why would he stoop to such things?” He shook his head. “It really took me by surprise.”

“If you were surprised, how do you think I feel? I don’t usually miss things like that and my brother got hurt because of it.”

“To be fair, you’ve been pretty distracted lately,” John told him. “New relationship high and all.”

“My lapse has been unacceptable. How do people stand this, having their brains turn to mush like this. Why do they do it?”

“It’ll wear off soon enough,” he assured him. “No need to do anything drastic like end the relationship,” he added almost casually.

“I didn’t say I would,” he retorted, his eyes narrowing. “But Mycroft could have been seriously injured, John. I need to keep a better eye on him.”

“My how the tides have turned.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Just that you were forever complaining about him being so overprotective and yet here you are, wanting to do the same.”

“This is completely different.”

“No, Sherlock, it’s not. But it’s good to see you giving a shit about your brother for once.”

“I wasn’t aware that you cared so much for Mycroft.”

John got up to rinse out his empty cup. “Yeah, well, as much as he’s an arrogant megalomaniac most of the time, he’s been pretty decent lately. I thought it was really nice of him to look after you while you were having those nightmares, for instance. In fact, I thought of a way we could reward him for that.”

“Oh? How?”

“Well, there’s a doctor at work who’s super smart - almost as smart as you. He’s single at the moment but he’s seems to go for men like Mycroft. I thought maybe we could set them up?”

Sherlock froze, caught completely off guard. What was John thinking, playing matchmaker? It took him a moment or two but he finally found his voice again. “I’m not sure now is such a good time, John. I think Mycroft has been scared off relationships for the time being.”

“He just needs to find someone decent. It couldn’t hurt to just have one date.”

“I really don’t think it’s a good idea.”

“You could just ask him, couldn’t you? He might surprise you.”

“I would be very surprised if he said yes, John.” More surprised than you could ever know.

“Just ask him. What can it hurt?”
Sherlock’s phone rang, saving him from having to reply and he saw it was Lestrade calling. He picked up and listened to the DI as he explained the situation, then hung up with a grin. “We’ve got a case, John! And it sounds delightfully gruesome!”

“I’ll check if Mrs Hudson can take Rosie.”

Sherlock almost danced across to put his Belstaff on, his happiness stemming almost as much from distracting John from his ludicrous idea as from the promise of an exciting puzzle to solve. He felt invigorated as he ran down the stairs - the game was on!
By the time the case was over, Sherlock Holmes had a pretty good grasp of how long an eternity was. Eight days. An eternity was eight of the longest days he had ever lived through. One hundred and ninety two hours in which he didn’t get to see his brother once. When he’d first been given the run down of the murder, he had estimated that two days would be all it would take to get to the bottom of it. He’d easily be done by the weekend and then he’d have two whole days to spend ravishing his brother. But one lead had turned into finding a second body, and then a third, and then another, this one having been killed at least eight years ago. By the time they had chased down the murderer, they had eleven bodies spanning over a decade and the man arrested had hinted that there may be even more. Once they had captured him, Sherlock had left that part of the interrogation to Lestrade and had returned to Baker Street to crawl into bed. He was exhausted, having only gotten an hour or two of sleep here and then over the past week. His body was screaming for rest and he fell into bed, still fully clothed and awaited for oblivion to claim him.

Sleep, however, eluded him. His body was ready for rest but his mind was still ticking away. It reminded him that other than a quick phone call (to advise Mycroft that due to the nature of the case, he’d be unable to visit over the weekend), and a handful of texts, he’d had no contact with his brother. Now that the case was solved and his focus could waver, he realised he missed his brother terribly. He’d thought of him often over the past eight days - not even Sherlock’s mind could remain locked onto one thing for that long, but it had only been in passing. The downtime while waiting for results to come back; the odd shower he’d managed to take; the moments just before his catnaps. Now that the urgency of the work had passed, his mind was clamouring at him, reminding him that he now had time available and who needed sleep when he could be wrapped in his brother’s arms instead?

He tried desperately to ignore his brain, to disregard the persuasive arguments so he could sleep instead, promising himself he’d see Mycroft tomorrow. After forty minutes had passed, he gave up. He knew the only way he’d be able to sleep now was if he was in Mycroft’s bed. John was picking Rosie up from daycare so he sent him a text, telling him he’d be spending the night at Mark’s and not to expect him home until tomorrow. He hailed a cab and directed the driver to Mycroft’s address, then settled back and watched the streets of London flash by. It wasn’t yet dark - peak hour was just beginning - and his eyes watched people and cars go by almost in a daze.

Mycroft wasn’t yet home when he arrived so he let himself in with his key. He headed upstairs and decided a shower would help so he soaked under the hot spray until he knew he’d fall asleep standing up if he didn’t get out. He dried himself and crawled into Mycroft’s bed without dressing, pulling his brother’s pillow towards him and inhaling his scent. He sighed, feeling his whole body relax and within moments he was asleep.

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“This is a pleasant surprise,” Mycroft murmured into his ear.

Sherlock roused from his slumber and smiled into the darkness. “Missed you,” he stated simply, raising his shoulders so his brother could slip an arm under him.

“I missed you too.” Mycroft pulled him close and nuzzled his face into Sherlock’s curls. He too was naked and the younger man pressed himself backwards so they were flush together. “More than I possibly thought imaginable.”

“I’m so sorry about cancelling our plans,” the youngest said in a quiet voice. “If I could have left for
even a brief period, I would have, but…”

“Shhh, I know, Sherlock. It’s alright. You needed to be there, to be processing the data.”

“It was coming so quickly. If I’d missed anything… I wish it had been different.”

“Oh, love, we both knew it would be like this. Both of us are dedicated to our work - it’s what make us us. I would never ask you to change that about you, and if it means we go a week or so without seeing each other, then as hard as it is, that’s what we have to do. Just know that I’ll always be here, waiting for you. Just as I know that if I have to go away, or get caught at the office during an emergency, you’ll be here for me when I get back.”

Sherlock’s heart had leapt at hearing the pet name fall from his brother’s lips, only to plummet when he remembered the reason he’d not been there the night Elliott had attacked. He’d been upset because Mycroft hadn’t been able to say he’d give up everything for Sherlock, to run away with him somewhere far away. Even though he’d realised how selfish he’d been in asking that, he’d never had the opportunity to explain that to Mycroft after what had happened next. “I’m so sorry, for getting mad at you that day. I…” He was cut off by one of Mycroft’s fingers on his lips.

“I know, Sherlock, I know. There’s no need for apologies.”

“But I -”

“Hush, love. There will be time for talking later. For now, just sleep. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

He knew it was pointless to argue, and to be honest, he didn’t really want to continue the conversation so he did fall silent. He was no longer tired though so he twisted around in his brother’s arms and sought out his lips in the dark. He felt his body relax again as they kissed, knowing he would never get used to how wonderful it felt to be able to do this with his brother. It was such a simple thing, just a pressing of mouths together, a sharing of breath, and the slide of tongue on tongue, and yet it made him feel so close to Mycroft, even closer than when they were making love. He ran a hand up from Mycroft’s hip, avoiding his tummy as he knew he was so self conscious about it, his fingers dropping into the dip between each rib as he moved up to his shoulder. He caressed the hair at the nape of his neck and gently pulled him in ever closer, deepening the kiss.

Mycroft moaned softly against him and Sherlock inserted a knee between his brother’s legs. Mycroft’s fingers were tracing patterns over Sherlock’s chest, the pad of his thumb dragging across his nipple, causing it to form into a small peak. He gasped as it was pinched softly and rubbed again, amazed at how sensitive they were. He’d never bothered exploring his body much when he’d self pleasures, preferring to be swift and efficient; a means to an end. His catalogued every touch, every reaction his senses had to Mycroft’s ministrations, stored them away so he could examine them when they were parted.

Mycroft shimmied down the bed, laying open mouthed kisses to his brother’s chest and stomach as he went. Sherlock’s cock got even harder when he felt the first warm puff of breath against it and it jerked when Mycroft lathed the flat edge of his tongue over the head. “Fuck!” he gasped, as a slender hand was wrapped around the base and his brother’s talented tongue continued to lap at the slit.

“I shall never get over how amazing you taste,” the older man murmured from below. He then wrapped his wet lips around the head and slid down the shaft.

Sherlock couldn’t help but buck his hips as his cock disappeared into the glorious wet heat, feeling himself hit the back of Mycroft’s throat. His brother just hummed around him and took him even
deeper. Sherlock vowed he would learn how to take his brother’s cock just as deep so he could make Mycroft feel as good as he did right now.

Mycroft continued for several minutes until Sherlock was pulling at his shoulders, urging him to stop. “I want to come with you,” he explained, kissing his way along the older man’s jaw.

His brother nodded and reached into the top drawer for the lube. He squirted a generous amount of gel onto his palm and then guided Sherlock to sit up on his knees. He mirrored the position and took hold of both of their cocks, sliding his wet hand up and down both their shafts. Sherlock swore as a long thumb rubbed across his slit and leaned forward to kiss Mycroft. Pre-ejaculate was oozing from his cock, adding to the slick, and the satiny tug of flesh on flesh as their erections rubbed against each other sent sparks of pleasure shooting through his cock and up into his stomach. “Faster,” he urged, sweaty and breathless.

Mycroft obliged, speeding up his strokes, squeezing tighter at the tips. In the darkness of the room they could just make out each other’s faces, eyes locked, foreheads leaning against the other. Sherlock gasped, and Mycroft kissed him chastely. “Come for me, baby brother,” he whispered.

Clutching his hands on Mycroft’s shoulders, he did as he was told, crying out as his release shot from his cock, splashing up onto his stomach and chest. His brother milked his orgasm from him and then mercifully let go of his over sensitive prick. Mycroft reached up through the darkness and Sherlock felt his fingers slide through the come sticking to his chest. He moaned as he realised what he was doing, slender fingers dropping back to his own cock to stroke himself using Sherlock’s ejaculate as further lubrication. “That is so fucking hot, Mycie,” he said, his voice low and hoarse.

“God, what you do to me, brother,” Mycroft choked out, his breathing speeding up along with his hand. Sherlock crushed their lips together, plunging his tongue into his brother’s mouth as he shook and shuddered as his orgasm hit. Mycroft’s head dropped down onto Sherlock’s shoulder and his breath was warm against his ear. “I love you.”

“I love you, too.” He reached over and fumbled for the lamp with his clean hand, finally finding the switch. They both squinted as the room was flooded with light and he quickly found the dimming dial. Once they could see without being blinded, he plucked several tissues from the box and handed them over to Mycroft, then took care of his own cleanup.

“It was nice,” his brother said, lobbing his used tissues at the bin in the corner. “Coming home to find you here.”

“I probably should have messaged you,” he admitted, both of them climbing back under the blankets after he’d turned the lamp off.

Mycroft wrapped his arms around him and snuggled in close to him. “You never have to ask, Sherlock. You’re always welcome here. I want you to consider this your second home.”

“You live here, Mycie. This will always be my first home, because it’s where you are.”

His brother chuckled against his neck. “So very sentimental, brother mine. I think your brain is going soft.”

“Not as soft as your stom -” He stopped midway through his insult. It was born of habit, a mindless reaction to their bickering, but it was too late. Mycroft knew exactly what he’d been going to say. He tensed up beside him, but didn’t pull away. “Mycie, I’m sorry, I didn't mean it.”

“It’s fine, Sherlock,” he replied, quietly. “You should go to sleep now. You need your rest.”
He knew anything he said now would just upset Mycroft further, so he kept quiet, mentally kicking himself for being so careless with his words. He knew he had to work harder at getting his brother’s self esteem up, for him to realise just how perfect he was, but it appeared that would have to wait for another day. He closed his eyes and tried to sleep, but it was a long time coming. The unnatural stillness from next to him told him that sleep was evading Mycroft as well.
Chapter 42

Mycroft woke early, unable to sleep, so after a shower, he took his time to savour a cup of tea before leaving for work. To his surprise, Sherlock joined him. Usually when he stayed over, his brother was content to have a lie in, admitting to Mycroft that he relished immersing himself in his brother’s scent as long as possible. The younger man was on his best behaviour and was being more affectionate than he usually was, and Mycroft realised he was trying to make up for his comment last night.

“There’s no need to walk on eggshells, brother mine,” he told him, pouring himself another cup since he had the time. “I know you meant nothing by it last night.”

Regret was writ large across his face. “I hate to think I’ve upset you.”

“You haven’t, I promise.” He refrained from mentioning he had spent his spare time the past week training mercilessly on the treadmill, successfully losing three more pounds. He was determined to hit his goal weight, whether or not Sherlock supported him in his endeavour or not.

Before Sherlock could respond, his home phone rang. Mycroft sighed, knowing only his parents used that line. He answered, refraining from simply saying “Hello, Mummy.”

“Mycroft Holmes.”

“My, it’s Mummy.”

Yes, I know. “Mummy, to what do I owe this pleasure?” Sherlock’s head whipped up and he moved closer to listen in.

“It’s Christmas next week and neither you nor Sherlock have told us what you’re doing. I need to get the details nailed down so you boys can’t slither out of them.”

“We do not slither out of them, Mummy.” He rolled his eyes, causing Sherlock to grin.

“Yes, you bloody well do. Well this year we’re going to have a proper Christmas. There will be no crises, no druggings, and no murders. Do I make myself clear?”

He had to bite his tongue to refrain from pointing out that none of those last year had been him at all. It wouldn’t have done any good since Mummy had a large blind spot for her youngest son.

“Perfectly.”

“Will you both be attending?”

“I most assuredly will be. I can’t speak for Sherlock but I can ask him next time I see him if you’d like?”

“Yes, please do. And tell him to ask John to come along and bring his daughter. We can’t have the poor man spending his first Christmas without his wife alone.”

“No, of course not.”

“And you and your brother need to come up a day or so earlier. We need to make sure we visit Eurus as well. Can you arrange that from your side of things?”

Your side, meaning the dirty, dark, government side. It was as if she didn’t even consider them to be siblings anymore. “It won’t be a problem to visit whenever you’d like, Mummy.”
“Good. I’ll talk to you soon. Let me know when you hear from your brother.”

“I will. Goodbye, Mummy.” He hung up and crossed back to his chair, slumping down in it and dropping his face into his hands.

“Come now, Mycie, it won’t be that bad,” Sherlock told him, rubbing his back.

“Easy for you to say, brother, as you are the golden child and can do no wrong.”

He made a rude noise and sat down opposite. “You know they’re just upset because you’re usually so perfect that it’s got them off footed to discover that you’re not.”

He threw him a withering glance. “Thanks for that.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes. “You know what I mean. I think you’re pretty bloody perfect, but it’s not like we can let them know that. It’s going to be great, you’ll see - especially if John comes along.”

“I fail to see how that will make it any better.”

Sherlock grinned at him. “That’s because you’re not thinking straight, Remember what happened last year when John and Mary came?”

“You drugged us all and stole my laptop!”

“No, no, not that. What happened when we first got there? What had you fuming?”

He stopped to think and it was as if a lightbulb went off in his head. “John and Mary took your room so you and that Wiggins chap had to sleep in my room with me.”

“Exactly! Bill won’t be there this year so it looks like it’ll just be you and I sharing a room.”

“You know it’ll be too dangerous to do anything under their roof.”

“Please, Mycroft! I might not fuck you into the mattress, but I’m sure we’ll manage to get away with a few kisses and maybe a handjob or two.”

“We can’t take that risk, Sherlock!”

“Mummy and Daddy are heavy sleepers, and John won’t even suspect anything. Do you really think you’ll be able to go a handful of days sleeping in the same room as me without laying a single finger on me?”

He bit his lip, torn. He knew it would test his willpower, but they simply couldn’t risk getting caught. “We’ll see,” he said to stave off the argument.

“Yes, we will.” Sherlock looked smug, already knowing Mycroft would give in.

“There is the bigger concern we need to be worried about,” he warned him.

“Oh? What would that be?” Sherlock asked.

“How are we going to stop John from telling Mummy and Daddy about Mark? Or do we go ahead and tell them?”

His brother’s eyes narrowed and he steepled his fingers under his chin as he thought. “I would rather they not know about my faux partner just yet. Maybe I’ll ask John not to say anything? Tell him that
I’m not ready for them to meet him just yet and if they know about him, they’ll insist on doing just that.”

“Do you think he’ll agree?”

“Of course. I’ll tell him you’re being difficult and threatening to tell our parents, which will make him want to prove he’s better at keeping a secret than you.”

Mycroft rolled his eyes, but saw the merit to the plan. The doctor was nothing if not competitive. “Very well then. Now if only we could solve the Eurus problem as easily.”

“What Eurus problem?”

He sighed. “Sherlock, the minute we walk into that room, she will know. There’s no way to keep this from her, and I can’t predict how she will act.”

“She’ll only know if we give it away, brother.”

“Sherlock, I’m telling you, it is inevitable.”

“Perhaps she’ll surprise you?”

He knew it was pointless to argue - Sherlock hadn’t known Eurus for as long as he had so his optimism had yet to be crushed. “Perhaps. Now I need to get to work.” He stood and leaned down to give his brother a kiss. “Call Mummy at some point, won’t you.”

“I will. Have a good day, Mycie.”

As he collected his briefcase and umbrella he paused to send up a brief prayer to any deity that might be out there that Sherlock would be right.
Chapter 43

The helicopter ride to Sherrinford was tense. Sherlock sat next to Mycroft, opposite Mummy and Father and he could feel the worry emanating from his brother. Mycroft’s attention was fixed somewhere out the window and he was nibbling on his thumb nail, an action he surely wasn’t conscious of. That in itself screamed at Sherlock how far down the rabbit hole his brother had fallen as he’d never usually allow any sign of his discomfort show.

Mummy’s gaze was stern from her seat and Sherlock knew that she had incorrectly interpreted Mycroft’s mood. She still believed he hated his sister, even though he never had. He did everything he could do for Eurus - more than he should have (and look where that had gotten them) - but his priority had been keeping everyone else safe. She’d killed so many people during her little game that she could officially be classified as a serial killer, yet Mummy seemed inclined to overlook that. All she focused on was her eldest’s deception.

Of course they could never tell Mummy the truth. The reason Mycroft was so frazzled was the fact that they were walking into a room with the smartest person on the planet who could read them with ease, and there was a teeny tiny secret they may have been keeping from the world. Eurus hadn’t said a single word to them during the course of their visits, and Mycroft was worried that the discovery of their relationship would put an end to her silence. Sherlock had continued to be optimistic that their sister might not figure it out, but every time he mentioned it Mycroft would throw him a withering glance and tell him it was a certainty. The consulting detective had eventually given up trying to persuade him but he personally believed he and Mycroft were cleverer than Eurus, and in fact Mycroft, gave them credit for. As the dark shape of Sherrinford appeared through the cloud he knew that they would find out soon enough.

The security screening was long and painful as usual. Ever since the breech, Mycroft had put measures in place that meant even he couldn’t just waltz in whenever he wished. Sherlock grumbled a little about this as his Strad was manhandled by a beefy security guard but he understood the reasoning behind it. Soon enough they were being escorted down to the lower levels where their sister was being held.

Eurus seemed to know they were coming as she was sitting on the edge of her bed, hands in her lap, waiting. Her violin was laying next to her. As they all filed in, her head turned to acknowledge them but her eyes sought out only Sherlock’s. She stood, lifting her violin to her shoulder and he knew that until they had played, his sister would not have patience for anything else. Luckily, Mummy seemed to understand this and she took a seat, clutching the wrapped present to her chest to be given afterwards.

As hard as it was, Sherlock didn't spare a glance for his brother as he met his sister in front of the glass. Mycroft had steeled himself as they had left the helicopter and had pulled his Iceman persona around him like a cloak, shutting out everyone, even Sherlock. His younger brother knew that beneath that, he was still suffering and he longed to reach out and touch, to reassure him. Instead he nodded at Eurus and began to play.

She watched him as they played, her wraithlike eyes sharp with an intensity that cut through to his very soul. Before they’d even finished the first piece, he saw understanding dawn in her eyes and he knew that she had seen that something had changed for him. He only hoped that she wouldn’t figure out with whom.

They played for a solid hour before she seemed satisfied and allowed her parents to approach. The present was put through the security hatch and Eurus opened it, more hesitant than Sherlock had ever
seen her. It was a photograph in a simple, plastic frame that could not be used as a weapon in any way. It was the last family portrait they’d had done before the fire, taken at Christmas. She held the photo in her hands and looked at it for a very long time, and Sherlock could hear his parent’s holding their breaths next to him, wondering if she would accept it. Eventually she crossed to the bed and placed it on the table attachment and they breathed a sigh of relief. Mummy wiped at her eyes and held a hand up against the glass. Her daughter approached slowly and then reached up to place her hand against it, causing Mummy to burst into tears. She leaned her forehead against the barrier, sobbing about how loved Eurus was, and how sorry she was that she hadn’t known she’d survived the fire. Father stood behind her, rubbing her back and smiling at his daughter.

Sherlock and Mycroft exchanged a look, and he saw a single crack in his brother’s defenses. Mycroft had been well aware of how much pain would be suffered if anyone ever discovered the truth, and yet he’d done it anyway because it was the right thing to do. Their parents had said they’d forgiven him, but both brothers knew that there would always be a part of them that never would. They had been led to believe their daughter had died, the grief and suffering they had gone through not only then, but now at discovering the truth was more than enough to always foster a sliver of resentment. Even knowing all of this, and feeling the anger towards him, Mycroft had admitted to Sherlock that if need be, he would do it all over again. He simply could not allow the destruction that was Eurus loose on the world.

Once Mummy had composed herself, Sherlock and Eurus played several more pieces before it was time to go. As he was packing away his Strad into its case, and his parents had finished saying their goodbyes, Eurus spoke.

“I’d like to speak to Sherlock,” she said, shocking them all, her voice dry from disuse. He spun to look at her, his eyes wide. “Alone,” she added, her eyes flickering to the rest of her family.

Unable to help it, Sherlock’s eyes met Mycroft’s and his brother gave a miniscule nod. He ushered his parents from the room, leaving his younger siblings alone. Sherlock eyed her warily, preparing himself for what was to come.

“There’s no need to look so frightened, brother,” she said, meeting him at the glass.

“I’m not frightened,” he asserted, even though it was a lie. “What did you wish to speak to me about.”

“You’ve changed,” she said, her eyes searching his. “I can tell from your music.”

“It’s what people do. You should know - you’ve studied human behaviour extensively.”

She gave an enigmatic smile and tapped the glass in front of his chest. “I mean, you’ve changed in here. Last time I could tell that you were interested in a woman, a woman who fascinated you, but now, you’re different.” She leaned closer, as close as she could get, her breath fogging the glass. “You’re in love,” she whispered.

“And?”

“And I know who with.”

It took every ounce of his willpower not to gulp loudly, to remain stoic and in control. “Is that so?” he said, trying to sound nonchalant.

Her eyes darted to the camera, always recording, and she lifted a finger to her lips. “Your secret is safe with me, brother.”
She could be bluffing, to mess with him. He had been subject to her psychological warfare before after all. But Sherlock had a horrible intuition that she wasn’t, that she was telling the truth. “Why?” he managed to rasp out.

“Because you were kind to me, even after all I did to you. Perhaps this is my way of making it up to you.”

He wanted to argue, to say that nothing she did could ever make up for the fact she killed his best friend, but he knew it would be pointless. Even if she believed she was doing him a favour by not saying anything, she still knew their secret and could always hold it over them. Of course, she had no proof, but even the suggestion of such a thing, coming from the woman who prevented three terrorist plots after reading a handful of tweets, would be enough to end Mycroft’s career. Sherlock didn’t care about himself, he didn’t care what people thought of him, but there was no way he would do anything to risk destroying what Mycroft had spent his entire life achieving.

“Will you come to visit again soon?” she asked, signalling their conversation was over.

He nodded. “Of course. As soon as I can.”

“Until then, brother.” She turned and walked back to the bed, stopping with her back to him. “Oh, and please tell Mycroft I wish him a very happy Christmas.”

He swallowed, knowing now she hadn’t been bluffing. “I will. Goodbye, Eurus.” He spun on his heel and hurried from the room, feeling more rattled than he would have thought possible. Why did Mycroft always have to be right? It was very frustrating at times, being the dimmest child.
Chapter 44

When they were dropped back at the airfield, Mycroft returned home with his parents, whilst Sherlock went to pick John and the baby up from the train station. The car ride home was silent, neither of his parents up for conversation and their eldest not in the mood to make it. The only words Mummy said to him the entire way was a request to stop in at the local store for a few last minute groceries. The store was packed with what seemed to be everyone in the village and he endured being bumped and bustled for the entire forty minutes it took to purchase a bag of potatoes, clotted cream, and fruit mince pies to replace the ones Father ate the night before.

It was looking like it was going to be the most awkward Christmas Mycroft had endured since the time Uncle Rudi came downstairs wearing Mummy’s best frock, and if it weren’t for Sherlock, he was of mind to create a fictional disaster that would call him back to London. He’d spent almost his entire life being the apple of his parent’s eyes and their anger at him cut him deeply. He supposed that with the highs came the lows, and the more he had impressed them, the greater their disappointment would be. He didn’t know what else he could do to make it right, and unlike his brother, he cared about what his parents thought, especially Mummy.

They arrived home just as Sherlock was pulling up with his flatmate. He met his brother’s eyes as they exited their respective vehicles, Sherlock’s mouth turning down into a frown as he read the despondency on his face. He shook his head slightly, silently telling him that it was nothing to worry about. The glare his brother sent him informed him that he would be demanding an explanation as soon as they were alone.

“John!” Mummy greeted him as they met on the front walk.

“Mrs Holmes,” he said in return.

She batted at his arm. “I’ve told you to call me Mummy. Now how’s our little cherub doing?” She held her arms out for the baby and John handed her over.

“She slept most of the way down on the train so I think we’re all in for a long afternoon,” the doctor said with a laugh.

“Come on in then and let’s get everyone settled,” Father said, unlocking the front door.

There was the usual pandemonium as they juggled their luggage in order to remove their coats in the small front space.

“I’ve set up the old crib in Sherlock’s room,” Mummy told John, “so you and Rosie with be in there. Boys, you’ll have to kip in together,” she said to her sons. “Unless of course you want to bunk with John, Sherlock?”

“No, no, I’m sure Mycie and I can survive a few nights in the same room,” he assured her with a smile.

“There’s only the double bed in there so let Father know if you’ll be wanting the blow up mattress.”

Sherlock raised an eyebrow and looked over at Mycroft. “I know I don’t want to sleep on that horrid thing - do you?”

He shuddered. “Lord, no.”
“I guess we’ll be sharing the bed then. Will you refrain from stealing all the blankets?”

“Will you refrain from kicking me the entire night?”

“I guess it depends on if you still snore.”

“Let me know now if you two are going to bicker the entire time so I can wear earplugs to bed,” Mummy told them in a stern voice.

“I’m sure we’ll get it out of our system, Mummy,” Mycroft assured her.

“But just ignore the random screams if you hear any,” Sherlock added, a twinkle in his eye meant just for his brother.

She shook her head as she made her way down the hall, taking Rosie with her. “Honestly, you two never grew up. Go and drop off your belongings and I’ll put the kettle on,” she called over her shoulder.

Making their way up the creaking staircase, Mycroft and Sherlock veered off through the first door whilst John continued on down to the end, hefting the large bag he’d packed. Sherlock ducked his head out the door to make sure his flatmate was gone and then pushed Mycroft up against the wall, crushing their lips together. Giving in and returning the kiss, Mycroft’s hand clutched at the lapels on his brother’s shirt - the dark blue one he’d gifted to his brother.

“I’ve been wanting to do that all day,” the youngest breathed against his ear.

“As have I, brother mine. We don’t have long - tell me, does she know?”

Sherlock’s eyes closed and he nodded. “Yes, you were right.”

“What does she plan on doing with the information?”

“Nothing that I know of. Yet.”

Mycroft sighed and stepped away from him. “I suppose there’s nothing we can do for the time being but wait.”

“I’m sorry I doubted you,”

He smiled. “No need to apologise, brother mine. You hardly know her. Truly, let’s try and put it from our minds for now and try to enjoy our break.”

Sherlock reached up and clasped at his forearm. “You seem miserable though. I doubt you’ll enjoy the holiday much.”

He shrugged. “That will all depend on if Mummy continues my lynching.”

“If she doesn’t let up, I will say something,” the younger threatened. “You’ve said you’re sorry and explained why you had to do it. Surely that’s enough?”

“Oh, Sherlock. It will never be enough. The pain they went through, thinking their daughter had died...it’s unimaginable to the both of us.”

They heard the door to John’s room close and footsteps coming down the hall. Sherlock kissed him quickly and whispered, “I love you. Remember that.”
Mycroft smiled and mouthed *I love you, too* just before John appeared in the doorway.

“You two all sorted?” he asked.

“Yes, all done,” his brother replied. “Shall we go down for tea?”

As they sat around the kitchen table, Mummy kept the conversation focussed on the baby. She was overjoyed that Sherlock was so invested in the child and seemed to consider her a granddaughter. Mycroft found his mind drifting as they rattled on about things he really couldn’t care less about. After last year’s security breach, he’d left his laptop at home but Anthea had agreed to hold the fort. They’d been working on getting more people up to speed on a variety of issues and several of them were extremely competent. For the first time in a long time, he was confident that his absence would be managed without incident - as well as keeping his PA’s stress levels to a minimum. The several days he’d had off after the attack had only served to validate the need for a backup plan. His job came with risks and he could be injured or even killed and they needed a transition plan in place that would ensure the smooth continuation of the government. Of course, putting this in place had meant he didn’t even have the luxury of distracting himself with work while the inane conversation happened around him.

“Dada,” the baby cooed, grabbing at John’s jumper.

“Oh, she’s talking!” Mummy squealed, causing Mycroft to wince.

“Yeah, funny story that,” the doctor told her with a fond smile at her middle child. “Her first words were actually Sherlock’s name.”

“No!” she said, clapping a hand over her mouth as if it was the most scandalous thing she’d ever heard. Considering Sherlock’s potty mouth when he was high, it was far from it.

As if on cue, Rosie pointed and said, “Sher Sher!”

“Aww, isn’t that sweet,” Father said. Mycroft wanted to bang his head on the table, knowing it would be more entertaining that this conversation.

Sherlock met his eyes, seeing right through him. “Rosie,” he said to the baby, “Can you say ‘Mycie’?”

She gave him a serious look and he repeated the name, pointing at his brother. Her brow furrowed and she looked over at Mycroft. “My...ee,” she said.

The other adults all cheered and clapped, causing her to giggle and making the older Holmes brother want to roll his eyes. He didn’t though, knowing it would only infuriate the others so he instead smiled indulgently at the baby.

This led to the others taking turns trying to get the baby to say different words and after ten minutes, Mycroft was certain he had died and was in the lowest levels of hell. His punishment was cruel and unusual and he wondered if he could turn back time and repent? He waited until they all seemed quite distracted by their new source of entertainment and quietly excused himself from the table, ghosting out the back door and into the garden.

He fished a cigarette out of his pocket and lit up, standing close to the wall of the garden shed to shelter from the cold breeze that was blowing. Dense clouds sat low in the sky, threatening rain and possibly snow. He cherished the silence, taking his time smoking the cigarette, his throat and lungs burning deliciously with a combination of nicotine and frozen air. He ground the stub out on the pavers and stood for a while longer, looking out over the large garden, bare and barren under the
pale winter sun. Eventually it became too cold to remain outside and he steeled himself to return inside.

He only had to wait a few more hours until he could be alone with his brother, and with that silver lining in sight, he opened the rear door.
Chapter 45

Chapter Notes

Posted a tad early today since I'm out and about all day and am not sure what time I'll be home.
Please take these next few chapters with a grain of salt - I have very, very little experience with snow, or even just very cold weather. I am pulling this out of my arse, guys! So if my description of a British winter sounds odd, write it off as the fantastical imaginings of an inexperienced Aussie!

Sherlock slipped into the bedroom quietly, hoping not to wake Mycroft. His brother had gone to bed several hours ago out of sheer boredom, and as much as he had wished he could have joined him immediately, John and Mummy were feeling chatty and it would have raised suspicions if he’d retired so early, so he’d had to wait until they too called it a night. He undressed in the dark, and pulled on a pair of sleep pants, annoyed that social convention ruled he couldn’t sleep naked next to his brother at a family gathering. He drew the line at a t shirt however, needing to have some flesh pressed against the older man.

He lifted the covers to find Mycroft sprawled across almost the entire bed, long limbs spread diagonally, leaving no room for Sherlock. He nudged him gently, hoping to encourage him to move without actually waking him, but he was stubbornly refusing to move. He knelt on the side of the bed and caressed his brother’s cheek, then whispered into his ear. “Budge over, you bed hogging lump.”

Mycroft’s eyes twitched and then he was coming awake, looking blearily up at his brother in the dimness. “Sherlock?”

“Who else?”

“Are you coming to bed?”

“I will be if you made room for me to join you,” he teased.

“I wanted to make sure it would be warm for you,” Mycroft replied seriously, shuffling back over.

Sherlock stood rooted to the spot, taken aback by the sheer thoughtfulness of that statement. He’d always felt the cold more so than his brother, and complained bitterly about climbing in between cold sheets on a frozen night. He knew that Mycroft was feeling depressed after Mummy’s continuous vexation at him, plus the lack of intellectual stimulation here, and if he’d been in the same boat, he’d have most likely gone to bed in a snit, sulking at the injustice of it all. But not Mycroft. He’d been putting Sherlock first, like he always did. He’d said recently that no one had ever accused him of being selfless, but that was changing right now. His younger brother would gladly point his finger and make that accusation of him because he was the most selfless man he knew.

“Are you going to stand there all night?” Mycroft asked sleepily.

He shook his head and climbed under the covers, a ripple of pleasure going through him at how deliciously snug it was. He immediately rolled over so he was pressed up against his sibling, noting
that he too had foregone his pyjama top.

Mycroft yelped and jerked his legs back. “Your feet are freezing!” he hissed.

Sherlock immediately brought them up to lay flat against his brother’s legs and wrapped his arms around him, burying his cold hands under his brother’s armpits. “Mmm, and you’re nice and warm.”

The older man huffed but allowed himself to act as a giant heat pack for his sibling’s extremities. “You need to stop running about bare footed. Do I need to buy you some warm socks?”

“Socks around the house are for old men,” Sherlock grumbled against his shoulder.

“Be that as it may, at least they’re old men with warm feet.”

“Why bother when I have you to warm me up?” He nibbled on his ear lobe, sucking it gently into his mouth.

“Are you trying to distract me from your frozen toes?”

“That depends - is it working?”

Mycroft chuckled. “Maybe.”

“Turn around,” he urged him. “I know you don’t feel comfortable doing much here, but you can at least kiss me, can’t you?”

To his delight, his brother rolled over and wrapped his arms around him, kissing along his jaw. “Of course I’ll kiss you,” he murmured.

He grinned into the darkness. “I don’t think I’ve ever had a make out session before.”

“Make out session?” Mycroft demanded, biting at his collar bone. “Are you thirteen?”

It was his turn to laugh. “I never did any of this when I was that age so I guess in experience, yes, yes I am thirteen. Now shut up and snog me, you dirty old man.”

They giggled together, trying to keep it quiet but not succeeding very well. In order to not rouse the household, Sherlock took charge of the situation and silenced his brother by the simple task of locking his lips to his.

They managed to sneak out for a smoke together before breakfast whilst Mummy was distracted by feeding Rosie. It had snowed overnight, heavily so, and the backyard was carpeted by a thick layer of powder. It was very cold and forecast to get even colder so it looked like it would stick. The odd flake was falling now but from their sheltered spot against the garden shed, they were well clear of them. Mycroft remembered the stray thought that had crossed his mind so long ago now, of seeing Sherlock with snow in his hair, and he felt light hearted as he realised he would most likely see that come to fruition over the course of their stay. If they had more snow overnight, perhaps they could even have a snow fight tomorrow, like they’d done as children when they’d had a white Christmas. John would probably join in, but it would still be enjoyable to be able to let go of his serious responsibilities and engage in something carefree and fun for a change.

“Do you think the unlocking of my memories changed me, personality wise?” Sherlock asked, out of the blue.
“In what way?” he asked, smoke trickling through his lips as he spoke.

His brother turned slightly so his head was close to Mycroft’s. “When you told me about Eurus that time at Baker Street, you said that as a child I was very emotional but I changed after Victor’s disappearance, became colder, less attached. I feel that lately, with you, and even with my interactions with Rosie, I’m not as removed as I once was. I’m trying to decipher if that’s because the return of my memories has unlocked that part of me, or if it’s just because I now have something to care about?”

He took his time considering this, understanding that if it was playing on Sherlock’s mind, it was important for him to understand. “I think it might be a little of both,” he said, eventually. “I think you’d already started changing when you met John Watson. You got a little bit of that spark back, and seemed to be less removed. His distancing after your return and his marriage had a profound effect on you and I believe it wouldn’t have if the cause of your increased sentiment now was solely due to the memory restoration. Having said that, I can’t see this thing between us having developed if it weren’t for that - I don’t think you would have ever been receptive to it.”

He nodded, considering the words. “My feelings for you changed after my time away. The feeling of you, holding me in that cell after you rescued me, repeated in my mind at every quiet moment I got. The entire plane ride home I spent in my mind, wrapped in your embrace. I was so confused,” he admitted. “But I didn’t understand that it meant I was attracted to you. You’re probably right - if it wasn’t for everything that happened at Sherrinford, I probably wouldn’t have realised my true depth of feeling for you, or if I did, not have acted on it.”

“How do you have any regrets?”

Sherlock shook his head as he took a long drag from his cigarette. “No, none. Well, actually, maybe just one - I wish we’d gotten around to this sooner.”

Mycroft gave him a wry smile. “If only.” He stubbed out his own smoke and shoved his hands deep into his pockets, not only for warmth but to dissuade himself from reaching out and clasping his brother’s hand in his. “Can I ask you something?”

The younger man looked taken aback. “Of course. You know you can ask me anything.”

“Yes, well, this might be a touchy subject for you.”

“Oh?”

“I know you had a...connection, with the Adler woman. How far did it go?” Although he was quite secure in their commitment to each other, every now and then he would feel a pang of jealousy over the dratted woman. He was sure his heart had shattered when he’d seen how far Sherlock had fallen for her, how he had been so eager to please. The ache from that had far surpassed his anger at having the Bond Air mission ruined, and he had taken great comfort in the way his slighted younger brother had viciously torn away her hope when he’d unlocked her phone. Of course, he should have realised that he’d never remain angry enough with her to not save her if he had the chance.

Sherlock’s eyes were on his and he squirmed, uncomfortable, beneath his gaze. “I never slept with her,” he told him. “But you already knew that. She did kiss me, after I had rescued her, and as much as I thought I’d wanted that, it didn’t do a thing for me. My attraction to her was solely for her mind.”

“If she were ever to come back from the States, would you take the opportunity to have a real life with her?”
Sherlock’s eyes narrowed. “A real life? Mycie, what we have is real.”

He looked away, out over the white blanket of snow, glistening in the early morning sun. “You know what I mean. You could have a partner you could show off in public, someone you could introduce to Mummy and Father, get married to...have children with.”

His arm was grasped roughly and he was dragged around the side of the shed, his feet crunching a dormant plant laying beneath the snow. “Mummy will not be happy we’re destroying her garden bed,” he warned.

Sherlock pushed him up against the shed and stood close, his eyes boring into his. “Shut up and listen to me!” he hissed. “I don’t want any of that! I don’t want a wife and a happy little family. I don’t want our parent’s blessing. I. Want. You. Only you, Mycroft, no one else, nothing else. Yes, it would be wonderful if we could announce to the world how in love we are, but at the end of the day I don't care if no one knows, because we know and we are the only ones that matter.”

They heard the back door open and Mummy calling for them. Mycroft opened his mouth to speak but Sherlock crushed their mouths together, kissing him fiercely. He broke away when Mummy called again and he stepped away from him and headed towards the house. Mycroft took a deep breath, smoothed down his hair, and followed.

“What are you two doing?” Mummy demanded. “Have you been smoking again?”

“Mycroft was,” Sherlock dobbed. “I came out to convince him it’s a disgusting habit.”

She gave him a knowing look. “Did you now? Did you do that by demonstrating to him how horrible it was by smoking a cigarette?”

“He also stepped on you Baptisia,” he said, sidestepping the question and hurrying inside.

Mycroft gave a small smile as Mummy’s frown was turned towards him but he couldn’t be angry at Sherlock for throwing him to the wolves. Afterall, it was what little brothers were for.
Mummy and Father had plans to catch up with some old friends that day for Christmas Eve lunch and had offered to take Rosie with them. They suggested the three younger men spend some time in the village, and perhaps have lunch at the pub. Mycroft would have preferred to stay home but John was enthusiastic about the idea and so Sherlock had agreed. There was the unspoken option of the eldest sibling remaining behind but he didn’t want to miss out on any chance to spend time with his brother. So it was that come late morning he found himself driving them into town.

“I didn’t even know you could drive,” John commented as they left the house.

“Who do you think taught me?” Sherlock asked, an amused glint to his eyes.

“Yeah, well, you know, he has those fancy drivers…”

Mycroft rolled his eyes. “I didn’t inherit them when I first joined the government, John. They’re a perk when you get to a certain level of responsibility, but it’s not so much as to make my life easier, but to ensure I can continue working whilst travelling.”

“My brother doesn’t get any downtime, John. He still has to answer emails and prevent wars when stuck in traffic.”

“Oh, well, that’s much less glamorous than I thought,” the doctor admitted.

“My entire role could be summed up as such,” Mycroft told him.

It didn’t take long to get into the centre of the village - in fact, if it wasn’t for the weather, it was a pleasant enough walk. It was as busy as was to be expected the day before Christmas but by luck they found a parking spot quite close to the local. “Shall we head straight in?” Sherlock asked, wiping a drop of rain from his face with a gloved hand. “Or does anyone want to look in the shops?”

Mycroft looked over to the handful of bustling stores and shuddered. “No thanks.”

“Yeah, I’m good to grab a pint now,” John agreed.

The pub was a stand alone, two storey building with rooms to let on the upper floor. It was dark and cosy inside, split into various rooms that circled the bar, allowing for service of every room from a central location. The front room had a large television playing an old football match and was dotted with couches and small tables. They went through the doorway into the next room which had booths and other tables and served as the dining room. It was almost empty, except for a few old men sitting at the bar, and a younger couple at one of the tables.

“Grab a seat and I’ll get us drinks,” Sherlock surprised them by offering, pulling off his Belstaff and handing it over to his brother.
“Cheers,” John said with a grin. “Just a pint of whatever’s on tap for me.”

“Cider, thank you,” Mycroft said, not wanting anything heavy.

They went to the booth in the back corner and Mycroft pulled off his gloves and unwound his scarf before scooting onto one side. John sat down opposite and looked around. “Nice place,” he said. “Did you come here much when you were of age?”

He shook his head. “No, I went straight off to university after high school - I took extra classes over the summer. Besides, who would I have come with?”

“You didn't have any friends?” the doctor asked, sounding shocked.

Mycroft cocked an eyebrow at him. “You have met me, haven’t you? Neither Sherlock nor I were social children, John. The only friends we had were each other and even then the age gap made it difficult to relate to the other at times.”

“Huh. Sherlock never really talks about his childhood so I really have no idea.”

He gave a sad smile. “Now do you know why he doesn’t?”

John glanced over at his flatmate. “Yeah, I suppose I do.”

Mycroft’s eyes followed and he allowed them to roam appreciatively over his brother. Neither had felt the need to dress down for their visit to the village and so Sherlock was in one of his usual suits. His top two buttons were undone but he still had his scarf wrapped snugly around his throat, leaving only a small V of pale skin showing through. He gave the bartender a small smile as the three drinks were placed on the counter and then looked over to the table, his eyes meeting Mycroft’s. The smile still on his face grew just a little, became fonder, the smile he gave only to him, before he gathered the three glasses in his large hands and brought them over. “Pint for you,” he told John, sliding the glass over. “And normal cider for Mycie and pear cider for me.” He flopped down on the bench next to his brother and took a sip of his drink, looking around the place. His thigh was pressed up against Mycroft’s, and the older man could feel the heat through their clothes. “The bartender is sleeping with the publican’s wife,” he announced suddenly. “Within the last twenty minutes if her gait and the way his hand is cramping is anything to go by.”

John spat a mouthful of beer over the table. “What?”

“He’s also skimming the tills,” Mycroft added, his nose wrinkling as he pulled out a handkerchief and wiped at the glass where the bartender’s hands had been.

John look like he was going to ask how they knew but shook his head and didn't bother, knowing the brilliance of the explanation would go over his head. Mycroft smirked, wondering if it ever got old, always being three steps behind the consulting detective. He still didn’t quite understand why Sherlock was so attached to the man. It certainly wasn’t for his intelligence, although his brother said he was a conductor of it for himself.

“So, what’s Mark doing for the holidays?” John asked, changing the subject.

“Working,” Sherlock replied briefly, sipping again at his drink. “I don’t think I like this,” he said. He plucked Mycroft’s drink from his hand and replaced it with his own and took a gulp. “Oh, that’s much better.”

“I’m glad you approve,” he drawled, nudging him under the table.
“If you don’t like that one, I’ll share with you,” he offered.

“How very kind, offering to share my own drink.”

“What can I say? I’m overcome with Christmas generosity.”

“I’m happy to know my sleep won’t be interrupted tonight by the clanking of chains as a ghost comes to visit you.”

“Pfft, please. I’d outsmart those ghosts any day of the week.”

“And as usual, you completely miss the moral of the story.”

“Morals are for people who don’t know their own minds.”

“And since you’re very self assured, you’re above a moral code?”

“I would have thought a software company would have closed over Christmas,” John said, interrupting their banter.

“Not that work, his freelance work,” Sherlock clarified. “Don’t you think you’re being a little hypocritical?” he asked Mycroft. “You’re not exactly a Disney role model.” His eyes were teasing though, alluding to their secret, their own personal in joke.

As much as Mycroft didn’t think it quite a laughing matter, he admitted to himself that it felt nice to be able to skirt around the edges of the truth in front of an oblivious John Watson. The way Sherlock’s foot wound around his ankle told him his brother was enjoying it just as much. “No, I’m not, but then again, my line of work has rather blurred lines.”

“And mine doesn’t?”

“You work on the side of the angels, Sherlock. You’re supposed to know the difference between right and wrong.”

“Right and wrong is different to moral and immoral.”

“Many would disagree with you.”

“ Idiots would disagree with me.”

“Not -”

“As fascinating as this is,” John said loudly, cutting off Mycroft’s retort, “it’s a bit heavy for a relaxing afternoon at the pub, wouldn’t you say?”

“What would you suggest then?” his flatmate asked.

John twisted around and looked through the next door. “There’s pool tables through there. How about a game?” He sounded confident, and Mycroft deduced he’d played many a game over the years, and considered himself to be rather good. It seemed an obvious ploy to turn Sherlock’s attention back to himself, to have a moment of glory. Of course, he was seriously underestimating the Holmes brothers.

Sherlock seemed to be thinking the same thing. “Alright then, you’re on,” he agreed, a smirk on his lips.
“Mycroft?” the doctor asked.

“Oh, I’ll be more than content to watch for now, John.” Seeing his brother kick his arse would be a most entertaining way to spend their day.

“Perhaps the winner could challenge Mycroft?” Sherlock suggested.

John looked amused at this, still not associating either brother with a physical game. What he was failing to recognise was that pool was mostly angles and calculating force, which the brothers excelled at. “Sure, why not. You two go and rack up and I’ll order us some chips. May as well have something to munch on while we play.”

Chips - Mycroft’s guilty pleasure, and the chance to watch Sherlock bent over a table. Christmas really had come at last.
They tossed a coin for the break which John won and he sank the ten. “Looks like I’m bigs,” he announced unnecessarily. “Your go.” He handed over the cue, needing to share it as the pub only had three and the others were already being used at the other table.

Sherlock assessed the table, seeing numerous shots he could take. The one he chose positioned him right in front of Mycroft and he took his time as he leaned over, lining up the shot. The older man felt his cheeks flush as his brother’s pert arse waggled in front of him, the cut of his trousers accentuating the lushness of it. He knew the show was just for him and he felt the overwhelming desire to give him a slap on one of his delectable cheeks. He picked up his cider and took a sip in order to keep his hands busy so he couldn’t give in to temptation.

Sherlock sank the two, and then the seven, and then much to John’s dismay - the rest of the smalls. Each shot he took, he made sure to position himself to Mycroft’s best viewing advantage. When it wasn’t his arse being presented in front of him, it was his forearms as his shirt cuffs were rolled up, or his sharp cheekbones as he peered down the cue. By the time he contorted over the table and twisted his head to make a behind-his-back shot, exposing the long line of his neck, Mycroft was rock hard in his trousers. He perched on his bar stool and crossed his legs, squirming slightly as he watched Sherlock line up the black. It just missed the pocket and he handed over the cue to a slack jawed John.

“Played much?” John asked, slightly sulky.

“It’s simple mathematics and physics, John.”

“Oh, right. Simple.”

As the doctor surveyed the table, Sherlock crossed to where Mycroft sat and took the cider from his hands, making sure to place his lips directly over the point where his brother had been drinking. “I thought you didn’t like the taste of that one?” he quipped.

His baby brother shrugged. “I thought perhaps I was mistaken and needed a second try.” He handed the glass back, making sure their fingers brushed as he did so.

“Oh? And has your opinion changed?”

“No, not really. It still tastes like cat urine.”

“How very descriptive.”

“You could go and get another of the apple cider for us to share?” Sherlock suggested, eyeing his empty glass mournfully.

“Actually, no, no I can’t,” he told him, crossing his legs to the other direction. “Not for some time anyway.”

The grin that spread across the younger man’s face was utterly salacious. “Is that so?”

“You know exactly how it is, since it was a calculated effort on your part.”

“Guilty as charged,” he said with a wink, then turned his attention back to the game.
John sank two of his balls and then the white, allowing Sherlock to line up the final shot of the game. The blonde groaned as the game ended and his flatmate turned to him with a victorious grin. “Drinks are on you, John!”

He nodded and headed for the bar, leaving the brothers alone for the time being. Sherlock stepped up as close to Mycroft as decent in public, his hand twitching as he started to reach for him. “Damn it to hell, I just want to touch you,” he said between gritted teeth.

“I know the feeling,” he agreed. He held up his glass, allowing Sherlock to grasp it, to take what small comfort they could from that small contact between their fingers.

“Maybe playing against each other is a bad idea,” he said after he’d taken a sip.

“How so? Worried I’ll beat you?”

“Hah! No, I’m confident that in this at least I can best you. No, I’m more worried about how tight my damn trousers are. Seeing you bent over the table is going to have the exact same effect on me as I had on you, and these don’t leave much to the imagination.”

“As much as I wouldn’t mind seeing that, I don’t exactly want to give John fuel for his daydreams,” Mycroft admitted. “How do you propose we get out of it?”

Sherlock gave a furtive glance around the pub, and seeing that no one was watching him, picked up the cue and twisted at the tip, ripping off the small nub of leather. “Oops! Oh dear, it seems this old thing has finally given up the ghost,” he said innocently. “I guess it looks like we won’t be able to play anymore.”

Mycroft chuckled. “That’s deserving of a kiss, brother mine. Unfortunately for us, you’ll have to wait until tonight to collect.”

“I shall try my best to contain myself until then.” John walked back over with their drinks and Sherlock held the broken cue up in his hand. “This establishment’s paltry excuse for equipment has disintegrated, bringing an end to our competition, and thus sparing my brother the embarrassment of a crushing defeat.”

“That was lucky timing for you,” John told Mycroft with a shit eating grin.

“Yes, very fortuitous,” he agreed, holding back his sneer in order to keep the peace.

“So what will we do now then?” the blonde asked, picking up his pint.

“How about having some lunch?” Sherlock suggested.

John looked surprised at his flatmate’s eagerness to eat, but quickly agreed. “They have a steak and kidney pie on their daily specials board that looks amazing. I’ve got to run to the loo though - will you order for me?”

“Of course.” Sherlock watched as he walked off and then pulled his brother over to the counter so they could look at a menu and order.

“I’m not really very hungry,” Mycroft said as they looked.

“You still need to eat though. Did you think you could hide from me all the weight you’ve lost lately? You’re skin and bone!” he hissed.
He rolled his eyes at Sherlock’s theatrics. “Hardly, brother mine. I’m still several pounds heavier than I should be for my ideal BMI.”

“Have you not read the research? The Body Mass Index is a flawed system that doesn’t allow for numerous variations. It’s just a guide, Mycie.”

“And I’m allowing it to guide me.”

“Urgh! Why are you being such a stubborn fucking git abo - oh, hello, yes, we’d like to order some lunch.” The bartender had wandered over, a grin on his face at their bickering.

“Sure thing, what can I get you?”

They placed their orders and then went back over to the booth they’d been in before, which was still free, and sat side by side. “I just don’t understand why you think you still need to lose weight,” he said to his brother. Mycroft thought he sounded rather sulky.

“Does my appearance really matter so much to you?” he asked with genuine curiosity. “Would your desire for me diminish if I was substantially bigger or smaller?”

“No!” His reply was vehement. “You’d still be you so I’d still want you just as much. It’s not about your appearance, brother, it’s about your health.”

He still couldn’t see the issue. “But I’m not unhealthy, Sherlock.”

“Gah! I can count your vertebrae when you’re lying down, Mycie.”

“As can I with you,” he pointed out, starting to get defensive. “Are you not being just a little hypocritical?”

“That’s not point! We’re not talking about me.”

“Perhaps we should be.”

“We really shouldn’t.” He’d rarely seen Sherlock so passionate about something that wasn’t a gory murder. “I worry about you, Mycie. I don’t want you passing out at work because you’ve not been eating enough. I don’t want your mind to slow and for you to make a mistake because you’ve not maintained your transport. I don’t want you to look in the mirror and hate what you see. I want you to be happy. I want you to see yourself as I do - to know that you’re gorgeous. I want you to have the energy to make love to me all night long.”

Mycroft saw John exit the toilet and knew their conversation was at an end. He took the chance to dart his hand out and give his brother’s a squeeze under the table. “I promise I’ll take care of myself.”

His brother’s eyes narrowed but he couldn’t reply since John had reached them.

“Mycroft, I’ve been meaning to talk to you about something,” John announced as he took his seat opposite them.

“Oh?”

“Yeah, I raised it with Sherlock a while ago but I’m not sure if he mentioned it to you.”

Beside him, Mycroft felt Sherlock tense up. “Nothing seems to be ringing a bell. What is it?”

“I know someone at work who I think you’d be interested in. He’s single and right up your alley so I
thought you might be interested in getting to know him.”

The doctor looked so sincere that he couldn’t even be accused of trying to stir the pot. “I guess Sherlock didn’t mention it because he thought it would be too soon after the unfortunate incident with Elliott,” the politician surmised.

“Exactly!” The detective shot his flatmate a fierce glare. “I think it’s still too soon to bring it up.”

“And I still think that that should be up to Mycroft,” John shot back.

“As much as I appreciate the thought, I must agree with Sherlock that it’s too soon for me to even consider seeing anyone else right now.” Under the table, Mycroft allowed his fingers to brush reassuringly against his brother’s thigh. “It was very considerate of you though.”

The thanks seemed to placate him somewhat and John gave him a smile. “Well whenever you feel ready, just give me a call. I’m sure Travis would love to meet you.”

“That’s very generous of you. I’ll be sure to let you know when I get to that point.” Sherlock’s leg jerked under the table and Mycroft gave his thigh a proper squeeze to assure him it was just part of the game.

“So, how was your sister?” John asked, demonstrating his ability to ask the most uncomfortable questions possible.

“Oh, keeping busy,” Sherlock replied sarcastically. “She has knitting group on Monday’s, book club on Thursdays, and catches up with her old school chums on the weekend.”

“Was that really necessary?” John demanded.

“What else did you expect? She’s incarcerated, John. It’s not like she has an active social life.”

“So I’m not allowed to enquire as to her health and wellbeing?”

Mycroft decided to step in to prevent the argument from escalating. “She accepted Mummy’s gift which made our parents very happy,” he told him. “And she seemed to enjoy her duet with Sherlock.”

“That’s good to hear,” John said, ignoring the scowl on his best friend’s face.

A server brought over their meals and they were silent for a while as they unwrapped their cutlery from the paper serviettes and started to dig in.

“Is your pie good?” Mycroft enquired politely. He usually despised small talk but the atmosphere was tense and as little as he cared for the ex-soldier, he didn't want Sherlock to be grumpy the entire afternoon.

John moaned around his mouthful. “S great.”

“I’ve never been a fan of kidney,” he admitted.

“That’s because it’s something you should dissect, not eat,” Sherlock declared.

John huffed but otherwise ignored the remark. “What sort of salad is that?” he asked Mycroft.

“Just a simple Moroccan chicken.”
“It looks good.”

“It is.”

The conversation died away to an awkward silence, and they all concentrated on their meals. Mycroft snuck a glance out one of the windows and sighed. It had started to snow again which brought to a complete halt his idea of walking home and leaving his brother and flatmate to their afternoon at the pub. As much as he enjoyed spending time with Sherlock, he’d much rather be in front of the fire at his parent’s house with a book than here right now. Knowing that he had time to waste, he raised his hand and signalled to the bartender that he’d need another drink.
It was rather late in the evening and everyone was relaxing. Father had convinced Mycroft to play a game of chess, Mummy was attempting to knit (a hobby she continued to revisit despite her lack of talent for it), and John was reading one of his spy novels, Rosie having been put to bed hours ago. Bing Crosby’s voice drifted softly across the room, and glasses that had been filled with mulled wine were now sitting empty on the coffee table. Sherlock stood and stretched out like a cat, yawning widely. “I’m going to shower and then go to bed,” he announced, meeting Mycroft’s eye when no one else was watching.

“Okay, night, Sherlock,” Mummy said, touching her cheek to indicate she wanted a kiss.

He dutifully gave her a peck and then headed upstairs, after catching the almost imperceivable nod Mycroft had given him. He rummaged around in his bag to find the items he had hidden away, and then headed for the bathroom. After a thorough wash, he stood under the hot water, allowing the heat to relax his muscles. Once he felt himself start to unwind, he uncapped the silicone lubricant he’d brought into the stall with him and poured a generous amount onto his fingers, then spread his legs. He twisted his arm around behind him, seeking out his rear entry, circling around the delicate pucker. He’d been practising opening himself up for several weeks now, determined to have himself well prepared so he could convince Mycroft to make love to him. As much as he adored being deep inside his brother, he wanted to experience everything, to have Mycroft become part of him, to empty his seed far inside.

It wasn’t long before he felt confident he was ready and he picked up the large plug he’d brought with him. He’d worked his way up from the very small, beginner’s sizes to ones that had a similar girth to Mycroft’s cock. His brother was hesitant to participate in any overt sexual activities whilst under their parent’s roof, but Sherlock was confident that if he took care of all the preparations so Mycroft could simply slide into his slick heat, he would be amenable.

His breath hitched as the widest part of the plug stretched him, his body seeming to constrict around the intrusion. He let out his breath slowly, forcing himself to relax, to not fight it. It took a good minute or so, the water beginning to lose its heat by the time the rest of the plug was swallowed up by his muscles. He turned the cold water off completely, coaxing as much warmth from the shower as he could as he allowed his body to adjust to being filled by the plug. He hadn’t managed to find his prostate, not knowing if he was just missing the right spot, or if he was just one of those people who weren’t as sensitive there as others were. He remembered Irene telling him she had never had an orgasm from being penetrated and she had felt betrayed by women’s magazines for years as a teen for making her believe every woman had a g spot. She was sure a dick was all she’d need and it took her what felt like an eternity of self discovery before she realised she could have fulfilling sex without one.

The water went cold suddenly, but he welcomed the distraction. He didn’t know why his thoughts had turned to Irene at that moment, but he willed them away. He didn’t want to associate anything to do with the love and desire he felt for his brother with The Woman. She was in his past, a fleeting interest that had been more theoretical than reality. Mycroft was his everything.

He stepped out of the shower and onto the bathmat, moving stiffly as he got used to movement with a plug inside. He dried off and brushed his teeth, then opened the door just enough to stick his head out. There was no one about so he wrapped the towel around his waist and darted down the hall to the room he was sharing with his brother. He jerked open the door and hurried inside, pausing as he found Mycroft already there. He was sitting up in bed, a book open on his lap, and he was watching...
his brother in amusement. “Enjoying a little naked dash around the house are we?”

He gestured at the towel. “Obviously not naked. However, that is easily remedied.” He pulled it off and flung it over onto the chair, enjoying the way Mycroft’s eyes raked his body hungrily. He stalked towards the bed and climbed up onto it, straddling his brother’s lap.

“Sherlock, we shouldn’t…”

“Oh, I think we most definitely should,” he disagreed with a purr, leaning down and brushing his lips along his jaw. Mycroft’s stubble tugged at his own and it made his cock stand up and take notice. “I want you so much,” he whispered.

“I always want you, but what if someone hears?”

“They won’t. We can be quiet. Think of it as a challenge.” He continued to kiss over his face and neck, then nibbled on his earlobe. Mycroft moaned softly as he licked his way around the shell of his ear.

“I’m not sure,” he continued to protest, but it was weaker now, with no force behind it.

Sherlock reached down under the waistband of his brother’s pants and ran his fingers up his hardening length. “Someone seems sure,” he said with a smirk. He shimmied down the bed so he could pull the pyjama bottoms off of him. Mycroft lifted his hips to accommodate him and soon he was back on top of his now naked brother. “Please, Mycie. I want you, so, so much. Besides, I have a surprise for you.”

Mycroft’s hands had come up to stroke up and down his sides, causing goosebumps to break out where his fingers had passed. “Something even more surprising than you, naked, in bed, with Mummy two doors down?”

Sherlock grinned and knelt up on his knees, reaching behind him to pull the plug out. It resisted for only a moment and then slipped out with a plop. He held it up, enjoying the way Mycroft’s eyes went as wide as saucers. “Surprise!” He tossed it to the side of the bed and then, keeping their eyes locked, lowered himself down, finding Mycroft’s cock by touch. He’d made sure he was well lubed, but there was still a little resistance, but he bore down and slowly he sank all the way down onto his length.

“Oh, fuck,” Mycroft gasped, his hands clutching at his brother’s hips.

“Oh, Mycie, you feel wonderful.” He dipped his head so he could kiss him, sucking his bottom lip into his mouth.

“I’m not hurting you?” he asked, breaking the kiss and looking worried.

Sherlock shook his head, and moved his hips a little to make his point. “Oh! No, not at all. I’ve been practicing for weeks now, stretching myself, moving through a range of toys.” He caressed Mycroft’s cheek adoringly. “Always thinking of you, wishing it was you inside me, that it was your hand on my cock, that it was your tongue licking my come off my hand.”

Mycroft’s eyes fluttered closed as the images of his little brother preparing himself flashed through his imagination. Sherlock felt a rush of satisfaction, seeing how the older man was reacting to him. In the very late, quiet hours of the night, every now and then doubts would flicker across his mind, and he would worry that his brother would grow tired of his lack of experience. Later, when the sun was up and his phone would ping with a text from Mycroft, he would realise it would never happen. He cherished moments like the present though, when he had hard data he could add to his collection to
reinforce that knowledge.

He sat back up and placed his hands on Mycroft’s chest so he could balance himself as he rode him. He kept the pace slow, not wanting the bed to creak as he experienced for the first time what it was like to have his brother inside him. He could have used adjectives such as full, stretched, or pleasurable but instead he felt connected to Mycroft in a way he’d never been before, so close that it was as if their very souls were merging into one. Every quiet gasp, bitten off moan, and shudder of enjoyment that Mycroft made seemed to be reflected back onto Sherlock and he found himself gasping, moaning, and shuddering as well. They moved as one, their eyes locked, love writ large upon their faces.

Sherlock’s cock had been bobbing against his stomach, completely forgotten by the genius as he had focussed on his brother. Mycroft reached out and wrapped one of his slender hands around it, stroking up the silky shaft, and rubbing his thumb across the pool of pre-ejaculate at the tip. “So wet for me,” he murmured, lifting his hand to his lips to taste him.

The younger brother moaned, a little too loudly at the sight of Mycroft’s tongue darting out to lick at the fluid, and a hand flew to his mouth to clamp over his lips. They both froze, listening intently to see if anyone would come to investigate the sound, but after a while it appeared they had gotten away with it. “Sorry, sorry,” he whispered, beginning to rock his hips once more.

“Why are you incapable of remaining quiet?” his brother asked, a wry smile on his lips. “Perhaps I’ll need to get you a gag?” His cock twitched at the thought and Mycroft’s smile turned into a wicked grin. “Oh! Oh, I am most definitely getting you a gag,” he uttered softly, his hand returning to tug and pull at Sherlock’s prick.

He was lost for words, the pleasure of Mycroft’s cock deep inside him and his fingers wrapped around him too much. He ground down even more, feeling his brother’s length push even deeper inside. Mycroft’s free hand took hold of his hip and guided him, increasing the pace, the hand on Sherlock’s prick matching it. From downstairs came the sound of the grandfather clock striking midnight, the gongs drowning out the quiet whimpers both made as they came - Mycroft exploding inside of his brother, and Sherlock painting his chest and brother’s hand with his come. He collapsed down onto Mycroft, both of them ignoring the way their chests smeared the ejaculate between them, almost immediately turning sticky and tacky. Sherlock’s lips found Mycroft’s and they shared a sweet kiss. He pulled back and ran a finger over his brother’s swollen lips. “Merry Christmas, Mycie,” he whispered.

“Merry Christmas, Sherlock.”
Chapter 49

A knock on their bedroom door woke them both but before they could even react, Mummy had walked into the room. Mycroft sighed a breath of relief as he realised he had migrated once again to the side of the bed during the night, leaving a respectable distance between he and his brother, apart from one leg that was intertwined, hidden beneath the blanket. He was also relieved that he had managed to convince Sherlock to don pyjamas before they’d fallen asleep.

“Sorry to wake you, boys, but your father wants to know if you would like to accompany him to mass this morning?”

Sherlock huffed from somewhere underneath the blanket that was wrapped high around his face. “One would think that after more than three decades of not one of us accepting his offer that he would stop asking.”

“No need to get snippy, young man,” Mummy chided. “You know it’s important to him.”

“The only time he attends mass is at Christmas. How important can it be?” he rumbled.

Mycroft rolled over onto his back and pinched his brother beneath the covers. “It’s a tradition for him, brother mine. That’s what’s important to him, not the religious aspect.”

“Still not going,” he grumbled.

“John is going with him,” Mummy said, thinking perhaps this would convince him.

“Good for John. Tell them I hope they both don’t die of boredom. It would be horribly inconvenient to start arranging funerals today.”

It was their mother’s turn to huff. “Could you not just make an effort this one time, Sherlock?”

“And ruin my streak? No, I don’t think so. Besides, I don’t see you going.”

“I have lunch to prepare!” she argued back. “It’s not like I get a spot of help from you lot.”

“I will politely decline as well, Mummy,” Mycroft told her. “But I am more than happy to help you with lunch.”

“Brown nose,” Sherlock muttered.

“Thank you, Myc. I’ll appreciate the help. I’ll see you boys downstairs shortly then.”

“I didn’t say I was helping,” her youngest son said, his head emerging from his cocoon to glare at her.

“No, but I did,” she retorted. “If you’re not going with your father then you can ruddy well help me. Would it kill you to be a bit more like your brother, Sherlock?”

“Hurrah! It’s a Christmas miracle!” he declared, throwing an arm out of the blanket. “Suddenly Mycie is back in the good books.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she demanded.

“You’ve been mad at him for months now,” he told her, ignoring the warning look Mycroft shot
him. “You and Father say you’ve forgiven him but then you treat him like he’s not even family anymore. How can you not see how upset that makes him? And he’ll never say anything because he’s been carrying the weight of his guilt around with him for so long that he thinks he deserves to be punished. Out of your three children, he’s the one who least deserves to be punished - he’s the only one who’s never actually murdered anyone!” Mummy gasped but he continued on with his rant. “He keeps this country safe, and has given up so much, making those hard decisions that no one wants on their conscious, but he makes them because someone has to. And you stand there and judge him for what he had to do, to keep the world free from our sister’s madness. Would you still be so angry at him if Eurus had had her way and I had pulled the trigger? Killed my own brother?”

Mummy’s face paled and she staggered, slumping to sit on the edge of the bed. “Myc, what is he talking about?” she asked. “What did he mean by that?” Sherlock’s eyes went wide as he realised he’d given away details of what had happened. They had agreed never to tell their parents the details of the game Eurus had played with them. He opened his mouth to take it back but Mummy shut him up with a glare. “Myc, what did he mean?”

“Can we save this conversation for once we’re out of bed?” he asked. Her dangerous look gave him his answer so Mycroft pulled himself up into a sitting position, his back resting against the headboard. “You know that while we were at Sherrinford, Eurus had us solve puzzles, working towards her Final Problem. There was a gun, loaded with two bullets. One of them, the Governor used to kill himself in order to try and save his wife...the other, well, the other was for Sherlock to use, to choose between killing John or myself.” He swallowed hard, remembering the moment Sherlock’s eyes had locked with his, knowing he had decided, that he’d chosen to kill his brother. As much as he had offered, had been willing to give his own life in order for Sherlock to be happy, it had still hurt immensely that his brother had chosen the doctor over himself. But then he’d turned the gun on himself and Mycroft had willed him to point it back to him, to pull the trigger.

Mummy’s eyes bored into Sherlock’s. “And you were going to do it?” she said between gritted teeth. “You picked your brother to die?”

“In the end, I picked myself. Eurus knew her game would end if I killed myself so she shot us all with tranquiliser darts and moved John and I to Musgrave Hall.”

“But before you changed your mind, you were going to shoot Myc? You chose John over your own brother?”

“Mummy, I was willing to die if it meant Sherlock had a chance at happiness,” Mycroft told her. “But in the end it didn’t happen so does it really matter?”

“It matters because as I told you afterwards, family is all we have in the end.” Her eyes turned back to Sherlock. “You tell me right this instant, young man - do you harbour any romantic interests in John Watson?”

“What?” he spluttered. “No! He’s my best friend, nothing more.”

“Friend or best friend, what matters is he isn’t blood, Sherlock. If you were in love with him I could understand, but to chose him, to aim the gun at your brother? Mycroft watched over you from the minute you were born. He was the most attentive brother I could ever hope him to be. He protected you from bullies, he helped you learn mastery over your intellect, he dragged you from drug dens in the middle of the night and saved your life! And this is how you repay him?”

“Mummy -” Mycroft tried to interrupt, but she held up a finger, silencing him.

“You chose a friend over the one person, other than your father and I, who loves you most in this
world. The person who would do anything for you? How could you, Sherlock?”

His brother choked out a sob, tears running freely down his cheeks while he endured his mother’s chastising. Mycroft didn’t even try to hide it - he reached over and pulled his brother into his arms, holding him as he cried. “Mummy, that’s enough,” he told her quietly.

She regarded them both for a moment and then stood up. “Myc, I’m sorry if I’ve been too hard on you lately. I’ll be more mindful from now on. I’ll see you both downstairs shortly.”

She left, closing the door behind her, and Mycroft tightened his arms around his brother. “Shhh, it’s okay, Sherlock. Everything is okay now.”

“I’m so sorry, Mycie, I’m so sorry,” he wailed clutching at Mycroft’s chest, his tears soaking the silk pyjama top.

“Oh, love, you have nothing to be sorry for. It was a horrible day and we all had to make decisions we didn’t want to.”

“How can you ever forgive me?”

“I can’t, because there’s nothing to forgive. You did what you had to do, but it’s in the past now. I love you so much, I hope you know just how much. Mummy was right - I would do anything for you, Sherlock. Anything.”

He cried harder, his whole body racking with his grief. Mycroft continued to hold him, carding a hand through his curls, and whispering endearments. It took a long time for his brother to calm down, his sobs slowly easing, but eventually he lay slumped against Mycroft, his cheeks still damp. “I’m sorry,” he whispered again.

“I know, but there’s nothing to be sorry for.” He placed a finger under his brother’s chin and tilted his face up, capturing his lips in a kiss. “Did I mention how much I enjoyed last night?” he asked, changing the subject.

Sherlock managed a small smile. “You might have said something about it. Once or twice.”

“Well I’ll tell you again - you were amazing. Thank you.” They shared another kiss and then he gave a little sigh. “As much as I want to be able to stay in bed with you all day, Mummy will come looking for us if we don’t get up and go and help her. Best not risk that again.”

Sherlock groaned and buried his face against his chest again. “That was too close,” he agreed. “I’d been awake for a little while, considering waking you with a blowjob. Luckily I’d decided to let you have a lie in.”

Despite the severity of that near miss, Mycroft managed to laugh. “An enjoyable Christmas morning for me would have turned into a trip to A&E for Mummy’s heart attack.”

“John and Father will die of boredom, Mummy of too much excitement...looks like we could be spending the rest of the day by ourselves.”

He batted at his brother’s arm. “Don’t even joke about things like that, Sherlock,” he admonished. “Now come on, time to get up.”

He tried to wriggle out of bed but his arm was caught by Sherlock. “Just one more kiss,” his brother pleaded.
Feeling generous with Christmas spirit, Mycroft indulged him.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The atmosphere in the kitchen was rather subdued as they followed Mummy’s instructions. Sherlock kept his head down, eyes averted from Mummy, and remained quiet as he stood at the sink next to Mycroft and peeled potatoes. Needing to see his brother smile, Mycroft nudged him and tilted his head in the direction of the backyard. “How about after lunch you and I challenge John and Father to a snow fight?”

His sibling looked skeptical. “You want to spend time outdoors? Playing in the snow? Getting wet and muddy?”

He shrugged. “It was just a thought. If you’re not interested we can do something else.” He turned his eyes back to the task of peeling the carrots.

Sherlock put down the potato and peeler and reached over to touch one long finger to Mycroft’s wrist. “I think I would find that rather enjoyable,” he said, almost shyly.

He gave his brother a small smile. “I’m glad.”

“Of course, they won’t stand a chance against us.”

“I wouldn’t be so cocky, Sherlock. Don’t forget both are ex-soldiers. John still would have had tactical training as an army doctor, and Father was a colonel in Vietnam.”

“Yes, but we’ll have the element of surprise.”

“How so?”

Sherlock grinned. “We won’t give them any warning they’re about to take part in a snow fight. It’ll be an ambush.”

They giggled together, but when they saw Mummy watching them, they fell silent and resumed their tasks.

She came up behind them and put an arm around both their waists. “Don’t stop,” she said, going up onto her tiptoes, kissing first Sherlock’s head and then Mycroft’s. “It’s good to see you boys getting along so well. Besides,” she added, giving them a grin of her own, “you’ll need to plan if you’re to get one up on your father. He plays dirty during snow fights.”

“Do you have any insider information about his preferred tactics?” Mycroft asked her.

“Oh yes. Listen closely.”

The table in the formal dining room was groaning under the weight of the food they had prepared and yet they were still needing to find space for the accoutrements that went with it.

“Anyone would think we’re feeding the Royal Army,” Mycroft muttered as he maneuvered the gravy boat in between two platters of roast vegetables.
“We were never fed this well,” John quipped from the doorway.

“That’s because they didn’t have Mummy doing the cooking,” Sherlock said, coming up behind Mycroft to try and fit the cranberry sauce in somewhere. He placed a hand on Mycroft’s hip to balance as he leaned far over the table. It was a relatively innocent gesture but it caused Mycroft’s heart to begin pounding in his chest.

“I would have killed to have just one of her meals whilst deployed,” the doctor said, his eyes dreamy.

“I thought since you were a doctor, you saved people?” the detective asked, his eyes sparkling with mirth.

John grinned at him. “I had bad days.”

They laughed at their private joke, and Mycroft felt a small pang of jealousy for the doctor. John had shared so much with his brother, things that he would never have had the chance to, even if they’d been on better terms back then. He knew it was impossible to be a part of every aspect of Sherlock’s life, just as he knew it was not feasible for his brother to be involved in everything he did, but it still stung. Sherlock surely hadn’t meant to exclude him when he’d made the comment, but the reality was, Mycroft felt a little like an outsider. He tried to push the juvenile feelings aside but they were particularly stubborn today.

John glanced into the kitchen and saw that Mummy was still busy in there. “Did you get to talk to Mark today?” he asked his flatmate when he knew they wouldn’t be overheard.

Sherlock nodded. “Yes, for a short while.” It wasn’t a lie - Mark had called to wish the brothers a merry Christmas and they’d both chatted to him briefly while they snuck a cigarette.

“How’s he doing? He must miss you.”

Sherlock shrugged. “He’s busy with his work. There’s no need to fret that he’s pining over my absence, John. We won’t even be gone for five days.”

John huffed. “Normal people don’t like to be separated from loved ones during the holidays.”

Mycroft narrowed his eyes at the doctor. “You keep making those statements, John - ‘normal people’. Sherlock may have a greater intellect than most people but he’s not abnormal.”

The blonde barked out a laugh. “Are you kidding?” he asked. “I mean, are you being entirely serious right now, Mycroft?” He pointed at Sherlock. “There is absolutely nothing ‘normal’ about him. But it’s not like it’s a bad thing.”

“Yes, I don’t!”

“Mycroft,” Sherlock said to him, laying a hand on his arm. “John meant nothing by it. It’s okay.”

“Yet the way you seem to be constantly pointing out how he’s not doing what normal people do would beg to differ, as if you think the way he’s living his life is wrong.”

“No, I don’t!”

“Mycroft,” Sherlock said to him, laying a hand on his arm. “John meant nothing by it. It’s okay.”

“He’s making you out to be some kind of freak, and you’re not. Does it matter if you don’t love someone in the conventional manner? Does it really matter if you do things differently?”

“Even if John had meant that, it wouldn’t bother me, Mycie. My partner and I know what we mean to each other and we don’t care that we do things differently to regular people.” His voice had a slight warning tone to it, alerting Mycroft he was taking the matter too personally.
He took a deep breath, and allowed himself to step back from the situation. “Of course. Apologies, John.”

The doctor shrugged. “No worries.”

Mummy bustled into the room then, putting an end to the conversation. She had the baby in her arms and strapped her into the highchair. “I think we’re just about ready. I hope everyone is hungry!”

Mummy had positioned the highchair so John was sitting next to Sherlock, and so Mycroft had to settle for sitting opposite his brother. Father joined them, bringing in the carved turkey on a large platter. “Merry Christmas, everyone!” Mummy declared, and then picked up her fork. “Let’s not stand on ceremony - dig in.”

Conversation for the next few minutes revolved around asking for particular dishes and passing around platters. Mycroft served up only a small plate of food, not wanting to overindulge but it appeared he’d underestimated Sherlock’s resilience to his dieting. His brother had stood up from his chair to reach for the different dishes and each time he scooped a spoonful of something onto his own plate, he would subtly add one to Mycroft’s. He didn’t say anything, didn’t draw attention to it, just bit by bit loaded up his brother’s plate without anyone noticing - except for Mycroft. He finally stopped once his older brother had shot daggers at him, but he sat down with a self-satisfied smirk upon his face.

“Are you still working at the clinic, John?” Father asked, kicking off the small talk.

As he blocked out John’s reply, not being at all interested in his dull working life, Mycroft’s attention was drawn to the feeling of a foot inching up his leg. He looked over in time to catch Sherlock’s innocent look before the foot reached his knee. He raised an eyebrow but got nothing but the flash of an impish grin in response. Mummy and Father were sitting at opposite ends of the table meaning the chair next to him was empty - no one would see what his brother was doing, but Mycroft still shuddered at the indecency of it. As the foot crept further up his thighs, working unequivocally towards his groin, Mycroft dropped one hand into his lap and tried to stop the appendage in its tracks. The naked foot (he was still refusing to wear socks inside) nudged his hand out of the way and continued to seek out the growing bulge in Mycroft’s trousers.

Knowing it was pointless to try and stop his brother when he was hell bent on something, Mycroft decided to allow him to do what he wished. That didn't mean he was going to make it easy for him though. The pointed look directed at him was an unspoken request by his baby brother to undo his zipper to allow ease of access, but he just as pointedly ignored it. If Sherlock wanted to play, then he would play by Mycroft’s rules. Not one to ignore a challenge, Sherlock began to stroke his long foot up and down Mycroft’s ensconced erection, keeping the pressure firm and steady.

The meal continued, Mycroft and Sherlock answering questions put to them but otherwise not actively engaging in conversation. As their plates cleared, Sherlock theatrically slumped in his chair, stating he was so full his stomach was about to explode, when in reality he was using the extra reach from being lower under the table to maneuver his toes around his brother’s cock. The politician kept his face schooled into a polite expression, his will power being tested as his balls started to tighten and draw against his body as his orgasm approached.

Father stood to began to clear plates away and Sherlock started to gather together the used cutlery. “John and I will clear the table,” their father told them. “You boys helped your mother to lay everything out. Just sit there and relax.”

Relief washed over Mycroft as he was in no state to be up and walking about around his parents. John stood and happily collected dishes and Mummy announced she’d begin seeing about dessert.
All three bustled from the room and the instant they were gone, Mycroft grabbed a handful of serviettes and fumbled for his zipper. Sherlock grinned and as soon as his brother’s cock had sprung free, his nimble toes stroked even faster. Mycroft bit his lip as he came, shooting his load into the crumpled mass of green and red tissues. His eyes remained locked with Sherlock’s the entire time, his brother’s blue-green orbs intense as they watched him as he shuddered through his orgasm.

Mycroft tucked himself away, getting his breathing under control while Sherlock stood and collected the discarded cardboard tubes from the crackers. He silently held out one hand for the soiled serviettes and then balled them up with the rest of the rubbish. With a final smile, he flounced from the room and into the kitchen, announcing loudly that he was helping to tidy. Mycroft slumped back against his chair, pondering just when his life had turned so erotically clandestine. He found though that he was so happy that he wasn’t concerned in the least that it had taken such a direction.

Chapter End Notes

Surprise footjob! Woot! Merry Christmas ;-)
Chapter 51

Mummy had made her trifle for dessert and Sherlock watched his brother closely, knowing it was a favourite of his but having a feeling he would pass on it. As expected, Mycroft didn’t help himself to any, so the detective loaded up a bowl and then plonked it down in front of his sibling, before filling another for himself.

“Honestly, Sherlock, I’m stuffed,” Mycroft protested. “I couldn’t possibly eat any more.”

“It’s Christmas, Mycroft. I’m sure you’ll find room.” He kept a slight challenge in the look he directed at him, knowing he would give in rather than argue in front of their parents. Mummy had always fed them up, being the biggest contributor to her eldest’s weight problem as a teenager. Even as adults she would fuss over if they were eating enough, much to Mycroft’s dismay. The ploy worked as he dropped the matter and began to pick at the dessert. He didn’t finish all of it, but Sherlock was just happy that he’d indulged at all. He’d had several glasses of mulled wine over the course of their meal as well, so along with the foot job, Sherlock was confident his brother was at least relaxing somewhat.

Once the table had been cleared, Mummy suggested they all take a wander through the garden before they got too sleepy. She winked at her sons, rather taken with the idea of the snow fight, much to Sherlock’s surprise. She had never been one for flights of whimsy but perhaps the holiday season was partly to blame? Or perhaps she was just up for anything that involved the cooperation of her normally-bickering sons? Sherlock had to fight to keep the smirk from his face when he thought of what her reaction would be if she found out just what sort of cooperation they got up to behind closed doors.

Father grumbled a little but joined them outside to keep his wife happy. Rosie had been bundled up in so many layers of warm clothes that she looked like a starfish and Mummy carried her around, showing her different frozen plants. John fell in step with Sherlock, and although he’d have much preferred to wander with Mycroft, his flatmate was in a cheerful mood which made the detective nostalgic for the beginning days of their friendship. The wine he’d drunk had given his brain a happy little buzz and he found himself wistful, wishing that things could return to those simpler times - before Moriarty, before Mary, even before his memories of Eurus had been restored. He looked over and caught Mycroft’s eye and his heart started beating faster at the brilliant smile his brother gave him, blowing away such thoughts. No matter how things had changed in other aspects of his life, he would do it all over again if it meant he got to be with Mycroft, not only as his brother but also as his lover.

They reached the end of the long, narrow backyard and stood looking out over the snow covered fields that backed onto it. “Let’s continue walking,” Mummy suggested, fumbling one-handed with the frozen latch on the gate.

“It’s a bit cold to be galavanting around, isn’t it?” Father asked, looking mournfully back at the house.

“Nonsense! It’s a glorious day. Oh, thank you, Myc,” she said as Mycroft helped open the gate.

They filed out into the field and started skirting the edges of it, following the path already cut through the snow. Although now deserted, there were signs children had been playing in the fields earlier - the well trodden paths, the remains of a snowman, a single woolen glove, lying lost on the ground. They walked for quite a while, the houses disappearing to be replaced with the woods that circled the village. Sherlock slowed, and allowed the others to catch up to he and John. When his flatmate and
father were distracted by their conversation about football, he winked at Mummy, then grabbed Mycroft’s hand and pulled him off the track and into the field.

Their long legs took them quickly through the deeper parts of snow as they put distance between themselves and the others. He pulled his brother down behind a particularly large drift, ignoring the shout from John behind them. Taking advantage of being hidden, he cupped Mycroft’s reddened cheeks between his gloved hands and kissed him exuberantly. “Shall we wage war?” he asked.

“I believe we shall,” Mycroft replied.

They formed a handful of hastily put together snowballs as the sounds of John and Father following them got closer. When it sounded like they were no more than a few feet away, they picked up their frozen weapons and stood, silently hurling them at the enemy. The expressions on their victim’s faces were shocked, and then they looked at each other, nodding wordlessly as they ducked to one side. “You’ll regret that, boys!” Father called.

“The game is on!” Sherlock shouted back, feeling lighthearted and young again.

The battle began, snow not even being formed into proper spheres, just given a cursory squeeze in the hands and then the whole hunk was lobbed through the air. The layer of snow on the ground wasn’t thick - only perhaps half a foot but it still slowed them down and so as much as they all tried to dodge, most of the time if the thrower’s aim was true, there was no escaping the hit.

After a while, the brothers became separated, cut off from each other by the enemy. He could hear Father’s hoots of laughter, and Mummy calling encouragement to her eldest, and then he dodged around a drift whilst evading John and caught sight of Mycroft. He was crouched over, gathering snow, his hair speckled with white flakes and he looked so much younger. His eyes were twinkling with joy, his cheeks were rosy, and a smile was hovering on his lips. Sherlock felt his breath catch as he gazed upon the sight, the love he felt for Mycroft almost overwhelming. He wished he had his phone on him so he could capture the moment forever in a photograph so he could revisit the vision without needing to delve into his mind palace, but he would have to make do with etching it into his mind. His brother looked up, their eyes locking, and his own feelings were reflected back at him. He smiled as they shared a brief, stolen moment together, and Mycroft’s answering smile was almost blinding. It faltered just a brief moment before Sherlock felt a cold lump of snow collide with his face.

“Score!” John shouted triumphantly from behind him, and Sherlock whipped his head around, spying out his prey.

“You won’t get away with that, John!” he called, and then darted after him.

The doctor turned on his heel and fled, running for the safety of the woods, with the consulting detective in close pursuit. His longer legs helped him gain ground but he lost his advantage as he stopped to gather a handful of snow. By the time he looked back up, John was gone, hidden from sight. Sherlock darted across to hide behind the trunk of a tree, peering around it for any sight of his flatmate. “Come out, come out, wherever you are,” he called in a sing song voice.

“Never surrender!” John’s voice rang back from some distance away.

Moving from trunk to trunk, Sherlock advanced in the direction John’s voice had come from, the only sound his slightly laboured breath. He was sure John was taking cover behind a small outcrop of rock, and as soon as he was close enough, he pounced. His triumph was short lived however as the space was empty. His face fell and he turned slightly to scout the surrounding area when he was tackled from the side.
He cried out as he tumbled to the ground, John landing on top of him. The wind was knocked from his lungs and then a handful of snow was being rubbed in his face. He spluttered and hit out, trying to dislodge his attacker, but he was laughing too hard to be effective. John was giggling too, and he reached down to get another handful of snow, smearing it over the detective’s face again. “Surrender!” he demanded, his knees locked around the taller man’s waist, keeping him pinned to the ground.

“No,” Sherlock said, still trying to gain the upper hand. “This isn’t over, John!”

“Admit it, I’ve won, Sherlock.”

Another handful of snow was pushed into his face and he choked on some of it as he laughed. “Stop that, you bastard!”

“Nope, not until you admit defeat.”

He struggled another minute more but the doctor had too great an advantage and finally he went limp, ceding the victory. “Fine,” he admitted. “You win.”

John looked triumphant, but there was something else in his expression that Sherlock couldn’t read - almost a longing but also a challenge? And then he was leaning down and his lips were brushing Sherlock’s, just as Mycroft came into view.
Chapter 52

Aren’t weekends great? More time to write so you lovelies get an earlier update.
Huzzah! Especially after Mrs Evil left it on a cliffhanger...

He was giggling. Mycroft Holmes was hiding behind a tree, soaking wet and covered in snow, and he was giggling. If anyone from the Home Office saw him now, they would not believe it was actually him, but for the first time in a very long time, he was thoroughly enjoying his Christmas at home. He had started to discover through his relationship with Sherlock that one didn’t have to be serious all the time, and that there was much benefit in a hearty laugh, and this compounded that lesson. He felt good. Not only happy, but healthy, energetic, like he could take on the world. All from a romp in the snow with his family.

A truce was called as Mummy appeared with John’s child, neither Mycroft nor his father brave enough to dare lob a snowball at Mummy. “I’m taking Rosie inside,” she announced. “She’s getting a little too cold.”

Father stood, and brushed the excess snow from his trousers. “I’ll join you, since my joints aren’t what they used to be. Myc, let the others know that I’ll have tea and hot chocolate ready when you all get back.”

He nodded, and watched his parents go, Father placing a hand on the small of Mummy’s back to help her through the snow. Their love for each other was still clear as day after all these years, and it wasn’t so long ago that he hadn’t thought something like that was within his reach. Now though he could see himself getting old with a lover at his side. That lover just happened to be his brother, but life wasn’t meant to be simple.

He could hear Sherlock and John’s shouts from the woods and so he headed in that direction, starting to feel the cold now that he wasn’t running about. He shivered and tucked his hands under his armpits, his skin starting to tingle as his gloves soaked through to the skin. He wondered if before they left to return to London, he’d be able to get Sherlock out alone for a walk through the fields. It was a silly, romantic notion, but he was beginning to discover that there was a reason the masses indulged in such things - they left you happy. Perhaps it was time The British Government started thinking about his own happiness.

He was getting closer now to where his brother and flatmate were battling in the snow. He could hear the rumble of Sherlock’s laugh, and John trying to claim victory coming from just beyond the small thicket of trees ahead. He skirted around them and then stopped dead at the sight of John leaning down to kiss Sherlock.

He saw his brother go still for a moment, and then in a flurry of movement he was sitting up, flinging the doctor off of him. “What do you think you’re doing?” he demanded, his eyes wide.

John lay sprawled in the snow, looking chagrined. It didn’t appear he had seen Mycroft as yet, so the older brother took a moment to school his expression, to remove the rage he knew must be showing on his face. He remained silent, feeling that Sherlock had to be the one to handle this latest breach of trust.
“I thought maybe things had changed between us,” the blonde muttered, unable to meet his best friend’s eyes.

“What part of ‘we are just friends’ are you simply not understanding?” Sherlock snapped, his anger sharp and biting. “Nothing has changed, John. Nothing will change. Besides the fact that I have a partner that I love very much, I am not attracted to you and have no desire for a physical relationship with you, even if I was available. I need you to respect that! Not just continue to try and kiss me in the hopes that I’ll finally give in and kiss you back.”

The doctor’s cheeks were flaming, not only from the cold but also with rejection. “Yeah, alright, I get it.”

“Do you really, though? You said before that you understood but here we are.”

“Sherlock, I get it. I’m sorry I misread the situation.”

He looked as if he’d say more but instead he turned his back on his flatmate and started towards the house, declaring as he went, “I simply can’t be around you right now.”

John watched him go, clearly debating whether he should follow or not. “Let him be, John,” Mycroft told him.

The doctor yelped, startled by his voice. “How long have you been there?”

“Long enough to see it all.” He shook his head, surprised as his anger at the man dissipated, replaced instead with exasperation. “I thought you were smarter than that. What even made you think he had changed his mind.”

He gave a shrug and then pulled himself to his feet, brushing the coating of powder from his clothing. “It just felt like things were getting back to how they used to be between us.”

“And yet nothing had ever happened before so why would it be different now?”

“Well, no, but I just thought maybe…” He trailed off, unable to finish the thought.

“Come on, let’s go back,” the older man suggested, eager to be able to check up on his brother.

The walk back to the house was silent, both lost in their thoughts. Mycroft wondered if the friendship his brother had with John would survive this latest hitch. It had seemed to be on rather rocky ground as it was, and didn’t appear to be the healthiest thing for Sherlock. Any advantages displayed at the beginning had worn off as their dynamic had changed, and now it simply appeared to upset and hurt his brother more than it made him happy. A very small part of him felt sorry for the ex-army doctor. He knew exactly how it felt being in love with Sherlock and to not have it requited. Remembering back to the time when he felt hopeless and pained to not be able to reach out and touch, or kiss, or even share breath still made him feel like he’d been kicked in the guts. Luckily that was in the past and he could share those things with Sherlock, but John would never know their joy.

Mummy fussed over them when they got in, handing them towels and telling them Sherlock had gone up for a shower so they would have to dry off as best they could for now. They took a seat in the lounge room in front of the fire and Father brought them cups of tea, seeming oblivious to the tension in the air. Mycroft drank his, all the while listening for the sound of the shower shutting off. As soon as it did, he was on his feet. “I’m going to head up and get changed. I’m just wet - not muddy, so I’ll have a shower later.”

“No worries, Myc,” Mummy said. “John, once Sherlock is out, I’ll watch Rosie so you can shower.”
Mycroft hurried up the stairs, heading directly for their bedroom. The light was still on in the bathroom so he had time to strip and dry off before his brother returned. He was just pulling on a soft jumper, feeling the need for warm clothes as opposed to a suit, when the door opened.

Sherlock had the look of a scared animal, caught in the headlights and torn between staying frozen in fear, and running. Mycroft hated knowing half of that was because his brother didn’t know what his reaction would be, so he opened his arms in a silent offer. Relief spread across Sherlock’s features and he stepped into the welcoming arms, melting into the embrace. “I’m so sorry,” he mumbled.

“Hush, you have nothing to be sorry for, love.” He pressed a kiss into his curls. “I just hope he’s finally gotten the message through that thick skull of his.”

“Is he still alive? Or did you leave his corpse back in the woods?”

He chuckled and squeezed his brother tighter. “No, he’s very much alive. I figured that once you calmed down, you’d be angry with me if I had disposed of him.”

Sherlock grunted. “Perhaps. Though I wouldn’t object if he was broken in several different places.”

“I beg to differ. How will you chase after the criminal masses if your blogger has broken kneecaps?”

“I would relay the story to him to update his page,” Sherlock said. “He doesn’t need to be an eye witness.”

“I must admit, I would enjoy the look of surprise on his face when he realises that I’m not entirely a useless lump.”

That elicited a laugh from him. “Perhaps hold off then so I can see it too. I wouldn’t want to miss that.”

Mycroft chose to draw him into a kiss instead of continue the conversation, his tongue licking at the seam of his brother’s plump lips. Sherlock moaned softly, parting his lips so they could deepen the kiss.

“Feeling better?” Mycroft asked once they broke apart several minutes later.

“I’d feel much better if I could get you naked,” he replied, rubbing his clothed erection over Mycroft’s hip.

“Unfortunately that will have to wait until we have retired for the evening.” Sherlock pouted, and unable to resist those plush lips, Mycroft kissed him again. “Now we really should make an appearance downstairs so Mummy doesn’t come looking for us.”

“I suppose so, especially given it’s now apparent she doesn’t feel the need to wait for permission to enter after knocking,” Sherlock agreed.

“You’ll have to think of something horrendous however before we leave to make your...situation...go away.” He looked pointedly at the bulge in his brother’s trousers.

Sherlock nodded and then closed his eyes. Almost immediately, his erection wilted.

“Oh my, whatever did you think about? I’ll need to ensure I avoid that subject at all costs in the future.”

The detective smirked. “Considering I imagined Donovan and Anderson copulating, I beg you never
to raise that subject in conversation with me, *ever*.”

Mycroft shuddered and then gave him one last kiss before they left. “That I can promise you, brother mine.”
Chapter 53

Chapter Notes

Posted before I head in to work today since I'll be home late and I didn't want you to miss out on a chapter!
Just some bickering and fluff for you all :D They'll be heading back to London soon, but I'm not quite done with this family gathering just yet.

Normally the brothers would head back to London on Boxing Day but this year they were staying on another two days, much to Mummy’s delight. She was very much enjoying having John and the baby to visit as well, and Sherlock knew she still had some hope that perhaps one day she would get grandchildren of her own. As he’d assured Mycroft, he felt no inclination to reproduce, and he knew that his brother would rather chop off an arm than have offspring, and so Mummy’s hopes would surely burn away to ash. Knowing how intelligent she was, he was surprised she had thought it even possible - both her sons had been rather open with the fact that neither of them felt the need for romantic entanglements, but even if they did, they both preferred men. Yet her longing to continue the family line seemed to trump reason.

Sometimes Sherlock found himself thinking that perhaps their parents were wasted on he and Mycroft as they had always been accepting of the fact that neither son liked women. They had even been fairly content that both had a higher work to life balance, wanting them to be happy above all else. Of course, that didn't stop them from hoping that their children would find that special someone. When John had first moved into Baker Street, Mummy had skirted around the subject, but was definitely curious as to if her youngest son felt anything for the doctor. He had thought he'd made it clear that he didn’t, but she had continued to hint at it every time she saw him. Yesterday morning was the first time his denial seemed to sink in.

Since his relationship with Mycroft had taken a turn for the incestual, he did find himself occasionally wondering what their parent’s reactions would be if they were to discover the truth. As much as he would hope they would be open minded and accepting, he knew the truth was more likely to be shock and disgust. He also predicted that they would lay the blame squarely on Mycroft’s shoulders, accusing him of misleading and coercing his baby brother. He doubted they’d even listen if he tried to explain that he had made the first move, never seeming to want him to take responsibility for anything, even though they for some reason thought him to be the *grownup*.

It seemed so long ago now, the night that started it all, and every now and then he would question if it was even real and not just a hallucination. At present they were sitting in the lounge room, drinking tea and watching the morning news, and he turned his attention from the television to his brother who was sitting next to him on the couch. Mycroft was focused on the report on government spending, ignoring Rosie’s babbles and Mummy and John cooing over her. His eyes were a very pale blue in the morning light, and one of his long fingers was tracing patterns absently on his knee. Sherlock wanted so badly to reach out and link their hands together, to prove what they had was real, the frustration of not being able to touch him almost overwhelming.

He decided that if he couldn’t touch Mycroft as a lover, he would do it as an annoying younger brother. He twisted so his back was against the armrest and stretched his legs out, pressing his feet against Mycroft’s legs. His brother looked over at him so he gave him a cheeky grin.
“Really, Sherlock, must you?” he asked in a testy voice, playing along.

“My feet are cold,” he whined, burrowing them underneath his thigh.

“Perhaps Father could lend you a pair of socks?”

“No need, they’re warm now.”

“And bony. It’s not exactly comfortable.”

“You have more than enough padding to provide a cushion for my bones. Stop being selfish and let me stretch out.” The truth of the matter was he could feel the taut muscle against his feet and knew there wasn’t an ounce of fat on Mycroft’s legs at all. This was something that his brother actually accepted about himself and so Sherlock felt comfortable teasing about that as there was no way Mycroft would take offense.

“Is it really selfish to want to sit and relax without being stabbed in the legs by your unnaturally long feet?”

“Has it escaped your notice that we wear the same shoe size? If I have unnaturally long feet, dear brother, then so do you.”

“I never said otherwise. It does not detract from the fact that your unnaturally long and bony feet are digging into my legs.”

“If it bothers you so much, move.”

“We were both managing to share the couch quite comfortably before. I don’t see why I should move when you could just keep your feet to yourself.”

“Honestly, boys!” Mummy said, cutting through their charade. “I raised you both better than this! No bickering in front of our guest.”

“John is not a guest, Mummy, he’s family, so he is entitled to sit through our bickering.”

He saw the look of relief that crossed John’s face at that statement, and he gave him a small smile. It had been awkward last night after he and Mycroft had emerged from the bedroom, but Sherlock had been determined to try and act like nothing had happened. His anger towards John had stemmed more from worrying about his brother’s reaction and possible jealousy, than from his actual attempt to kiss him. He knew John very well and had been under no illusions that he’d try again. He was stubborn and persistent, especially with things he wanted very much. Since Mycroft hadn’t been angry, his own anger had died away and he was willing to move on. His flatmate obviously hadn’t figured that out as yet but at least now everyone was on the same page. He was sure that once they were back at Baker Street, John would try and have a conversation about what had happened, to apologise once again and ensure their friendship was intact. He really didn’t feel the need, and he’s have to try his best to get out of it when it happened.

“You may consider him family but at the end of the day it’s still rude to carry on like a pair of toddlers in front of him,” Mummy admonished.

Mycroft sighed, sounding put upon but Sherlock could tell that he’d had an idea that he considered to be rather cunning. He wasn’t sure if he could describe it as a self satisfied sigh but it was the closest he could get to putting words to the noise his brother had made. “Mummy, may I please have that throw rug?” her eldest asked, his voice contrite.
“Of course,” she replied, handing it over.

“Here,” he said to Sherlock in a very reasonable tone of voice. “Put your feet on my lap and I’ll cover them with the blanket. Surely that will appease your need to stretch out and keep your feet warm at the same time, all without impaling me on your sword-like toes.”

He had trouble keeping the smirk from his face as he did as instructed, knowing it would alert Mummy to the fact that they were hiding something. Mycroft had played his role of long-suffering older brother to perfection and now they both had what they wanted. His feet were nestled in Mycroft’s lap and one of his brother’s hands rested lightly on Sherlock’s ankle, the contact points between them radiating heat. It was so reminiscent of their first night together, that he felt a shiver go through him, leaving him covered in goosebumps. He knew that Mycroft was thinking the same thing, partly from the way his fingers began to stroke the skin of his ankle (very slowly so the motion would be hidden by the blanket), but also by the growing bulge in his pants.

Sherlock closed his eyes and relaxed, feeling extremely content. If they had been alone, it would have been the perfect moment, but it was as good as it could get whilst visiting family. He blocked out the noise of the television, and of Mummy and John chatting, and just concentrated on the feel of Mycroft’s fingers, curling his toes so he could squeeze his brother’s thighs affectionately.

He felt something tug on his arm and he opened his eyes to see Rosie standing on wobbly legs, holding onto him to stop herself from falling over. “Up,” she demanded, her face serious.

Unable to deny the child anything, he scooped his arm around her and pulled her up onto his chest. She immediately curled down onto his chest, a thumb going into her mouth and her eyes sleepy. He rubbed small circles on her back and very soon she had fallen asleep. He felt his own eyes grow heavy and he allowed them to close once more. He knew that he was going to drift off soon as well but he didn’t mind at all. If he was lucky, Mycroft would snooze as well and what better way to nap that with the man he loved most in the world, and a tiny human who trusted him to watch over her as she slept?
Chapter 54

Chapter Notes

Last chapter before they head back to London. This one has a few instances of homophobic language by a bigoted twerp of a character so just a heads up for that.

Their last day at their parents dawned and Mycroft found himself wishing tomorrow wouldn’t come so he didn’t have to go home. He rolled over in bed and pulled Sherlock to him, and his brother burrowed himself sleepily into the embrace. Ebony curls tickled his nose but he pressed in closer and kissed them, breathing in the scent of his brother’s expensive shampoo. It was still very early so they had a little more time to be able to spend together before they had to face the day.

The day that would prove to be entertaining at the very least - their Great Auntie Myrtice was coming for lunch and she and Sherlock had never seen eye to eye. She was a staid, traditional old biddy who was very proper, and wasn’t afraid to voice her displeasure for those who were not. She had spent most of her visits during their childhood haranguing Sherlock on his lack of manners, wild hair, cheekiness, and other assorted habits of which she did not approve. In return, his baby brother would go out of his way to be inappropriate, rude, and the purveyor of harsh truths for the duration of her visits. Nothing had changed much as he’d grown into an adult, except that not even Mycroft could rein him in anymore.

Mycroft had always envied Sherlock his ability to speak his mind, even when it caused more trouble than it was worth. He was a master of doing so when needed at work - the Iceman persona was indeed very real - but when it came to family, he’d always trod more carefully. Perhaps it was his desire to be not only a good son, but also a worthy role model for his siblings. He seemed to have failed miserably at both those goals, so perhaps it was time for him to start following Sherlock’s lead for once? The only problem would be that after having an extended Christmas break, he would fall further behind at work if he needed to take time off for Myrtice’s funeral after she’d died of shock. In between scolding Sherlock, she had always heaped praise upon Mycroft and held him up as the standard her youngest great nephew should strive for. If he started to act out now, she would in all likelihood have a heart attack. Perhaps it was best to just act as he always had and just enjoy the showdown between his two relatives?

“What on earth are you thinking about?” Sherlock mumbled.

“Just trying to predict the outcome of today’s visit,” he replied, stroking a hand through the soft curls.

“Well stop it - you’re keeping me awake. It should be fairly predictable so there’s no need to lay there pondering it.”

“Oh, I’m keeping you from sleeping?” Mycroft asked with faux innocence. “I’m terribly sorry. I’ll make sure to be very careful that I don’t disturb you when I do this…” He reached his free hand down under the waistband of his pyjamas and took hold of his cock and began to stroke it. He’d been mostly hard as it was, a combination of morning wood and the feel of his brother pressed against him, and he stiffened even more as he worked himself over.

Sherlock gasped and rolled over onto his stomach, throwing back the blanket so he could watch Mycroft wank. “You bastard,” he said breathlessly. “You know how sexy I find it when you do
"Not tired anymore?" he asked, a hitch in his breath as he ran his thumb over his leaking slit.

"Fuck, no." The Consulting Detective shimmied his own sleep pants down his legs, his erection springing free. Instead of using his own hand, he guided Mycroft until he was on his side and their cocks were aligned, allowing for the older brother to take both of them in his hand. His blue-green eyes locked on Mycroft’s sky-blue ones and he smirked. “I wonder what Auntie Myrtie would think about this? Somehow I have a feeling she wouldn’t -” He gasped and leaned his forehead against Mycroft’s, “- approve.”

“Oh Lord, don’t mention that old bat when we’re doing this, Sherlock.”

“Why not? Doesn’t it turn you on? Knowing that what we’re doing is so wrong, so naughty, knowing that she would have a fit if she found out?”

“I wouldn’t say it turned me on, no.”

His baby brother gave a throaty chuckle. “I guess it’s clear who has the better morals out of both of us.”

“I thought we’d established that the other day?” His hand moved faster now, his orgasm fast approaching.

“It’s always good to have multiple experiments confirm a result,” Sherlock said, his eyes closing and his face contorting in pleasure as he came.

The added slick of his ejaculate made the final few strokes of Mycroft’s sheer ecstasy and he buried his face in the crook of his brother’s neck to stifle his gasps as he came.

They lay, panting together, the room growing lighter as dawn broke completely. From down the hall they heard the sound of their parents stirring and they knew their time together was over for the morning. Mycroft kissed Sherlock gently and then reached for the tissues, allowing them to clean themselves off before they went down for breakfast.

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Great Aunt Myrtice sat stout and proud in an armchair, guzzling tea from a mug and appearing more like a warthog than a woman. Her eyes were locked on Sherlock, sitting rather contritely on the couch, this time next to John. “Who did you say this was again?” the old woman demanded of Father, waving a hand majestically at John. It had been several years since Mycroft had had the very dubious pleasure of her company and much to his dismay it appeared that time had made her much worse than he remembered. Gone was her need for any overt politeness and she felt it her right to inflict her opinions on the world at large.

“Doctor John Watson, Auntie” Father told her, for the fifth time. “He’s Sherlock’s flatmate.”

“Flatmate,” she said derisively. “Hmph. You two are no doubt copulating like the devil spawn you are.”

John spit his tea, spraying hot liquid over his trousers as he choked.

“Honestly, Myrtice,” Mummy chided, as politely as she could. “There’s no need to be so crude.”

“And I’ll have you know that we are not, in fact, copulating,” Sherlock half snarled. “We are
friends, nothing more.”

“Who then are you buggering?” Myrtice asked. “I know you’re not a decent chap who likes girls. Oh no, I always pegged you for being one of them queer faggots.”

Mycroft gasped at this. He knew that the sentiment existed but he had gotten used to being around a certain class of people who would never dare say such words out loud. Her descent into anarchy appeared to be complete.

“Who I shove my cock into is absolutely none of your business, you bigoted old tramp,” the detective snapped. “Just as it’s none of my business whose heart you rip out and eat every morning.”

“Considering the Holmes name will die with you if you don’t have children, it very much is my business, you insolent little sur!”

“If the Holmes name is represented by people like yourself, then I’m more than happy for it to die out. Better yet, perhaps you should die and do us all a favour.”

“Sherlock!” Mummy said with a gasp. “You can’t say things like that!”

“Why not? Everyone in this room is clearly thinking it.”

“We most certainly are not!” she protested, even though Mycroft could see she was lying.

“You have a responsibility to carry on the family name!” Myrtice barked, ignoring his quip.

“Correct me if I’m wrong but you didn’t have children,” Sherlock retorted. “A fact we are all rather happy about, by the way, but a fact that makes you a hypocrite nonetheless.”

“I had a medical condition!”

“Oh really? Since when is being too nasty and mean to land a bloke a medical condition?”

They continued to trade barbs and Mycroft relaxed back in his chair, enjoying it immensely. John’s eyes were wide and he looked over at the eldest brother, silently asking if it was always this way. He nodded and almost laughed as the blonde shrunk down into the couch, making himself as small as possible. Father had slunk from the room several minutes ago, always unable to stand his father’s sister. Mycroft suspected that most of what passed Sherlock’s lips were all thoughts his father had had at one time or another but was unable to find the courage to say them out loud. It would be the likely explanation as to why he had never chided his youngest son for the vicious insults he threw at the aged banshee.

“You’re one to talk,” Myrtice said with a scowl at the curly haired young man. “You have such an acidic mouth that I’m sure no one would ever want to spend more than five minutes with you without wanting to strangle the life from you, let alone wanting to kiss you.”

“You’d be surprised!”

“Oh really? Not the simpering little virgin anymore?”

“As a matter of fact, no!”

“How much did you pay the whore to have the dubious honour of popping your cherry?”

“My partner was more than happy to have that ‘honour’, you tiresome old windbag!”
Mummy’s head snapped up. “What? Sherlock, are you seeing someone?”

Mycroft sighed quietly, wondering if it would ever be possible for his brother to control his runaway tongue.

“I...well, you see...um...”

“Oh, for crying out loud, Sherlock!” John exclaimed. “The cat’s out of the bag. Just tell her about Mark already!”

“You knew?” the Holmes matriarch asked the ex-army doctor. “How long has this been going on?”

“A while,” Sherlock hedged, his eyes wide with panic, darting across to Mycroft, beseeching him to help.

“Mummy, leave him be,” Mycroft told her. “He’s knew to this relationship business and doesn’t want to rush into anything.”

“Telling your parents isn’t ‘rushing into anything’, Myc!”

“He’s been seeing this gentleman for only a couple of months. It’s still new to him, so go easy on him.”

“I knew it,” Myrtice shouted with glee. “I knew he was a bum fucking little faggot.”

“Mummy!” Mummy yelled, finally pushed past her tolerance levels for the old woman. “I will not have you spouting such hurtful things in my house.”

“This house has belonged to the Holmes family for longer than your maiden name has existed, Missy. I’ll say whatever I like in it.”

“Actually, Auntie, no, no you will not,” Father said in a stern voice from the doorway. “If you cannot keep a civil tongue then I will ask you to leave.”

She narrowed her rheumy old eyes at him. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Try me,” he said between gritted teeth. “Now, Sherlock - tell your mother and I all about your young man.”

“Devil spawn!”

“Auntie, this is your last warning.”

“Which isn’t needed,” she stated, climbing out of the chair on creaky legs. “If this is the kind of filth that you accept in this household then I refuse to stay a moment longer. Mycroft, will you escort me out?” she asked, turning to him and holding a hand out. “You’re the last decent one amongst this lot of rot.”

“Actually, Auntie, I too am one of those ‘bum fucking little faggots’ you spoke so fondly of. So no, I don’t think I will be escorting you out. Do try not to trip in the hallway - we wouldn’t want to remove the side of the house to get your enormous arse carried out of here.”

Myrtice turned beet red and stormed from the room, slamming the door behind her. There was silence for about ten seconds as the events of the previous half an hour sank in. Then, everyone spoke at once.
“Where did you meet him?” Mummy asked.

“Good riddance,” Father said.

“You’re actually related to her?” John choked out.

The only words that mattered to Mycroft were the ones that Sherlock said, pride clear on his face. “Feels good to speak the truth, does it not, brother mine?”
“Honestly, dear, you know Father and I would love to meet him,” Mummy said as she hugged him goodbye.

“Mummy, please,” Sherlock half begged. “I don’t even know if it will go anywhere. Let’s not get ahead of ourselves.” The last part was spoken very quietly so John wouldn’t overhear.

“I understand, love, but just keep it in mind, would you?” She beamed at him and pulled his face down to give him one last kiss. “Oh, Sherlock, we’re so proud of you - finally discovering that there’s nothing to be ashamed of about emotions.”

“Mummy…” He was blushing furiously under her fussing.

“Oh, go on then. Will you be seeing your sister anytime soon?”

“I plan on seeing her in a week or two.”

“Good, I’m glad. She does so enjoy her duets with you.”

“Sherlock, we’re ready to go,” Mycroft called from the car. He had arranged for one of his drivers to come up and they had just finished fitting the carseat in the back.

“Safe travels, dear,” Mummy said, kissing him again. “And try not to annoy your brother too much. Though I must say, you two are getting along better than you have in a very long time.”

“Don’t fret - he’s still an unequivocal, overbearing bore. I shan’t make life too easy for him.”

She batted his arm goodnaturedly and he gave her a small smile before turning for the car. It was one of the roomier models the government utilised, having two bench seats in the back, facing each other. Rosie was situated on the rear seat in the middle, John on the left hand side of her and the nappy bag on the other. Mycroft had taken the seat directly behind the driver, so when Sherlock got into the car, he shuffled onto the middle seat, opposite the baby. “More leg room,” he commented to John when he gave him a questioning look. He leaned forward and booped Rosie on the nose. “It means I also get to talk to you the whole way home,” he told the child.

“Delightful,” Mycroft said with a roll of his eyes.

“It won’t be all that bad, brother,” he assured him, widening his legs just a tad so their thighs pressed together. “She’s much more intelligent than most of the population.”

The ride home was in fact rather pleasant. John fell asleep before they’d even reached the motorway, and Rosie drifted off as well, leaving the brother’s practically alone. Of course, they couldn’t risk anything with the driver in front, and the risk of John waking up, but they did manage to converse on many topics, uninterrupted and both enjoyed it immensely. However, the closer they got to London, the more morose they both grew. The past nights spent together had been bliss and neither was looking forward to sleeping alone.

“You shall definitely have to arrange to spend some nights with your partner soon,” Mycroft told him as they entered the city limits and headed for Baker Street,

“Oh yes, I’m sure he misses me quite a bit.”
“I have no doubt he misses you more than just a bit. I’d even vouch that he misses you immensely.”

“Luckily for him then that I’m only ever a text or a phone call away.”

“I’m sure that brings him some small comfort,” Mycroft replied, his eyes on the scenery out the window, but his body pressing as close against Sherlock’s as he could get.

“Will you be taking the rest of the day off?” he asked his brother. “Or will you go straight to the office?”

“Straight to the office of course. I have much to catch up on, and have no doubt that I won’t see the inside of my home for the next several days.”

“Don’t work too hard.”

“Alas, it will be required after such a long absence.”

“You were gone five days!”

“And much can happen in five days, brother mine. I’m working on having people take on more responsibilities, and I’m sure they have done a stellar job whilst I’ve been gone, but still, there are some things only I can do.”

Sherlock sighed. “Do you ever wish you were normal so such heavy responsibilities didn’t lay on your shoulders?”

Mycroft chuckled. “Oh, Sherlock, not at all. Unlike yourself, I embrace responsibility and enjoy the challenges I face. I would be horribly bored otherwise.”

“There are other ways to keep oneself amused.”

“Oh? Are you referring to the detective work or the drugs?”

He scowled and seeing that John was still asleep, poked Mycroft in the ribs. “I’m talking about the work.”

“Work that I could never enjoy.”

“You’d be good at it. You solves puzzles like these quicker than even I do.” He found it was easier to admit to now that they were closer than ever.

“Yes, but I detest the legwork side of things. You’d never get me gallivanting down back alleys after criminals.”

“You don’t give yourself enough credit, Mycie. I’ve seen the reports - you excelled at field work.”

“How on earth did you see those reports?” He shook his head. “No, never mind, I don’t think I want to know how you got access to such classified documents.”

He smirked. “Probably not. Still, it doesn’t detract from the fact that you have excellent skills.”

“Just because one has the skills, doesn’t mean one enjoys using them. I’m in a position now where I can get others to do the things I chose not to do. Legwork is one of those things.”

“Pity,” he murmured. “I’d love to see those legs in action.”
“Careful,” Mycroft warned with a pointed look at John who was starting to rouse from his snooze.

He fell silent, and looked out the window past Mycroft, watching the familiar streets go past as the car brought them closer and closer to Baker Street. Sooner than he’d like, the car pulled up out the front of the flat.

Mycroft helped carry in Sherlock’s bag as he brought in Rosie, meeting a delighted Mrs Hudson in the hallway. “Oh, my boys are back!” she exclaimed, clapping her hands together. “Did you all have a lovely Christmas?”

“Yes, thank you, Mrs Hudson,” he replied. “Of course it would have been much more enjoyable if I didn’t have to share a bedroom with my flatulent older brother, but I managed to survive.”

“Just as I had the distinct honour to have to put up with your mess, brother mine,” Mycroft sniped back. “How on earth does your expensive wardrobe survive never being hung up?”

“Generally one of us picks up after him,” John told him with a nod at their landlady.

“I used to hold out hope that he’d finally learn how to do it himself,” Mrs Hudson said with a fond look at the consulting detective, “but I’ve just accepted it’s not going to happen.”

“Honestly, Sherlock, couldn’t you be a little more considerate?”

“And couldn’t you sound less like Mummy?” he shot back. “Honestly, Mycroft, we left our parents behind - I don’t need you assuming their mantle.”

They had made their way up the stairs as they’d bickered and soon were standing in the sitting room of 221B. Sherlock looked around, and although it felt good to be back, he felt more of a desire to be at Mycroft’s house than here. It just felt more like home there than this place did now.

Mycroft put Sherlock’s bag down on the couch and then headed for the door. “As delightful as this has been, I must get back to work,” he announced.

“I’m sure all of England has been aquiver during your absence, brother mine,” he said as way of farewell, hoping to convey just how much he didn’t want him to go. “Do hurry back to the office so you can once again assume control of your symbiotic little science experiment and ease the anxieties of the mindless masses.”

“And you enjoy playing detective and finding missing dogs,” Mycroft replied, letting him know he would miss him too.

“Always a pleasure, Mycroft,” John said, giving him a small smile.

“John, Rosamund,” he said, with a nod to the baby. “Good to see you again, Mrs Hudson,” he told the older woman, inclining his head to her as well. “Goodbye.”

Sherlock watched as his lover descended the stairs and felt a pang in his chest, a tangible pain. He rubbed at the spot absently, pulling his phone from his pocket when it pinged with a text alert.

*I miss you already. Be well, brother mine - MH*

He smiled sadly, and pocketed his phone, then headed for the kitchen. “Tea?” he asked John, forcing himself to sound cheerful as he slipped seamlessly back into his old life, the past few days already fading into memory.
It was late, very late, and Mycroft knew he should go home soon. He’d been at the office for almost 30 hours straight now, catching a few hours of sleep here and there on the couch, and showering in his private bathroom. In truth, there was nothing overly serious keeping him there. No international incidents had occurred, no scandals with the royal family, nothing that would dictate he practically live at work. He did it because it kept him occupied and he didn’t have to go home to an empty bed.

He missed his brother fiercely, more than he thought would have been possible. In the very quiet hours of the morning, he even admitted to himself that it scared him just how attached he had become to him. Sherlock was as essential to him now as oxygen and he could not bear to ever lose him.

They had texted at every opportunity since their return to London, and had even managed a phone call, but it wasn’t the same as being able to see him in person. Although Mark had resumed his regular duties at work, he wasn’t on an active mission and so was in London at the moment. He’d already gone round to visit at Baker Street, ensuring the continuation of John’s deception, and had invited Sherlock to stay at ‘his’ house for the weekend. Having the young agent aware of the truth was in itself both terrifying and also very reassuring. To have someone know about their relationship and support it fully outweighed the almost crippling fear that their secret would be given away.

He glanced down at the clock on his laptop and saw it had just gone midnight. He sighed and closed the computer down, feeling that now it was officially Saturday morning he could go home. Sleeping in his empty bed would feel odd, but he hoped knowing it would soon have his brother in it would allow him to drift off.

The door to his office swung open and it was only years of practise that allowed him to keep a calm expression and not to betray how startled he was. Only a moment later did the calm facade drop away to be replaced with a wide smile. “What on earth are you doing here?” he asked.

“I thought I’d be a gentleman and see you safely home,” Sherlock quipped. He crossed to the desk but paused and looked around. “Do you have cameras in here?”

“No, not presently.”

“Thank fuck for that.” The lanky detective came around to the front of the desk and pulled Mycroft to his feet and into his arms, his lips seeking out his in the most urgent of manners. Mycroft happily allowed him to plunder his mouth, his hands slipping around to the small of Sherlock’s back, pulling him even closer against him. “I missed you so much,” Sherlock whispered as he broke the kiss, rubbing his nose along Mycroft’s cheek. “How is that possible? I only saw you a day and a half ago.”

“I think we have both fallen into the depths of sentiment, brother mine. I feel the exact same way.”

“Does it hurt you too?” his brother asked, curling a hand up in front of his chest. “In here? A genuine pain?”
“I tend to feel it more here,” he replied, touching his stomach. “It never stops roiling, and I feel like I’m going to be sick.”

Sherlock chuckled quietly and pulled him into a crushing embrace. “If we’re descending into madness, at least we’re descending together.”

“True.” Mycroft pressed a quick kiss to his lips and pulled back a little. “Let me gather my things so we can head home.”

“Not so fast,” his brother said, a devious expression on his face. “It appears that we’re all alone here right now.”

“ Mostly,” Mycroft agreed. “There’s analysts down on level five who work throughout the night, but I’m certain there’s no one else on this floor.”

Sherlock grinned and pulled the zipper of his trousers down. “Excellent. We shouldn’t be disturbed then as you fuck me over your desk.”

He felt his eyes go wide as desire washed over him. “Oh,” he gasped, unable to form proper words.

“I know I said a while ago that I’d like to bend you over and fuck you here, but I figured that tonight I could come prepared so it would work better this way.”

“That was very well thought out.”

Sherlock was kicking his trousers and pants to one side now and he toed the chair out of the way so he could lean against the table, his pale arse presented in all its glory. “I’m all ready for you, you just have to slip inside,” he said coyly over his shoulder.

Mycroft fumbled with the fastening of his own trousers, feeling a shudder go through him at just how improper this was. He wasn’t sure he’d ever be able to look at the surface of his desk the same again, especially knowing that Sherlock’s cock was pressed against the polished wood, most likely dripping copious amounts of pre-semen fluids all over it. He felt the urge to push him to one side so he could lick the mess up, but then Sherlock wiggled his arse and the invitation was too great to pass up.

As much as his mind was screaming at him that they should hurry, to do the deed and then leave to avoid being caught, his reasoning kicked in and told him they were quite safe. His office door was locked, there was no surveillance in here, and the building was almost empty. In reality, they had all the time in the world. So he paused, allowing himself the opportunity to just gaze down upon the perfection of his brother’s body, to take each rounded globe in his hands and knead the flesh. His puckered pink hole would disappear and then reappear as he cheeks were pushed together and then drawn apart, teasing and tempting him as the slick of the lube caught the light from the lamp. He ran a finger down from the cleft of his arse, over his trembling hole, and down his perineum to his balls. They were tight and full, waiting for Mycroft, and he leant down and pressed a kiss to their fuzzy outsides.

Sherlock moaned and shoved his arse further back, a silent demand for more. He chuckled and then, on a whim, smacked one of the cheeks in front of him.

“Oh!” Sherlock whined, throwing him a dirty look.

Mycroft laughed even more and soothed the reddening skin with his fingers. “Apologies, brother, that was a spur of the moment thing.”

“Well it bloody hurt. I can do it to you and see how you like it.”
“No, that’s quite alright. I have a feeling I’ll find pain as unappealing as you do. I really am sorry.”

Sherlock pushed his arse out again. “Then fuck me and show me you mean it.” Feeling that it would be in his best interests to not dally any further, Mycroft began to remove his unzipped trousers. A long fingered hand reached out to grab his wrist. “Keep them on,” his brother urged. “I want you to fuck me over your desk in that impeccable suit of yours.”

A surge of lust shot through him at the plea, and he pulled his cock free from his flies and lined himself up. With one push the head of his cock breached Sherlock and they both moaned at the sensation. It took the rest of his willpower to allow himself to slip slowly the rest of the way inside, the urge to grab those slim hips and start pounding away almost overpowering. Once he was fully seated, Sherlock pushed back against him, not wanting any time to adjust. More than happy to comply, Mycroft began to rock into that tight heat, one hand reaching up to grasp the nape of his brother’s neck possessively.

The moan that escaped Sherlock’s mouth at that action was obscene, and Mycroft immediately understood that part of his brother’s fantasy of this scenario included being possessed by his older brother. The suit, the office, the power he held, being able to take whatever he wished, and choosing to have the man beneath him. Mycroft’s mind saw it somewhat differently though - he saw this more as his brother staking his claim on him. Queen and country used him, and he furthered their cause as best as he could, but he didn't belong to them. He belonged only to Sherlock.

He leaned over, covering his brother’s body with his own, and kissed at his shoulders and neck. Choosing a delectable looking spot, he bit down gently and then sucked hard, leaving a lovely red bruise to mark Sherlock as his. “Oh,” the detective gasped. “Again!”

He moved to the other side and did it again, and then left yet another mark in the centre, just above his spine. He ran a hand over them, and then kissed above each mark, his hips still moving rhythmically as his cock slid in and out of his brother’s tight arse.

He moved his hands underneath Sherlock’s hips and moved him back a little, enough to raise him off the desk so his hand could fit underneath to grasp his cock. His brother made a needy little whine as his hand circled his prick, sopping wet with precome. Mycroft didn’t move his hand, just thrust his pelvis even harder, the movement causing Sherlock to fuck his hand. “Is this how you pictured it?” he whispered into his brother’s ear. “Just like this? Is this how you saw me fucking you in this office?”

“Oh, God, yes! Harder, Mycie, harder!”

His thighs were starting to burn but he found somewhere a burst of energy and pounded even harder into him. Sherlock cried out and shot his release over both his brother’s hand and the polished desk under him. The muscles of his passage constricted and convulsed almost painfully around Mycroft’s own cock, and his balls tightened and drew up before his orgasm exploded from him. Once the shudders of his release died off, he slumped against Sherlock’s back, his legs turning to jelly.

“You’re squishing me against this mess,” Sherlock grumbled.

“Oh hush, I’ll clean you up soon enough. Let me catch my breath.”

“Getting old, brother mine?” he teased.

“Obviously,” he quipped back, then pulled away, his softening cock slipping from his brother. He reached for the box of tissues he kept in a drawer and pulled out a handful, trying to keep his trousers free of semen.
Sherlock turned around and crushed them together in a hug, smearing the front of his suit with his fluids. He slung his arms around Mycroft’s neck and grinned impishly at him.

“Must you always be an insufferable little brat?” he moaned, looking down at his ruined suit.

“I’m pretty sure we’ve established in the past that yes, yes I do.”

“Whatever will my drycleaner think?”

“That you had a very enjoyable weekend?”

He tried his best to glare at Sherlock but found he simply couldn’t stay mad at him. “Come on, let’s go and have a shower and head home.”

Sherlock’s eyes softened at that and he pulled him close again, burying his face in Mycroft’s neck. “Home. Yes, I like the sound of that.”
Chapter 57

I have three large hicckeys on my back. Thought you should know - SH

Um...okay. Thanks, I guess? - Mark

If you were here you would have heard my huff of derision at the sheer blankness of your mind - SH

Unless you want me to give Mycroft a pat on the back, I honestly don’t see why I should need to know that - Mark

I shall be speaking to my brother about the incompetence of the intelligence agencies of this country. You are a spy, are you not? Well versed in the art of covert infiltration? - SH

A spy that can kill you and dispose of your body without anyone ever finding out so weigh your next words carefully - Mark

As my fake boyfriend, it would be expected that it was YOU who made those marks. If John sees them and then makes a remark to you, you would need to know they existed so your reaction was genuine - SH

Prance about the flat naked much? Why would John see them? - Mark

He is a doctor. I am a consulting detective who (according to the majority of people who know me) runs into dangerous situations without hesitation. The chances of John needing to patch me up are even greater than the likelihood of you needing help to finish the easy crossword in the paper - SH

Some of those can be tricky! Did you see 9 down the other day? I’d just been thinking my vocabulary could do with a word like tergiversate - Mark

It could do with a lot more words added to it considering a fourth grader has a better one than you - SH

Was there anything else? Or did you just have more insults to throw at me? - Mark

Numerous, but considering Mycroft is glaring at me, I shall save them for another day - SH

Can’t wait. Enjoy your weekend and say hi to your brother for me - Mark

“Honestly, Sherlock, perhaps you should be a little nicer to him since he’s keeping a rather monumental secret for us.” They were sitting together on the couch in the living room, Mycroft leaning against the armrest and Sherlock leaning against his chest.

“He knows I like him - I doubt he’ll take any of them to heart.”

“Just don’t push your luck. The last thing we need is for you to upset him.”

“Fine, I shall attempt to be nicer.” He yelped as Mycroft pinched his side. “What was that for?”

“Incentive. There’s more where that came from if you don’t make a concerted effort.”

“I will, I promise.” He leaned his head back so it was resting on his brother’s shoulder. “What do you want to do tonight? More of the same, or something else?” ‘More of the same’ was moving from bed, to couch, to kitchen, and back again, cycling through activities such as drinking tea, reading
books, and having sex.

Mycroft hesitated and then said, rather shyly, “I actually felt like taking you out to dinner.”

He twisted his head so he could look up at him. “Really? Whereabouts?”

“Oh, anywhere you’d like. I know we’d have to be careful and act like just brothers, but still...to people who didn’t know us, even without overt displays of affection, most would assume we were together, especially as the family resemblance is very small. I like the idea of strangers seeing us and believing you to be mine.”

“I am yours.”

“You know what I mean. It’s a silly notion, I know, but one that appeals to me nonetheless.”

He twisted about until he was kneeling in between Mycroft’s legs. “It sounds like a wonderful idea,” he said, linking his arms about his neck and leaning down to kiss him. “Plus, we can play deductions! It will be wonderful to have new prey.”

His brother rolled his eyes but smiled. “What else would we do with all those goldfish around us.”

He placed his hands on Sherlock’s hips and pulled him in for another kiss. “How about I make a reservation somewhere and you go and hop in the shower?”

“It’s a bit early to be getting ready, isn’t it?”

“A little, but considering how distracted I get by a wet, naked, and soapy you, I think we’ll need the extra time.”

Sherlock grinned. “This is why you’re the smart one.” He scrambled off the couch and hurried to the door, throwing a saucy wink over his shoulder as he went. “Don’t be long!”

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The restaurant was busy, but not packed. Sherlock was a little surprised at how normal it was, having expected something much fancier. He commented about this after they were seated and had ordered drinks.

Mycroft looked at him in amusement. “The overly posh places I tend to frequent for business, for when I need to intimidate or impress. For personal dining I much prefer establishments such as these where it’s a little more low key but the food and service are still above average.”

He nodded and took a sip of water. “I suppose that makes sense.”

“So have you any cases at the moment?”

Sherlock shrugged. “A couple of minor ones, just private clients. Christmas is usually a busy time of the year for the criminal classes but for some reason they all seem to have taken a leave of absence this year.”

“I’d offer to throw something your way but I don’t really have anything either.”

He gave him a small smile. “I appreciate the thought. Something will come along, I’m sure. In the meantime, I was hoping to arrange a visit to see our sister next week.”

Mycroft stilled at that but eventually gave a small nod. “Of course.”
I know you’re wary, and so am I, but I feel if we’re to keep her on side, I need to see her regularly.”

“Oh, brother mine, there’s no need for subterfuge. We both know you’d want to see her anyway.”

“Well, yes, but I think we can both agree it’s a little more important now.”

His brother nodded. “True. Just be careful.”

Sherlock longed to reach over and squeeze his hand, instead he just made sure he caught his gaze and held that instead. “I will, Mycie. I know just how much is at stake.” He paused, almost certain he knew the answer to his question but wanting to ask anyway. “Do you want to come with me?”

“No, I don’t think that’s wise, Sherlock. Unfortunately I don’t think she will ever forgive me for keeping her locked away all these years. The more she sees of you alone, the better I think.”

“Perhaps that will change one day.”

“Perhaps.”

They fell silent as the waiter appeared with two glasses of wine, and then took their orders. Mycroft played with the stem of his glass, seeming to have fallen into low spirits, and Sherlock searched his mind for a topic of conversation unrelated to their sister to lighten the mood. Unfortunately his eye caught sight of somebody that was a stark reminder. “Molly?” he blurted as the diminutive pathologist was being led past their table by a waiter.

“Oh, Sherlock,” she said, her cheeks flushing pink. “Mr Holmes,” she greeted Mycroft.

“Miss Hooper, what a pleasant surprise.”

“Yes, well I didn’t think I’d see anyone I knew here tonight.”

“What are you doing here?” Sherlock asked, seeing no one else but the waiter with her.

She gestured to the other side of the restaurant. “I’m here for a date.”

“A date? With whom?” His head swivelled around, hunting for the likely suspect. His eyes fell on the only candidate and he scoffed. “Dimmock? Really? That’s the best you could do?”

“Sherlock…” Mycroft warned in a low voice.

“Actually, the best I could do isn’t interested so I thought I’d try with someone who actually treats me decently,” she snapped, surprising him. “Greg thought we’d get along and I trust his judgement.”

“Molly, I didn’t mean -”

“No, save it, Sherlock.” She took a deep breath to calm herself and then gave a small twitch of her lips in Mycroft’s direction. “Have a lovely evening.” And then she was gone.

“That wasn’t kind, brother.”

“What? She can do so much better than Dimmock! Isn’t that a compliment?”

“The way you reacted? No, not really. Besides, as fleeting a part of Eurus’s game that she was caught up in, remember that Miss Hooper was a victim of our sister’s cruelty. I’m sure that seeing you tonight was an unpleasant reminder of what occurred, and something she didn’t exactly need.”
“But I explained afterwards why I did what I did! She knew it was to save her life!” He rubbed at his face, honestly confused as to what the issue was.

“Oh, Sherlock. Take it from me, from someone who loved you for so many years without it being returned –”

“I did love you all those years! I just didn't realise how much...”

“I know that, now, but at the time I didn’t. If I had been subjected to what Miss Hooper went through, I’m sure I’d react the exact same way.”

Sherlock bit on his lower lip, knowing the situation must have been bad if Mycroft was saying it was. “Should I go and apologise?”

“No, I don't think that would be appropriate right now, brother. Perhaps in a day or so. For now, just allow Miss Hooper to enjoy her evening with the Detective Inspector, as we shall try and enjoy our evening.”

He mulled this over and then finally nodded, taking a sip of his wine glass. “Of course, you’re right - as usual. Right, so, change of subject - what’s the latest political intrigue coming from Eastern Europe?”
Chapter 58

Chapter Notes

A little angst for you as we sail past the 100K word mark. This is the longest story I've ever written so thanks heaps to you all for sticking around with me :) Much love x

Light from a passing car flashed over the window, causing shadows to dance across the ceiling. Mycroft lay on his back, staring up at them, unable to sleep. Sherlock was curled at his side, tucked against him, making the odd noise here and there as he dreamed. He tried to take comfort in his closeness but a cold fear was gnawing at his heart.

Eurus knew. Their mentally unstable, gifted beyond belief, genius of a sister knew. She was one of four people in the world privy to their secret, and one word from her could ruin it all. Sherlock seemed confident that he could keep her on side, but Mycroft feared otherwise. It was true that she seemed more attached to Sherlock than any other living person, but only half of the secret belonged to him. The other half was Mycroft’s, and Eurus had many a grudge against her oldest brother.

Uncle Rudi may have been the one to lock her away in Sherrinford, but it was Mycroft who had kept her there. After the disastrous events there, he had revamped the entire security system and was taking a more hands on supervisory role of the new governor. Perhaps the biggest change was a shift in his own perceptions. He had been almost arrogantly confident that she would never have been able to escape, put too much stock in the systems set up and the people who ran them, but he wouldn’t make that mistake again. Checks and counter checks were in place, regular reviews, conducted personally by himself were carried out, and a more intensive training plan was introduced. Mycroft did not shie away from showing these people exactly what would happen if they broke protocol - the photos of the slaughtered family of the psychiatrist was a horrific example of what they could be coerced into doing by Eurus.

There was absolutely no possibility of release. She would be locked away until the day she died and she knew that Mycroft was responsible for that. He couldn’t see any reason at all for her to keep a secret on his behalf. It would hinge entirely on the relationship that Sherlock built with his younger sibling. Given how explosive that had the potential of being, he really couldn’t see Eurus remaining silent forever.

Sherlock murmured something and then rolled over, throwing a leg over Mycroft’s knee and curling a hand around his waist. “You’re still awake,” he stated sleepily.

“Mmmm, can’t sleep,” Mycroft said, running his hand through his brother’s soft curls (his new favourite thing to do).

“What’s keeping you up?”

“Nothing for you to be worried about. Go back to sleep, Sherlock.”

He shook his head, his locks tickling his brother’s armpit. “Nope, awake now. I’ll sleep when you do.”

“Don’t be silly. Just because I can’t drop off doesn’t mean you should lose out on a restful night.”
“Mycie, you forget that I’m more than used to having hardly any sleep at all. When we’re together, I sleep too much. Now shut up and let me keep you company.”

He huffed out a laugh and gave him a squeeze. “What would you like to do then? I could pop on an old movie? Or we could read? I don’t know if I have anything left in me to give if you wanted to do something more physical but I’m happy to watch you if you want.”

“How about we just talk?”

“Of course. Anything in particular on your mind?”

“You said that it’s been like this for you forever. Just when did you realise you felt more for me than you should?”

“If you’re wondering if I lusted over you while you were still in the cradle, no, no I did not.”

Sherlock huffed. “Obviously I don’t think you’re a paedophile. Now who’s being silly?”

“The age difference between us is large enough for that to be a concern for most people.”

“But I’m not most people, am I?”

“True.” He pursed his lips as he thought about it. “I’m really not too sure to be honest. You know I never really had friends or socialised with my peers, so I think my sexual awakening was delayed somewhat. It must have been my first year of university that I actually realised I felt an attraction to someone.”

“And did they return it?”

“I have absolutely no idea. It’s not like I acted on it. Lord no, I was way too busy with my studies to give it more than a passing thought. Over the next several years I started to realise a pattern in the appearance of the men I found my eyes wandering too. Tall, lanky, wild black hair...I think it took me so long to recognise it because the thought was so abhorrent. I knew I wasn’t normal anyway, but to realise I found my younger brother attractive was just beyond immoral - especially considering you would have been no more than fifteen at the time. I thought perhaps it was just a phase, a side effect of not exploring my sexuality. So I went to a few parties, met several men, None of them could hold a candle to your intelligence, your wit, your dark humour, but if I ignored what they said, I could go through with it. One or two shared your resemblance, and one or two didn’t but I had to know.”

He paused then for so long that Sherlock prompted, “And?”

Mycroft shrugged, feeling distinctly uncomfortable remembering those times. “And it was different when it was with someone who looked like you.”

“Different? How so?”

“Must I really spell it out?” he asked, desperate to let the matter lie.

Sherlock propped himself up on one elbow and lay a comforting hand on his chest. “Mycie, you can tell me. I’m not going to judge you.”

“But it was so wrong,” he whispered brokenly.

“Why?”
“Because I pictured you!” he cried. “As I was fucking those men I imagined that it was my baby brother instead! You weren’t even of age then - I am a paedophile!”

“Calm down, brother! No, you’re not. You never acted on anything with me and even if you did, it wouldn’t have gone anywhere unless I’d agreed. All you did was indulge in a fantasy, nothing more.”

“I’m despicable,” he gasped, burying his face into Sherlock’s chest.

“No, Mycie, you’re not. I promise you, you’re not.”

No matter what his brother said, Mycroft knew it had been so very wrong to even think such things. Self loathing welled up inside him, making him feel sick to his stomach. He had worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure bills were passed to increase penalties for such monsters, and here he was, himself one of them.

Realising he wasn’t calming down, Sherlock slipped his arm underneath Mycroft’s shoulders and pulled him in close. “I’m sorry, so sorry,” he murmured.

“What do you have to be sorry for? You didn’t do anything wrong.”

“And neither did you, Mycie. I’m sorry I brought this up, I didn't mean to upset you.”

“I deserve to be upset.”

“No, you don’t. Listen to me! It. Was. A. Fantasy. Nothing else. Tell me honestly - do you find teenage boys attractive? If you went to a public high school right now, would you walk around the entire time hard in your pants?”

“What? No!”

“But you found me attractive at fifteen?”

“You already know I did. Where are you going with this?” His brother seemed so sincere but he couldn’t understand what he was getting at.

“What I’m saying is you found me attractive - my personality, my intelligence, as well as my looks, but not my age.”

He took a deep breath, feeling some of the tension drain from him. Sherlock was right, of course. It still didn’t make it right, but it made it better than he’d thought.

“Better?” Sherlock asked.

He nodded. “Yes, a little. I’m sorry for getting upset.”

“Never apologise for that, brother mine. If we can’t be our true selves with each other, then when can we be? You never have to hide from me, Mycie.”

“I just don’t want to disgust you.”

His brother blew a raspberry and then ran his hand through Mycroft’s thinning locks. “You could never disgust me. I just wish I’d known back then.”

“Why?”
“Well, there were times when I’d be masturbating that I would have appreciated an extra hand.”

“Sherlock! Don’t even joke about such things!”

“All the time we missed out on,” his brother said wistfully. “We could have had this for so much longer.”

“We’ve already agreed that it probably wouldn’t have happened, even if you did know how I felt.”

“And look at what I have missed out on. I’m sorry it took me so long to realise how much you meant to me. I’m sorry I was always so horrid to you.”

“Oh, Sherlock.” He found his mouth in the dark and gave him a gentle kiss. “We have each other now. Let bygones be bygones and just focus on now.”

He felt him nod against him and then his lips were seeking out his for a much more thorough kiss this time. “Do you think you can sleep now?” he asked when they broke apart.

“I think that perhaps I will. Goodnight, Sherlock.”

“Goodnight, Mycie. I love you.”

“And I you. Always.”
We’ve had rather a lot of angst lately so here's something that's a little more lighthearted, whilst hopefully keeping them both still in character. Plus, bonus Mrs Hudson! Woot!

“I feel like cake.”

“Pardon?”

Sherlock smirked at the confused expression on Mycroft’s face at his random comment. “I said I feel like cake.” They were just packing away the Operation game after playing a few rounds and Mycroft had picked up the Jenga box.

“I don’t have any here. We can walk down to that little cafe down the road?”

“Nope, too cold for walking.”

“I could call for my driver?”

“No, I don’t want to go out.”

Mycroft raised an eyebrow. “I doubt there’s anywhere that delivers cake, Sherlock. If you want cake, you’ll have to go to where the cake is.”

“Not if I make one.”

His brother’s jaw dropped as he gaped at him. Sherlock laughed and headed for the kitchen. After another moment of shocked stillness, Mycroft followed. “You’ve never made a cake before!”

“And?” he asked, rummaging through the cupboards, looking for a cake tin. “How hard can it be? Children manage it so I can’t see it being too difficult.”

“I think you’ll be surprised at how much skill is involved, brother mine.”

He scoffed. “I hardly think so.” He held up a baking tin in triumph, noting it still had the sticker attached and had clearly never been used. “Right, let’s see what we’ll need. “ He pulled out his phone and searched the internet for a simple cake recipe.

“I’m going to boil the kettle and make tea so I have refreshment to go with my entertainment,” Mycroft advised him.

Sherlock waved a hand dismissively. “Yes, whatever.” He went to the fridge and got out milk, butter, and eggs, then to the pantry and pulled out the flour and sugar. “Where’s your baking powder?” he asked, his head still deep in the pantry.

“I have no idea.”

“Well what does the container look like?”
“Sherlock, I don’t actually do my own grocery shopping. So firstly, I don’t even know if baking powder has ever been purchased for this kitchen, and secondly, even if it had, I’ve never had need of it so I am not familiar with the packaging.”

He huffed and pulled out his phone, now searching for a substitute for the powder. “Hmmm, really? Baking soda and plain yoghurt? Well, you have both of those so it looks like we’re in business.”

“That sounds rather disgusting.”

“Once it’s all cooked together, I’m sure we won’t notice a thing.” He rummaged through another cupboard and was rewarded with a measuring cup and a mixing bowl, then found a wooden spoon in the utensil drawer.

“I’m quite the cake connoisseur, brother mine. I may surprise you,” he said as the kettle started to boil.

He opened his mouth to fire off the retort hovering on his tongue - *I’ll only be surprised if you don’t eat the whole cake yourself* - but managed to stop himself in time. As much as they still bickered like brothers, he was trying to not say all the things he once would have. A cruel jab at his brother’s eating habits now would guarantee that not only would Mycroft not have *any* cake at all, but he’d be secretly miserable all day. The last thing he wanted to do during their very limited time together was upset his brother. “I’m sure I shall be as naturally talented at this as I am at everything else so I think it will be *me* surprising you,” he said instead.

The way Mycroft smiled at him told him his brother had deduced his little internal battle and was grateful for the outcome. He stepped over and touched his hip gently then gave him a peck on the cheek. “Tea?”

Sherlock hummed in the affirmative, the noise rumbling through his chest. He scrolled through the recipe instructions and started measuring out butter and sugar. “Cream the butter and sugar. What does that mean?” he muttered. “Butter used to be cream, but it’s been churned until it becomes butter. What does this mean? Am I supposed to devolve the butter? Melt it?” He tapped the wooden spoon on his chin. “I think I may need to call Mrs Hudson.”

“Whyever must you disturb her, Sherlock?” Mycroft asked as he placed a cup of tea down for him and perched on a stool. “You have at your fingertips a device that can access an infinite amount of information. You could just use Google.”

“How many cakes has Google baked? Probably not near as many as Mrs Hudson has,” he said, finding her number in his contacts and hitting dial. “Now shush. If you make a noise, do try and sound like my ‘boyfriend’.” He ignored the eyeroll his brother gave him and heard the phone pickup. “Mrs Hudson! I need your help.”

“Sherlock, dear. What have you gone and done now? I’ve told you I won’t bail you out anymore you know,”

“Don’t fret, I haven’t broken any laws.” He looked across at Mycroft and images of his cock sliding in and out of the older man that morning flashed through his head. With a wink at his brother he said, “Well, not in the last hour or so anyway. No, I require some cooking advice.”

“Cooking? Oh, Sherlock, you don’t want to go down the road of methamphetamines, dear. They make the place smell something awful.”

“A cake! I’m trying to make a cake!”
“Oh, then you meant baking, dear, but that’s a mistake a lot of people make.”

Promising that he would later find some way of thanking the universe for bringing this wonderful woman into his life, he grinned and then asked, “What does it mean when it says to cream the butter and sugar?”

“Oh, that’s just to beat it for a good five minutes or so. It has to go light and fluffy.”

He looked down at the almost solid lump of butter in the bowl and couldn’t imagine that ever being light and fluffy. “I see. And is there a purpose to that?”

“Of course there is. Baking is science, Sherlock. Surely you can appreciate that. It aerates the mixture, plus it makes sure that the sugar is dissolved and is spread evenly through the mixture.”

“I see.”

“Don’t skip this step, dear. It’ll make your cake much better, I promise.”

“I shall be guided by your expertise in this, Mrs Hudson.”

“Good boy. Have fun and call me if you have any other questions.”

“Thank you, I will.” He ended the call and pursed his lips, prodding the lump of butter with the spoon. It was still rock hard and he doubted he’d be able to get it to mix with the sugar like this.

“Problem?” Mycroft asked, a twinkle in his eye.

“What? No, of course not.”

“It just looks to me as if you’re finding this a little more challenging than you expected.”

“Pfft, no! I’m just pondering ways to overcome thermodynamic speed bumps.” He pulled a knife from the block and sliced the butter into smaller pieces, hoping it would soften more quickly that way. He then picked up the spoon and began to mix the ingredients around, stopping to prod the lumps of butter every now and then to see how hard they were. Slowly, they began to mix with the sugar and he finally had a mixture that looked like wet sand. He began to stir the butter and sugar with more vigour, taking note of the time so he could ensure he beat it for five minutes like Mrs Hudson instructed. After a minute or so, he stopped and shook his arm. “How on earth does Mrs Hudson do this?” he demanded. “She must have the arms of a wrestler underneath those floral blouses!”

“Or perhaps she uses an electric beater?” Mycroft suggested.

Suddenly the noise he often heard coming from the downstairs kitchen made much more sense. He chose not to respond, ignoring the smirk on Mycroft’s face and kept stirring the mixture. Three minutes to go.

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It was with a feeling of great satisfaction when Sherlock slid the cake tin into the oven. He programmed the timer and then turned to survey the kitchen. He seemed to have soiled every available surface in the normally immaculate room. There were dustings of flour everywhere, spilled milk next to the sink, cracked eggshells dripping whites onto the counter tops, not to mention the dirty bowl and measuring cups.
Mycroft had collected the paper from the front step and was now browsing through it, and Sherlock knew he had to clean up his mess unless he wanted to face his brother’s wrath. He picked up the bowl to take to the dishwasher and absently put the spoon to his mouth, licking up some of the batter.

“And that’s how one contracts Salmonella,” Mycroft told him, without looking up from the paper.

“But it tastes good.”

“It’s your gastrointestinal tract, brother dear. Just remember though, I won’t go near that arse of yours when you have explosive diarrhoea.”

Sherlock immediately dropped the spoon back into the bowl. “Point made.”

Mycroft graced him with a sunny smile, and then turned his eyes back to the article he was currently reading. Sherlock busied himself with wiping down benchtops and stacking the dishwasher, grateful he wouldn’t have to wash up by hand. Perhaps he and John could have one fitted at Baker Street? There wasn’t much room but they both detested washing up so much that he was certain they could come up with a way to make one fit. Why hadn’t they thought of that when the place was being repaired after the explosion? Dammit!

Once he was done, he turned around to find Mycroft had snuck up behind him. His brother boxed him in against the counter and brushed a thumb across his cheek, removing a spot of flour. “Did you have fun?” he asked.

“I did. I guess we’ll have to see how it turns out though.”

“I’m sure it will be delicious.” He touched the front of his younger sibling’s shirt. “Perhaps you should have worn an apron? You’ve messed your shirt quite thoroughly.”

He glanced down and noted that he was in fact covered in flour. “Oh.”

Mycroft’s long fingers started unbuttoning it and he kissed his way along Sherlock’s jaw until he got to his ear. “Such a pity that we’ll have to get you out of these dirty clothes.”

He grinned and turned his head to capture Mycroft in a kiss. “A pity indeed,” he murmured as his shirt was slipped from his shoulders.
Chapter 60

Chapter Notes

Bonus chapter with added bombshell. Enjoy ;-)
behind the curtain as two women got out, but sighed as they headed into Speedy’s instead. “No, he has nothing for me at the moment.”

Mark laughed. “Have you two had a lover’s tiff?”

“No, nothing like that, it’s just all quiet for him as well.”

“I’m glad to hear you’ve not had a falling out. I’d hate to have to knock some sense into him.”

He stayed in front of the window, watching the traffic pass as he spoke. “Why thank you, Mark. Aren’t you just the perfect fake boyfriend - offering to beat up my real partner.” He rolled his eyes, trusting the agent would tell he was doing it. “No offence, but I have a feeling he’d kick your arse.”

“Oh, no doubt about it.”

“I’d make sure he went easy on you, after all you’ve done for us.” There was a noise from behind and Sherlock whirled to see John standing in the doorway, his eyes narrowed dangerously and a scowl on his face. “Mark, I have to go,” Sherlock said quietly.

“Is everything alright?”

“Yeah, everything’s fine. Talk to you later.” He ended the call and stood awkwardly, waiting for John to start speaking. It was obvious from his expression and stance that his flatmate had overheard the last part of the conversation but it was still up in the air how he would react. He quickly reviewed in his mind the exact words he’d used, breathing a sigh of relief when he was sure he’d not said Mycroft’s name aloud. The other silver lining was it appeared John had left Rosie with Harry so the baby wouldn’t be exposed to what looked to be a monumental row.

“Un-fucking-believable,” John spat, his hands clenching into fists at his side. “You’ve been lying to me for all this time?”

“John, I -”

“No! I don’t want to hear it, Sherlock!” the doctor yelled. “I am so sick and tired of you throwing excuse after excuse at me to justify the fact that you are incapable of telling me the truth.” He breathed heavily through his nose as he glared. “Your whole relationship with Mark has been fake? An elaborate ruse? For what? What fucking reason could you possibly have had to go to such lengths? Huh?”

“I can explain,” he assured him, trying to keep his voice steady.

“Oh, I’m sure you have explanations all ready to go. But how many of them will be the fucking truth? How many, Sherlock? Any of them? Or are you just going to throw lie after mother fucking lie at me until I believe whatever skewed version of reality you want me to believe?” He’d stalked forward as he’d yelled, backing Sherlock up against the wall by the window, his finger waving in his face.

“It’s not like that.”

“Then tell me how it is! Were you ever even in a relationship with Mark?”

He swallowed and gave a small shake of his head, watching as the doctor’s blue eyes flashed dangerously. “No, he was chosen to be a cover.”

“Chosen? By whom?”
“Mycroft.”

“I should have fucking known,” John snarled. “Of course he’d have something to do with this. As theatrical as you can be, you wouldn’t have had the means to pull off something like this by yourself.”

As much as he disagreed with that statement, Sherlock knew better than to argue. “I didn’t do it to be cruel,” he tried to explain.

“I don’t fucking care why you did it,” John screamed at him, grabbing him by the shoulders and slamming him against the wall. “All that matters is that you did it. You lied to me again, played me, like I’m part of a fucking game!”

“No, it wasn’t like that, I swear.”

“I don’t want to hear it,” the blonde snarled. “I’m sick of hearing it, Sherlock. Just shut the fuck up for once!”

“But -”

“I said, shut up!”

He swung his fist back, and Sherlock braced for the pain that he knew followed when that hand connected with his cheekbones. His eyes had screwed shut as he turned his head away as far as he could, but the blow never came. He opened his eyes to see Mycroft standing behind John, the doctor’s arm caught in his tight grip, and fury writ large on his face. He pulled John out of Sherlock’s personal space and then spun him, pinning him to the section of wall on the other side of the window to the right. John whimpered in pain as his arm was held painfully against his back, his cheek squished against the wallpaper. “I am going to say this once, and only once,” Mycroft told him in a deadly quiet voice. “If you ever raise your hand against my brother again, it will be the very last thing you do on this earth. But believe me when I say, Doctor Watson, that it will not be a quick death, and it most certainly will not be pain free.” He jerked John’s arm up even higher, causing him to cry out and fall to his knees. “Have I made myself clear?”

John squeaked in reply but when his arm was twisted again, he managed to gasp out, “Yes.”

Sherlock stood, rooted to the spot as he watched Mycroft pull his flatmate to his feet and then shove him across the room. “Now get out of my sight. Sherlock, gather some things. You’ll be staying with me when you get back from Sherrinford.”

The detective nodded, and hurried to his room, throwing together random items of clothing, hoping his subconscious was packing the basic necessities. As soon as the bag was full, he closed it and peeked out into the living area. Mycroft was alone, standing with his arms crossed and glaring at the wall as if it had personally offended him. “Mycie?” he asked in a small voice.

His brother turned and his face softened. He crossed to him and raised a hand to his cheek. “Oh, Sherlock. I’m so sorry I didn’t get here sooner.” He pulled him into a hug and Sherlock clung to him. “What happened?”

“He overheard me talking to Mark on the phone. He knows it’s a fake relationship.” Mycroft tensed at that. “He doesn’t know about us,” he hurried to assure him. “I probably wouldn’t be alive if he did...but now that one piece of the puzzle has untangled, I’m worried he’ll start picking at the ends, trying to discover the truth.”

“It’s okay, we’ll worry about that later. For now, let’s just get you out of here.” He kissed his brow.
“Do you still want to visit Eurus?”

He nodded. “Yes, we need to keep her happy. Besides, I enjoy our duets.”

Mycroft smiled and pressed a gentle kiss to his lips. “Then I’ll have my driver take you straight to the airfield before taking me back to the office.”

“Thank you, Mycie.”

“Oh, Sherlock, don’t you know I would do anything for you?”

Despite the worry and hurt coursing through him because of John’s violent reaction, there was a small part of him, right at the very centre of his being that remained calm, knowing that what Mycroft said was true. And since his brother was looking over him, protecting him, keeping watch, then nothing could hurt him.
Chapter 61

Chapter Notes

*deep breath* Okay, as big as the last chapter was, this is the one I’ve been terrified of posting...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Mycroft had asked their sister to be advised of Sherlock’s impending visit, so Eurus was waiting for him when he walked into the room. He managed to give her a small smile but didn’t engage in any small talk as he removed his violin from its case. He lifted it to his shoulder and waited for her to do the same.

“No, I want to hear you play today,” she told him, her eyes searching his.

He held her gaze, but didn’t challenge her, just began to play. His mind was a jumbled mess as his thoughts chased one another around his head, and when it came to an end, he couldn’t even remember which piece he’d played. As the last note rang out through the room, she approached even closer to the glass, leaving her instrument on the bed. “You don’t wish to play at all today?” he asked.

She raised a hand and lay it on the barrier between them, her eyes searching his. “I would prefer to talk,” she told him.

He raised an eyebrow. “That’s new. About what?”

“About what’s upset you.”

He huffed and turned away, putting the Strad back in its case. “Why do you care?” There was no point denying he was upset.

“Why do you continue to visit me?”

He paused. “Because you’re family,” he whispered softly.

“Precisely. You found me, Sherlock. You found me in the sky and helped guide me to land. You will never understand how much I owe you for that.”

He shook his head, keeping his back to her. “Even so, I can’t talk to you of this.”

“Why not?”

“Because you already know too much, have too much to use against me.”

“Sherlock, turn around.”

He shook his head again.


Almost against his will, his feet moved and he was facing her. “What?” he choked out.
“Sit with me.” She allowed her hand to slide down the glass as she settled herself cross legged on the ground.

He hesitated but eventually sat as well. She startled him by smiling fondly at him, and he raised his palm to lay against hers.

“I know the truth, yes,” she told him. “But it is safe with me. I know you don’t believe me, and after what I did to you, I don’t blame you. But I am trying to be a good sister to you. I’m not sure how to go about that, but perhaps this could be a start?”

He considered this, weighing up his options. She already knew who he loved and that information alone could hurt both he and Mycroft terribly. Would it hurt to tell her the small part about John? He couldn’t see that she could cause much more damage with that information, but trusting her with it could be invaluable in repairing their relationship and helping to rehabilitate her. Was it worth taking that risk? Eventually he decided that it was. “I can’t tell you everything,” he said slowly. “But I can tell you some of it.”

“What happened that has upset you so much?”

“Obviously we couldn’t tell people the truth—” he said, glancing up at the camera, “- but we had to be able to explain to John that I was seeing someone.”

“Would he have been able to tell? Sorry, brother dear, but he didn’t come across as being very intelligent.”

“If that had been the extent of it, we probably could have kept it from him, but he...expressed a desire to develop our friendship into something more.”

“I could see that happening,” she stated. “He spoke often of you during our therapy sessions together. Well, not so much at the beginning but at the end when he wasn’t so mad at you. Even through his anger I could tell he longed for you.” She looked confused, unsure as to how emotions such as those were supposed to work. She understood enough of the theory to be able to understand how they motivated others, and how they could be used against people, but when it came to her own, she was clueless. Sherlock felt a shudder go through him as he realised that not all that long ago, both he and Mycroft would have described themselves in the exact same manner.

“Unfortunately he pressed the issue, and so we had to come up with a ruse to distract him. The solution seemed to be a stand in - a fake partner.”

“Interesting. I can’t see...your paramour being too happy about that.”

“It was his idea.”

“Really?” Her face became almost animated. “That does surprise me.”

“It seemed to be working rather well up until just before I came here today. John overheard me on the phone to our decoy and realised I had been deceiving him.”

“Does it really matter?” she asked.

“I’ve taught John to question, to look for answers, to be persistent. He knows for a fact that I am seeing someone. I believe he will stop at nothing until he discovers the truth about my partner, learns his true identity.”

“He will not accept the truth?”
“Oh, Eurus, even you must be aware that no one would accept it.”

“I accept it,” she said simply.

“But you, like me, are different.”

“If he will not accept the truth, perhaps he is not the friend you believe him to be.”

He sighed and cast his eyes to the floor, not wanting to even think about that. He loved Mycroft, and couldn’t live without him, but at the same time, John’s friendship was very important to him. He didn’t want to throw it all away if it could be salvaged somehow.

“You want him to remain in your life,” his sister said, as if picking the thought from his head.

“Yes.”

“But you fear he will leave if he discovers the truth.”

“Yes.”

“Do you think he will use the information against you?”

He swallowed hard. “Perhaps.”

“The solution appears to be simple, brother.”

His eyes flew back up to meet hers. “I fail to see how.”

She shook her head. “Oh, Sherlock. Stop thinking like one of them, and start thinking like one of us.”

“Eurus, don’t play with me!” he snapped. “If you have a solution, then tell me!”

She sighed and then placed her hand on her chest. “Me, brother dear. Your solution is me.”

His brow furrowed as he tried to follow her thought. “I don’t see…”

She rolled her eyes. “Sex really does rot your brain, doesn’t it? Have you forgotten already how I was able to gain control of this facility?”

“During the course of them interviewing you, you reprogram -” He gasped, his eyes widening.

“There it is,” she said with a smile. “The penny drops. The solution is to tell him the truth, and I will make it so he accepts it, embraces it even.”

His eyes narrowed and he shook his head. “It won’t work. The people you took control of knew that it was wrong, that you were doing it to them; they were just helpless to stop their actions.”

“Only because it was more fun that way,” she told him with a wide smile. “I can make it so he never suspects his morals have been tampered with.”

“Even if that were so, you’re forgetting that I’d never get permission from Mycroft to bring John here to see you, to do that.”

“Oh, I think you could. Our big brother adores you, Sherlock. He’d do anything for you.” She left unsaid that it would be to his benefit as well. “I’m sure you could convince him. Besides, it’s not
something you have to decide upon now. Just something to keep in mind.”

He nodded, thoughtful. “I will. Thank you, sister.”

“Shall we play now?” she asked.

He gave her a smile and got to his feet. “I would be honoured to play with you, Eurus.” He took back out his violin and soon the haunting notes of their instruments drifted through the room.

Chapter End Notes

I can't figure out if I'll be laughed out of the fandom or if (for the first time in my life) I was a little bit clever...
Mycroft had arranged a car to pick him up from the airfield, and he slid into the back seat, lost in thought.

“Do you need to stop anywhere on the way, sir?” the driver asked.

“Uh, no, I don’t think so.”

“Very good, sir. Your brother advises he’s leaving the office now so he should arrive a few minutes before we do.”

He nodded and then turned to stare out the window. It would be madness, sheer madness to take Eurus up on her offer, but wasn’t there method to the madness? It was a solution to their problem, wasn’t it? Perhaps once John finally accepted that Sherlock was in love with someone else, someone that he simply could not compete with, they could work on fixing their friendship? They could go back to the way it used to be when Sherlock would do something clever, and John would look at him in amazement and then blog about it, instead of trying to snog him.

Of course, everything would hinge on getting Mycroft to agree. Sherlock knew that his brother wouldn’t jump on board unless it was the very last possible option, and it was likely that he would come up with an easier solution before then. Just knowing that his sister’s offer was there calmed him more than he thought possible. It was a contingency plan, something to fall back on when everything else had failed.

As the car pulled up outside of Mycroft’s house, he decided that perhaps he wouldn’t tell his brother just yet about the offer. Of course, he had underestimated his brother’s ability to read him so well. The minute Mycroft lay eyes on him, his lips twitched and his eyes narrowed as he deduced that something had occurred at Sherrinford. He came forward and pulled Sherlock into a kiss, and then holding his face gently between his palms said, “Go into the living room while I make tea. It appears we need to talk.”

Sherlock sighed but did as he was told, exhaustion washing over him. All he wanted to do was climb into bed, curl close against Mycroft, and sleep, but that would have to wait. For now he did the next best thing - he kicked off his shoes, folded his legs under him on the couch, and spread the throw rug across his lap. When his brother returned from the kitchen he held the corner of the throw up, inviting him under. Once he’d placed the tea on the table, Mycroft joined him, leaning against the back of the couch and pulling Sherlock close. One hand carded through his curls while the other rubbed circles on the nape of his neck and the detective found himself growing even more sleepy.

“So what happened?” Mycroft asked.

“She wanted to know why I was upset.”

“And?”

“And I saw no point in keeping it from her. She said she’s trying to make an effort, that she’s not sure how to go about it, but she wants to be a sister to me. I thought I’d give her the benefit of the doubt.”

Mycroft hummed but didn’t say anything, but Sherlock was certain he would be increasing surveillance on his sister’s cell for the immediate future.

“We talked, and then after we played our violins for a while, I left.”
“That’s nice, love. Now why don’t you go back and fill in the blanks?”

“Must I?”

“Yes, Sherlock, you must. We both need to be aware of everything that affects this situation so we can come up with a solution together.”

He sighed. “Well, here’s the thing - Eurus has a solution.”

“Really? Shall I take a guess and say ‘kill John Watson’? Because at this very moment, I’d be inclined to take her advice.”

He huffed but didn’t object since he knew Mycroft’s anger at John was still simmering below the surface. “Her suggestion was we allow her to spend some time with John so she can...convince him to accept us.”

“Oh.” The surprise in his voice was evident and Sherlock could tell the idea had never even crossed his mind. That in itself was enough to prove it was a highly dangerous and ludicrous idea. But perhaps that meant it would work.

“She said she can manage it so he won’t be able to tell the idea isn’t his own.”

“I wonder if she takes requests?” Mycroft muttered.

“Pardon?”

His brother sighed and his head rolled back until he was staring at the ceiling, exposing the long column of his throat. “I’m just wondering if I could ask her to change a few more things while she’s at it.”

“Like what?”

He squeezed his eyes closed and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Like removing his tendency to strike you when he’s upset. To make him think with his brain and not his fists. To instill in him an absolutely terrifying fucking fear of me so he knows that I will definitely kill him if he ever hurts you. Just things like that.”

Sherlock swallowed loudly, awed by his brother’s words. He knew that Mycroft loved him, watched over him, would do anything to protect him, but to see how much he hurt at the thought of Sherlock being hurt made it seem so much more powerful. “Perhaps we could ask?”

“You know I had security increased to prevent something like this from happening again, yes? I can’t just turn that off at will, Sherlock.”

He raised an eyebrow, skeptical. “I very much doubt that you would have ever put anything in place that you couldn’t circumvent, brother mine.”

Mycroft dropped his head, their eyes meeting. “Fine, you’re right. But it would be most difficult. It’s not entirely viable.”

“I’m not suggesting we take her up on the offer, Mycie. I know that you’ll most likely come up with an even better idea. I’m just telling you so you know all the options available to us.”

“I understand. Thank you, Sherlock. Though my first inclination is still to have him killed.”

“Please don’t kill my best friend.”
Mycroft shook his head and leaned forward to pick up his rapidly cooling tea. “I simply do not understand you, brother. How can you even want to continue your friendship with this man after the way he has treated you?”

He shrugged, finding it hard to put into words. “Everyone makes mistakes, don’t they? I’m not the easiest person in the world to like, Mycie. If I don’t have John, then who do I have? It’s hard for me to make friends - proper friends, and I don’t want to throw that away simply because I pushed him too far a few times.”

“Can’t you see that this is an abusive relationship? If you were together, it would be classified as domestic violence! And you didn’t push him too far. He chose to react that way, to lash out with violence, to hit you. Yes, you can be difficult to get along with, brother, but there has never been a reason for John to hit you. Not once. During all the times in our lives when we’ve literally seethed with animosity, have we ever once raised a hand against each other?”

“No, but that’s different because it’s us. But I’ve lied to him, and continue to lie to him.”

“And? There are other options, Sherlock.” He put down his cup and pulled him into another embrace. “You have other options. John isn’t the only person out there who you can form a friendship with. Look at how well you get along with Mark. And I know the handful of times you’ve socialised with Lestrade, you’ve enjoyed yourself. Distancing yourself from John wouldn’t be the worst thing you could do, Sherlock.”

He remained silent, thinking over Mycroft’s words. He wished he could explain why he was so hesitant to end things with John, but he couldn’t even explain it to himself, let alone out loud to his brother. He just knew that he wanted to give it one more try. Of course, he had no idea if John still wanted a friendship with him. It was possible that the ex-army doctor would want to call the whole thing quits. If he was willing to give it another shot, Sherlock wouldn’t let him off the hook too easily though. He recalled the conversation he’d had with Mark a long time ago now about needing to draw a line and having John accept that. But that was all a conversation for another day. For now, he needed sleep. “Come to bed?” he asked, holding back a yawn.

“I’m sorry, love, but I have work that needs to be done that simply can’t wait.” He brushed his lips against Sherlock’s forehead. “I can come tuck you in though.”

“Is it something you can do from in here?” he asked. “I don’t want to disturb your work but I don’t really want to be alone right now.”

Mycroft smiled down at him and nodded. “Of course. Let me get my laptop and phone, and a proper blanket and pillow for you.”

He left but returned quickly, helping to tuck the blanket around Sherlock’s shoulders and make sure he was comfortable. Then, much to his younger brother’s surprise, Mycroft pulled a cushion off an armchair and popped it on the ground in front of the couch and settled himself onto it. His back was right in front of Sherlock’s chest and he reached out and picked up one of his brother’s hands and settled it on his shoulder. “There you go, you can sleep knowing I’m right here.”

Sherlock shuffled forward and kissed the back of Mycroft’s head, then snuggled down into the warm blanket. Within moments the soothing sound of typing lulled him to sleep.
We start exploring a little bit of Mycie's work now. I have a lot of trouble writing this sort of stuff (one of the reasons I avoid writing case fic) but it's sort of necessary so bear with me :) As usual, thanks so much for your ongoing support and love, it means so much to me!

Mycroft rubbed at his eyes and then stretched his neck. He’d been working for hours while his brother slept behind him but he was no closer to a resolution than when he’d started. Knowing he’d have to send someone in to investigate, he picked up his phone and dialled Mark’s number.

“Hi Mycr...um, I mean, Mr Holmes,” the agent answered.

“Mark, after everything you’ve done for me, you’ve earned the right to call me by my first name, even at work,” he said quietly, not wanting to wake Sherlock but at the same time not wanting to leave the room in case he woke.

“Fair enough. What can I do for you, Mycroft?”

“What do you know about Grimesby Roylott?”

“Hmmm, not a lot. I mean, he’s the CEO of a research company that are rumoured to have links to several terrorist networks. Word is they’ve been making biological weapons but I’m not sure how much of that is true or not.”

“It looks more and more likely each day that that is the truth,” Mycroft told him. “Luckily for us, they’re hiring IT technicians at the moment. I need you to infiltrate Roylott Industries and do a little digging for me. Anthea will be able to set you up with an interview, and if needed I’ll have the HR manager... guided in her decision making.”

“No need for that - I guarantee you I’ll get the job.”

He chuckled softly. “Yes, I mustn’t lose sight of the fact that you are the best.”

“Anything in particular you need me to look for? Or just general law breaking?”

“Oh, I’m sure there’ll be a lot of that, but no, I’m more interested in any connections you can find to Syria. There’s chatter about a possible acquisition by the Syrian army of a new chemical agent, and not many companies would be able to manufacture such a thing.”

“Roylott Industries being at the top of the food chain?”

“Exactly. While you work that angle, I’ll be in direct contact with Roylott himself. I need to speak to him in person to see what I read from him.”

“No worries. I assume the usual communication protocols will be in place.”

“Of course. I’ll have Anthea arrange everything you’ll need. Good luck.”
“Thanks. I’ll be in touch.” He paused before he ended the call. “May I ask if Sherlock is alright? I didn’t hear back from him after our call was interrupted by John.”

“I arrived in time to prevent Doctor Watson from assaulting my brother, and have him staying with me for the time being. Needless to say, the cat is out of the bag when it comes to your relationship with Sherlock.”

“Does he know who he’s really seeing?”

“No, not yet.”

“That’s something at least. Tell Sher I’ll catch up with him when I’m back in town. Just because we’re not officially pretend dating anymore, doesn’t mean he’ll get rid of me that easily.”

Mycroft smiled. “I am very glad to hear that, Mark.”

“I’ll be in touch soon. Thanks, boss.”

Mycroft checked the clock on his phone as he disconnected the call, noticing it was nearing midnight. He needed to get to bed, but he was loathe to wake Sherlock. For someone who claimed to need very little sleep, he was out like a light. His confrontation with John seemed to have drained him and time spent sleeping was time he wouldn’t be fretting. Making a decision, Mycroft went upstairs and prepared for bed, brushing his teeth and changing into pyjamas, before turning down the covers. He then went back downstairs and assessed the form laying prone on the couch. Sherlock was lanky and thin, but he was more muscular than his slim fitting suits would have one believe. He worked the blanket out from where it was tucked under Sherlock’s chin and then slipped his arms under his knees and shoulders. He very slowly scooped him into his arms and stood up, making sure he didn’t put his back out. Sherlock mumbled something in his sleep, but didn’t wake - a sure sign of how exhausted he was. He nuzzled his face against Mycroft’s neck, his hands clutching at the front of his pyjamas.

The stairs were a chore and by the time he made it to the bedroom, Mycroft was breathing hard. Perhaps he had underestimated Sherlock’s weight by two hundred pounds or so...or maybe he was just getting old? He eventually made it to the bed and lowered him down, finding a little bit extra from within to ensure he didn’t just dump him onto the mattress unceremoniously.

After heading back downstairs and turning off all the lights, he finally slipped into bed next to his brother. He took a moment to just savour the feeling, having expected after waking up this morning that it would be at least several nights before he would have the chance again. Obviously he wished the circumstances were different, but for now he would just enjoy the benefits from the day’s events. He rolled over and slipped an arm over Sherlock’s hip, burying his face into his hair and breathing in the scent of him. He relaxed almost instantly, banishing all thoughts of biological warfare from his mind, filling it instead with all things Sherlock.

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When Mycroft woke the following morning, half an hour before his alarm was set to go off, he was alone. The bed next to him was still warm and so he knew that Sherlock couldn’t have been up for long. He decided to shower and dress before going downstairs so his brother could have a little more privacy. Usually when he stayed over he would remain in bed if he woke first, so the fact he had gone downstairs told Mycroft he’d needed a little time to himself.

Once he had finished getting dressed for the office, he went down to the kitchen, finding Sherlock at the kitchen table, an empty coffee cup next to him. “Good morning,” Mycroft greeted him, dropping
a kiss on the top of his head.

“Morning,” he replied, not looking up from his phone.

“What do you have planned for the day?” he asked as he made himself a coffee. He held up his cup in a mute question but his brother shook his head to indicate he didn’t want another.

“I’m going into the Yard to see Lestrade. He has a few things he wants me to look over. He’s warned me none of them are above a four but it’s better than nothing at the moment.” He ran a hand through his hair in agitation and Mycroft felt a spike of worry go through him. It had been quiet on the case front for several weeks now, and their new relationship would only keep Sherlock distracted for so long. How long would it be until his baby brother started looking for more destructive ways to occupy himself?

“I may have something you would be able to help me with,” he said slowly. “I’ll need to spend a bit more time pulling some threads together, but I should know in a couple of days.” The consulting detective looked so grateful at this that Mycroft hastily reviewed his deadline. “Actually, perhaps I’ll even have something for you by tonight.”

Sherlock stood from the table and came and wrapped his arms around Mycroft’s waist, pulling him in for a kiss. “Thank you, Mycie.”

“Anything for you, brother mine.”

“I’m off now. I’ll need to call by Baker Street and pick up a few more of my things that I forgot to pack but I’ll probably be home long before you.”

“Would you prefer me to send someone to get them for you? You could make a list?”

Sherlock shook his head. “No, it’ll be alright. John has a shift at the clinic today so he won’t be there. Plus, Mrs Hudson is babysitting Rosie so I’ll get to see her for a little while.”

“Very well then. Have a good day.”

Sherlock kissed him again, this time lingering a little. “I will. You too, Mycie. Remember, don’t start any wars - it plays havoc on the traffic.”

“I’ll certainly try my best not to,” he said, with complete sincerity.
“Thanks for coming in,” Lestrade said, giving him a warm smile.

Sherlock sat down in the chair opposite. “No problems.”

“No John today?”

“Ah, no. He’s got a shift at the clinic.”

“All good. Right, so here’s the two cases we’ve got at the moment,” the DI said, handing over two files. “As I said, they won’t rate very high for you, but the first involves a politician’s son, and the second is pretty nasty so I want to make sure we get it right.”

“It’s fine, Lestrade. I don’t have much on at the moment, so I’m happy to look over them.”

The older man looked surprised. “Without any complaining at all? Are you okay?” From anyone else, it would have been sarcastic, but from Greg, it was genuine concern.

Sherlock nodded, keeping his averted on the pages below. “Of course. Right, so, this first one seems to be rather clear cut. It’s obvious he killed this woman.”

“Yes, but I need it to be watertight. His dad is a sneaky Tory bastard and I know he’ll throw all the best lawyers at it to get the charges dismissed over any technicality. What I’m concerned about is the statement from the neighbour saying she can’t remember the time she saw him arrive, but she thinks it was midnight. That doesn’t add up with the time of death, which was 22:05 and even though the rest of our evidence is solid, that’s the sort of thing they’ll use. He’s trying to convince us he arrived and found her already dead.”

Sherlock flipped through the pages until he found the witness statement of the girl in question. “You think the neighbour is lying?”

Lestrade shrugged. “There’s something hinky about it, I just can’t figure out what. She confirmed what he was wearing so she saw him, but it’s just a matter of when.”

He skimmed the statement and then pulled out his phone, doing a quick search. He held up his phone and showed the photo on the screen to the DI. “She definitely got the time wrong. She’s a stripper who works for this company. Their evening shows start at ten, so she would have seen him as she was leaving for work.”

The photo was on Instagram and was tagged as the night in question, and showed the girl posing with a group of men out on a buck’s night. “How the bloody hell did you find that?” the DI demanded.

“She used to live on the streets. I recognised her name and remembered hearing she’d gotten a job as an exotic dancer who went by the name of Candy Stripe. Did very well for herself from what I heard. She was one of the few who managed to get her life together and get a job and a house so it was the talk of the underground for a long time. She’s obviously trying to keep her profession from her neighbours since they won’t want to know the girl next door shakes her booty for a living.”

“If I never hear you say the phrase ‘shakes her booty’ again, it will be too soon.” Lestrade threw him a grin and then stood. “I’m going to grab us coffee while you look over the next file. I’m pretty sure it’s the brother who did that one, but as I said, I want to be sure I’m digging in the right direction. He
killed his sister and her three kids and I don’t want to waste time going after him if it’s actually someone else.”

The consulting detective nodded and then read through the file. Lestrade’s instincts were on point, and Sherlock agreed with his train of thought. He said as much when the silver haired DI came back with their drinks.

“That’s good to know,” Lestrade said. “I’ll have Donovan bring him in for further questioning.”

“Search his house as well. If you find a meat tenderiser in his kitchen, have it taken in for forensic testing.”

Lestrade paled a little at that but nodded and made a note. “That’s great. Once I’ve questioned him, if I have anything else I need your opinion on, is it okay if I pop round and see you?”

“Oh, well, I’m not actually staying at Baker Street at the moment - I’m staying at my brother’s.”

“Why? What happened?”

“Oh, nothing really.”

Lestrade glared at him. “Don’t give me that, Sherlock. If it was bad enough for you to be staying at Mycroft’s, I want to know about it.”

He sighed. “It’s a long story.”

The DI got up and closed the door. “I have time. Now tell me, what happened.”

“I guess it all started when John tried to kiss me…” Sherlock had only intended to tell an abridged version, but he found the whole story - minus the true identify of his partner of course - spilling from his lips. Lestrade was an attentive listener, but he didn’t interrupt, or gasp in shock, he just nodded every now and then, his eyes full of compassion. It was this that led Sherlock to reveal even more, not just about what happened but about how he had felt at the time. He didn’t realise how therapeutic it would be to talk about even just some of it, but he started to feel much better. He still had the worry of Eurus knowing, and the challenges he and Mycroft would face for their entire lives because of the taboo nature of their relationship, but even just opening up about what had happened between he and John had helped immensely. He finished by explaining about John finding out and resorting to violence, and how Mycroft stepped in which is why he was currently staying there.

When he was done, Lestrade took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Thank fuck your brother was there,” is what he said to begin with. “I saw John’s knuckles when I interviewed him after the incident with Culverton Smith, I heard him admit he really went at you hard, but I didn’t realise that wasn’t the first time, or that he would try it again. I should have bloody seen it. I’ve been trained to see it. I’m so sorry I’ve let you down, Sherlock.”

“What? Lestrade, you haven’t! I really think you and Mycroft are overreacting a little bit. I’m not happy about what John did, but let’s be honest here - who hasn’t thought of punching me?”

“That’s exactly the point, Sherlock! People might think it when they’re upset, but they don’t do it.” He shook his head. “Whatever respect I ever had for John has completely disappeared. Decent people just don’t do that sort of thing. What makes it worse is he doesn’t seem to know how to take no for an answer.”

“I really want to try and salvage what I can of our friendship, so please don’t be too hard on him.”
He looked like he wanted to argue but eventually nodded. “Look, I’ll keep out of it because you asked me too, but I want you to know, Sherlock, that you don’t have to take that.”

“That’s what Mark told me as well.”

“And he’s got a good head on his shoulders. Sounds like a decent bloke, and a good friend. But I’m your friend too, Sherlock. Don’t ever forget that. I know that sometimes it seems that all we ever do is work together, but just remember that it’s more than that. If you ever want to just catch up for a chat, or if you need some advice, or just need someone to bounce ideas off, you know how to contact me.”

His throat suddenly seemed tight and he had trouble swallowing. “Thank you, Lestrade,” he choked out. “That means a lot to me.”

“Hey, we’ve been through a hell of a lot together - the fact that both of us can still stand to be in the same room as each other must mean something.”

Sherlock huffed out a small laugh. “The fact that you’re still putting up with me after all these years really speaks to your low intelligence.”

“Oi! None of that, mister!” Lestrade pointed a finger at him, but his eyes were filled with mirth, and also affection. “Right, I have to go and see about arresting a murderer so I’d best be off. Cheers for the help, yeah.”

“Anytime.”

“And Sherlock - I meant what I said. You need me, I’m only a phone call away.”

He nodded, but didn’t trust himself to answer. He stood, his coat swirling around behind him and headed for the door. He reached the street and pulled himself from his thoughts long enough to hail a cab to take him to Baker Street. As he watched the streets flash by he found himself considering something that perhaps he should have given thought to well before now.

Just how much did he need John Watson in his life?
Chapter 65

Chapter Notes

If you're fans of Conan Doyle, you'll probably recognise Roylott from The Speckled Band...

Mycroft skimmed through some emails, trying to use the time before his meeting started to catch up on a few things. He had been working almost regular hours recently and eyebrows were beginning to be raised in his direction from his superiors. He needed to prove that just because he was cutting back on the amount of time he spent at the office, didn’t mean he was becoming less productive. He knew they would soon be asking questions, mostly because it was such a dramatic change in his personality. He couldn’t inform them he was in a relationship because they would want to do a security check on his partner, and he didn’t particularly want to say it was due to health issues as they would insist he see the in house physician. The only logical course of action would be to cite family concerns, Sherlock being the logical scapegoat. He wasn’t particularly fond of that idea as it would besmirch his brother’s reputation even further, however he knew Sherlock would be the first to tell him to go ahead with the plan. It was something he really should discuss with him soon so he wouldn’t be caught unawares. Ultimately, he would still work back on nights when he wasn’t with his brother, but the times he did get to see him, he wanted to spend as much time as possible with him. He had given so much to the British Government that he would face down anyone who dared to imply he was letting his work slip.

There was a knock on the door and Anthea popped her head in. “Meeting starts in ten, sir.”

“Thank you, Anthea.” He gathered some papers - entirely useless papers as he would not require anything, but needed to look the part - and headed through to the meeting room. Technically he wasn’t running the meeting, he was there at Lady Smallwood’s invitation. Roylott had been asked to attend, along with several other leaders in the pharmaceutical industry to discuss a tender for the supply of vaccinations and schedule four drugs for the British armed forces. It was a real tender process, but one that Roylott Industries would not normally have been interested in. When it had first become apparent that the illustrious CEO could be involved in the supply and manufacture of biological weapons, Lady Smallwood and made sure she was seated next to Roylott at a charity dinner. By the end of the evening, after they had spent hours chatting, she had suggested his company would be ideal for a contract she had going and would he come along just to see if he was interested? He’d been completely taken in by her charms and had agreed.

Mycroft had simply needed an excuse to be able to observe the man without actively engaging with him. He had viewed news footage and a TED talk he’d given several years ago, but they were all staged affairs and he needed to see how he reacted to others so he could get an accurate read from him. The evidence was overwhelming that his company was involved, he just needed to figure out if the head honcho was involved or an unwitting participant. If Mycroft was a betting man, he’d say most definitely the former, but he had learned very early on to never make assumptions - deductions were the only thing he could rely upon.

Company executives and their assistants started to arrive and Mycroft kept one eye on his paperwork, affecting a bored persona. Roylott came in towards the end, easily recognisable. He was a large man - tall and broad, bald, with deep set eyes and a sharp nose. His face was extremely
winkled, his overall appearance putting Mycroft in mind of a turkey vulture. He greeted the other executives like family, a jovial smile on his face, but his eyes were hard and calculating. Lady Smallwood greeted him warmly, also introducing Sir Edwin and Royce Harper who would be facilitating the negotiations, and then waved to Mycroft and the handful of secretaries and interns, advising they’d be taking notes. Roylott glanced over at the small group, seeming to dismiss them, but his eyes lingered for a fraction of a second on Mycroft and the politician knew he’d been recognised. As the CEO took his seat, he leaned over and murmured something to his assistant, who nodded and began typing furiously on his phone.

Mycroft caught Lady Smallwood’s eye and she nodded her understanding. It would have been better if the man had remained oblivious to Mycroft’s presence, but there was still much they could learn. Roylott may think himself clever, but he wasn’t a Holmes and no matter how much he tried to hide, Mycroft could still read him like an open book.

The meeting lasted for several hours, and by the end of it Mycroft was certain Roylott was not only aware of his company’s involvement, but was the mastermind behind it. The government tender was a lucrative deal - one that would have not only made them a lot of money, but would have opened doors that would otherwise remain closed, and yet he was not at all interested in the deal. He asked a handful of questions, but did not participate in many of the discussions and debates. When they wrapped up and Lady Smallwood asked if everyone wanted an official invitation to submit an offer, he politely declined. He and his assistant rose to leave, but not before he smirked in Mycroft’s direction and tipped an invisible hat. “Mr Holmes,” he murmured as he passed.

The room emptied, leaving only Mycroft and his two colleagues. “Well that was a disaster,” Lady Smallwood muttered, rubbing at her face.

“Not entirely,” Mycroft disagreed. “I think we have enough to justify surveillance and intel gathering.”

“You’ve already sent an agent in, haven’t you?” Sir Edwin asked.

“Arranged it, yes. However, I think that perhaps we need to be a little more obvious about it. If he recognised me today then he’s sure to know we’re looking into them. The company is looking to fill several IT positions, and I’m sure Roylott will expect us to have someone placed there. The agent I’ve arranged is good enough to get the job off his own back, so I think we could send in someone else as a red herring. Put a little pressure on the HR manager to hire them, so Roylott thinks he has the upper hand, all the while we have someone else working behind the scenes.”

Sir Edwin nodded. “Sounds like a plan. Elizabeth?”

“Yes, let’s do it,” Lady Smallwood agreed. “I have another meeting to get to,” she said, rising. “Thank you, gentlemen.”

They all headed their separate ways and Mycroft retreated to his office. He walked in and saw a white paper box on his desk. “Anthea?” he asked from the doorway.

“Sir?” she asked, coming up behind him.

“Did I have a delivery?”

“Oh, yes, your brother dropped by and left that for you. Is there a problem?”

“Oh, not at all. I needed to discuss something with him so I’m just sorry I missed him.” I’m sorry I missed the chance to hold him close and kiss those plush lips. He pulled his mind back to the present.
“Did you get everything arranged for Mark?”

“Yes, sir. He’s good to go. Interview is 9am tomorrow morning.”

“Excellent.” He walked into his office and went to his desk, eyeing the box. It looked to be the sort one got from a bakery or cafe but it had no sticker or branding on it. He flipped it open and saw it was the last piece of the cake Sherlock had baked on the weekend. There was no note, but he didn't need one as he knew Sherlock was reminding him of the way they’d made love up against the kitchen counter, Mycroft’s legs wrapped around Sherlock’s waist as his brother had rocked into him. Sherlock must have gone back home after his meeting with Lestrade so he could drop this off on his way to Baker street. He was touched that he’d gone to so much effort. He pulled out his phone, ignoring the notifications of the missed calls from the PM while he was in his meeting, and sent a text to his brother.

_I wish I’d not missed you when you dropped by, but this was the next best thing - MH_

The reply came through almost immediately.

_Just wanted to put you in mind of what I’m going to do to you when you get home - SH_

_After the day I’ve had, that sounds divine - MH_

_Until then, brother mine - SH_
Chapter 66

Sherlock heard the door open and he shot off the couch, hurrying to the foyer. Mycroft had only just removed his coat when his younger brother was on him, his hands cupping his cheeks and pulling him down into a heated kiss. The older man gasped, allowing Sherlock’s tongue to plunge inside his mouth, twisting with his own, his stubble brushing against his own five o’clock shadow. Sherlock walked him backwards until Mycroft’s back hit the wall and he pressed their groins together, grinding slightly as he felt his brother’s erection begin to grow.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft gasped against his mouth, a breathless plea for more.

“Need you so much,” he choked back in reply, dropping to his knees and fumbling with the fastenings of his trousers. He felt his brother’s long fingers tangle in his curls, his thumbs finding that sensitive spot behind his ears and rubbing in gentle circles. He worked the layers of fabric aside and soon Mycroft’s long, hard shaft was free from its confines, the head already dark pink and swollen. He took a moment to savour the sight of it, and then he leaned forward and ran the flat of his tongue over the top, pressing down hard as he passed over the slit. He heard Mycroft moan and the fingers in his hair tightened just a little. He did it a few more times, and then licked his lips to make sure they were wet, before sliding them down Mycroft’s cock.

It seemed an eternity since he’d done this last, when in reality it had only been two days. Sherlock was a man familiar with addiction, but he knew no amount of rehab would ever cure him of his craving for this. Sharing such an intimate moment with his brother, doing all in his power to be the reason Mycroft made those breathy little moans and gasps, why his knees would start to tremble. Feeling vulnerable in his position on his knees, but also safe as it was his brother who stood above him. Inhaling the scent that was pure Mycroft as he swallowed deep enough to nestle his nose in the neatly trimmed curls at the base of his shaft. He didn’t only want this, or crave it, or desire it - he needed it. Needed to be this close with his brother, entwined together in every possible way, connected on every level. Mycroft was as vital to his ongoing existence as breathing and if he ever lost him...well, that was too horrible a thought to even contemplate.

He moved back up the shaft and began to concentrate again on just the head, his hand taking the place of his lips lower down. He sucked gently, his tongue twirling around the top, dipping into the slit to lap up every drop of pre-ejaculate that pulsed from it, then ducking down to lick stripes over his frenulum. He suddenly widened his lips and slid back down the shaft, his hand falling away until only two fingers loosely encircled the base. Above him, Mycroft gasped and his hips bucked slightly. “Sherlock, please,” he stuttered out. “I want to come with you, please.”

With one last bob of his head, Sherlock reluctantly let his cock slip from his mouth and he got gracefully to his feet. Mycroft’s mouth immediately found his, his fingers moving from his curls to the nape of his neck, cupping the base of his skull to hold him close. The detective was painfully hard in his trousers, and he rubbed himself against Mycroft’s thigh, trying to relieve some of the pressure. “We are wearing too many clothes,” he managed to say between kisses.

His brother looked over at the stairs and then shook his head slightly, obviously deciding the bedroom was just too far away. Continuing to kiss his brother, he walked backwards, drawing Sherlock into the living room. They worked swiftly at removing their clothes, more interested in getting naked as quickly as possible than pawing at each other’s shirts. Although not a real fire, Mycroft had always had a plush rug in front of the heater and once they were undressed, he guided Sherlock down onto it. His body covered the detective’s, a comforting and familiar weight as he rested on his elbows above him. “Have I ever told you just how stunning you are, little brother?” he
murmured, gazing down upon him. Sherlock made a small noise in his throat, skeptical. Mycroft peppered his face with kisses, before coming back to his plush lips and kissing them properly. “But you are. You’re the most divine creature to walk this earth, and you are all mine.” He growled the last word and kissed him fiercely, and Sherlock returned it in kind.

He’d never in a million years have thought that he would find it attractive to be possessed by someone, but he could honestly say he belonged - heart and soul - to Mycroft. Having his brother stake his claim not only made him feel a surge or affection, but also a surge of desire.

“Fuck, I want you. I want you so much,” he whispered, his hands raking down Mycroft’s back, groping his arse in both hands.

“How?” his brother asked, his mouth busy nipping at the skin of his throat. “Tell me how you want me.”

“Inside me,” he gasped, his back arching upwards, the silky skin of their cocks rubbing together.

“I’ll need to go upstairs to get some lube,” Mycroft told him, preparing to get up. “I haven’t any down here.”

Sherlock growled in frustration, grabbing at his brother’s arms and pulling him back down. “No, don’t leave. We’ll do something else then, just please, I need to feel your touch on me.”

The older man nodded, and Sherlock could tell he’d been loathe to leave him as well, even if it was for a scant few minutes. They both appeared to be as needy as the other tonight, but neither seemed to mind. Mycroft began to kiss his way down Sherlock’s neck and chest, licking briefly at a nipple, and then working his way down to his stomach. He kissed around his belly button and then moved down to his left hip. Sherlock shivered as Mycroft licked into the hollow above the bone, and then moved over and licked the matching dip on the other side. He had been straddling Sherlock, but he climbed off and gently pushed open his brother’s knees. Sherlock slid his feet up so his legs could fall open even wider, and Mycroft kneeled between his pale thighs. He pressed open mouthed kisses to the skin around his cock, but ignored the twitching member entirely. He licked briefly over his tight balls and then hooked Sherlock’s legs under his arms so he could move them to rest on top of his shoulders. Then he moved his face down even further and licked over his brother’s perineum.

Sherlock’s breath hitched as he realised exactly what Mycroft’s final destination was and he tensed a little. He’d showered when he’d gotten home from seeing Mrs Hudson, which relaxed him a little, but still, he was a little hesitant. Mycroft showed no such qualms, and soon the flat of his tongue was lathing over his entrance. A breathy little moan escaped the detective’s mouth as the sensation hit him, and he relaxed even more. His brother licked in circles around his pucker, every now and then going over the top of it, and then he dipped the tip inside and Sherlock’s back arched off the rug.

Mycroft ran a soothing hand down the back of his thigh, but didn’t stop his ministrations and he licked and lapped at Sherlock’s entrance. The younger man’s cock was almost throbbing with need and he reached down to stroke it, finding a large pool of pre-ejaculate on his stomach. His brother gently sucked on of his bollocks into his mouth, and Sherlock cried out, his hand dropping from his cock to clutch at Mycroft’s hair. “Up!” he urged, “Up, up, up.”

Letting his brother’s legs slip from his shoulders, Mycroft obliged and was pulled up and into a heated kiss. Then Sherlock wrapped one of his large hands around both their pricks and began to stoke as best he could. They both bucked their hips, thrusting into his hand and against each other, their dripping cocks providing enough natural lubricant to create a delicious friction.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft gasped, and then he was coming in hot spurts across his brother’s hand.
“That’s it, Mycie, come for me,” the younger man said, then closed his eyes, his mouth dropping open as his own orgasm rippled through him.

Panting hard, they both rested for a moment, their foreheads pressed together, sharing breath. Then Mycroft stretched up to reach the box of tissues he kept on the sideboard so they could clean up. Once they were done, they settled back down onto the rug, limbs tangled as they held each other close.

“How was your day?” Sherlock rumbled softly, his fingers busy tracing patterns between Mycroft’s shoulder blades. “Is the empire intact?”

His brother shrugged. “For now, but there is a pesky businessman who thinks he can make some pocket money by selling biological weapons to the Syrians. I’ll have to see how that pans out.”

“Oooh, that sounds fun. Need a hand?”

Mycroft laughed. “It’s exactly the situation I was talking about this morning. I’ve sent Mark in undercover, but it would be good to have you working it as well.”

“I’m yours to use, Mycie.”

The older man pressed a kiss to his temple. “As kind an offer that is, I’ll never take advantage of you, Sherlock. You’re not to be used and abused.”

He rolled his eyes, and poked him in the ribs. “You know what I meant. No need to get all ethical on me.”

“Fair enough. I’ll fill you in on the details tomorrow morning. And how was your day? How did it go at the Yard?”

“Lestrade had it under control already. He just wanted a second opinion to be certain since they were quite high profile cases.” He left out the part about the DI echoing Mycroft’s thoughts on the state of his friendship with John. He knew he had a bit of soul searching to do and that was something he needed to do inside his own head. “Mrs Hudson and Rosie were happy to see me,” he added.

“I’m sure they were. I’m guessing she asked why you weren’t staying there. What did you tell her?”

“Just that John and I had had a disagreement and I needed some time away. She understood. She’s quite familiar with John’s temper.”

Mycroft sighed but didn’t push the issue, for which Sherlock was grateful. “Do you feel like some dinner?” he asked instead.

Sherlock burrowed in closer to his brother. “Not just yet. Let’s just stay here for a little longer.”

Arms tightened around him, and Mycroft nuzzled the spot behind his ear, making a happy little humming noise. “That sounds delightful,” he murmured.
Chapter 67

Anthea smiled as she showed Sherlock into Mycroft’s office and then shut the door behind her. “Thank you for coming, brother,” Mycroft greeted him. He longed to take him in his arms and kiss him, but although they were alone, this was work and he needed to keep it separate. He could tell that his younger brother was fighting the same urge, so he stayed seated behind his desk to help both of them fight their instincts.

Sherlock slouched into one of the guest chairs, crossing his ankles. “What is it you need me to do?”

He slid a file across the desk to him. “I need you to do some digging into the CEO of Roylott Industries and see what you can find on him. His electronic record is squeaky clean - not even a parking ticket.”

Sherlock flipped through the papers. “Hmph, for a man who lives in central London, I find it unbelievable that he doesn’t even have a parking ticket.”

“My thoughts exactly. He’s gone to a lot of trouble to have someone wipe his record of everything but his business success and philanthropy. I need you to find me something I can use against him. He knows I’m looking into him, but perhaps if he doesn’t realise exactly what I’m looking into, it’ll be easier for me to find the truth.”

“I’m sure it won’t be too hard to dig up some dirt on him,” he said, closing the file and tossing it on the desk. “If his ancestors are anything to go by, he’ll have vices aplenty.”

“Indeed. However, don’t underestimate Roylott, Sherlock. He’s single handedly rebuilt his family’s fortunes and is absolutely ruthless.”

“Everyone has a weakness.”

Mycroft gave him a very pointed look. “Yes, and just remember that also applies to us.”

His brother regarded him somewhat seriously and then nodded. “Point taken. I have more to lose now than I ever have had before.”

“Believe me when I say I’m not trying to rein you in, or make you change the way you go about your work. I just want you to be careful, Sherlock.”

“I will, Mycie. I promise.” He stood from the chair. “I’d better get started. Are we finished?”

He nodded, hesitant to see his brother leave but knowing they both had work to do. “I have nothing else for you.”

“Well, I have something for you,” Sherlock announced, and walked around the desk.

“Oh?”

He came up next to him and lowered his head. “I couldn’t leave without a single kiss, now could I?” he asked, then brushed their lips together.

“No, I don’t suppose you could.” He smiled warmly at him and ran the backs of his fingers gently down his cheek. “See you tonight.”

“That you will.”
Mycroft watched as he left, noticing how animated Sherlock had grown since he now had work to do. It was different to the energy he had for their relationship, a little manic with pinpoint focus instead of the smouldering enthusiasm and almost puppyish affection. It had been missing for the past couple of weeks, and the older man hadn’t realised how much he’d missed it. It made Sherlock complete, the last corner piece of the jigsaw puzzle fitting into place. Although he'd been in love with him for years before he started his detective work, it was something that Mycroft adored about his brother. It was uniquely him, a way for him to channel his excess energy, and use his superior intellect, whilst at the same time doing genuine good for society.

If there was one thing that Mycroft regretted, it was that he’d never been able to convince Sherlock to work for him. When they were younger, his brother had been besotted with Uncle Rudi, and had pushed for details of his work for the government. Their uncle could only skirt around the edges of the details, but of course both boys could read between the lines and knew exactly what he did. Mycroft had followed in his footsteps and he had genuinely believed that Sherlock would follow not too far behind. But then he’d gone off to university and started the slippery slope of recreational drug use and the rest was history.

He sighed and pushed away all thoughts of his brother. He had work to do, and needed to focus. With a sigh, he opened his email account and clicked on the latest report from the analysts downstairs.

Sherlock left Whitehall and headed across to the Yard, hoping he’d be able to use Lestrade’s access to do some digging. Something was niggling at the back of his mind, a name, something to do with Roylott that had happened a few years ago, possibly from when he’d first started working cases with a certain DI. The memory was fuzzy, and he could certainly find it with enough time in his mind palace, but sometimes there was an easier way. Someone at the Yard might recall the details, and then it was just a matter of finding the right file. It didn’t take much to have official records altered, but somewhere in the deep depths of the archive room beneath Scotland Yard, paper records still existed.

The offices that housed Lestrade and his team were on the third floor and Sherlock flashed his access card at the security guards as he made his way across to the elevators. They all knew him, but it never hurt to have it readily available on the off chance there was someone new working there. It was never a good day for the rookie who got in the way of Sherlock Holmes and the people he needed to see. The lift dinged as he arrived at the correct floor and he stepped out into the hustle and bustle of the busy department.

Lestrade wasn’t in his office but Donovan was sitting at her desk. He hesitated, unsure if he should just wait or check if the DI would be gone long. Considering she was still there, it was unlikely Lestrade was out at a scene, but he could be in a meeting. Although not as tense as before he ‘died’, he and Donovan still didn’t see eye to eye. She had stopped calling him Freak after Lestrade had put his foot down, but she still loved to argue and contradict him. They now had permission for him to consult on cases, but that didn’t mean she had to like it.

The Detective Sergeant looked up and saw him lingering by the door so Sherlock headed for her desk. “He’s just popped out for coffee,” she told him, knowing who he’d be after. “Won’t be long.”

He nodded, and then figured it couldn’t hurt to ask her if she knew anything of interest. “Do you by any chance recall anything about the Roylott family? I’m after information about Grimesby Roylott but I’m sure something happened a few years ago, maybe involving his family.”

She tapped her finger to her bottom lip as she thought. “The name certainly rings a bell. For a private
“What case?”

“Not exactly. Work for my brother.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Woulda thought the spooks would have this sort of information at their fingertips.”

He shrugged. “Who knows why my brother does the things he does. Maybe there’s a mole?”

Her eyes sparkled at the juicy thought and he found himself smiling. When Donovan was in a helpful mood, she was surprisingly likable. He supposed the same could be said about himself. “Let me do a search on the name and see what it brings up.” She tapped away at her computer several times, her eyes narrowing as different keywords failed to bring anything up. “That’s really odd,” she said.

“Let me guess - not even a parking ticket.”

“No. There’s nothing. I know who he is since you know, I don’t live under a rock, and usually with bigwig businessmen there’s a record of a court appearance or something. You know, someone fighting over a patent issue, or unfair dismissal. But there’s simply nothing.”

“Hmmm, perhaps in order to try and hide something, he’s gone too far. It’s more suspicious to have nothing at all don’t you think?”

“For sure.”

“Alright, is the world ending and no one told me?” came the gravelly voice of Lestrade. “What the hell has you two agreeing on something?”

Sally looked amused and waved a hand at Sherlock to explain. He repeated what he was after and what they had found so far. “Don’t you think that’s odd?” he said.

“Yeah, definitely,” the DI agreed. “The name’s familiar to me as well,” he said. “Come with me, let’s do some digging.”

Sherlock grinned and he followed the older man into his office, Sally scrambling to follow now that she was intrigued.

It didn’t take long for Lestrade to come up with something. “Aha!” he exclaimed, spinning the monitor around to show them the results. “I knew my memory hadn’t failed me entirely. The search for his name doesn’t bring anything up, but Julia Stoner, Grimesby Roylott’s step daughter does. Found dead in her bedroom six years ago. There’s nothing else on the system though, which is odd. The file here in incomplete, almost like it’s unsolved even though it’s stamped as complete. Let’s head down to the archive room and see what the original file says.”

It only took them half an hour to find the file and they crowded around to read it. “Suicide?” Donovan asked after they’d read it.

“Looks more like murder to me,” Lestrade muttered. “But the room was locked up tight. Her sister, Helen, found her, and she had to use her spare key to get in.”

“Something’s definitely not right,” Sherlock said, picking the file up and flipping through to the toxicology report. “They found an unknown substance in her blood, but ruled it out of being the cause of death.”
“Does this help you at all with whatever Mycroft is looking into?” the DI asked.

“I’m not sure, but even if it doesn’t, I think it needs to be investigated further.”

“You’re thinking foul play as well?”

“When both of us think something is off-” he paused as Donovan coughed loudly and amended it to, “-when all three of us think something is off, then there’s a bloody good chance there is. I think that’s worth looking into.”

“Alright, I trust your judgement on this. Let me make a few calls and have this officially moved over to reopen so you have the full backing of the department.”

He gave Lestrade a smile, grateful for his help. He had no idea if following this lead would be at all helpful to Mycroft, but there was definitely a puzzle to solve here and he was going to solve it.
Chapter 68

When Mycroft got home that evening, he found Sherlock in the kitchen, files and papers spread out across the table. “Busy day?” he asked, coming up behind him and wrapping his arms around his chest and resting his cheek on top of his head. They had texted on and off but his brother hadn’t said much other than he had a lead he was chasing down.

“Mmm.” Sherlock rumbled in reply. “Found out some interesting things, like one of his step daughters died under suspicious circumstances six years ago. Roylott also likes to keep exotic animals, and somehow managed to get a permit to keep a cheetah on his property. He’s prone to violent outbursts and has trouble keeping household staff. He’s been through three housekeepers in the last year alone.”

“Yes, I’ve heard about his anger issues.” He reached over and closed the file. “Enough for now, though.” Sherlock started to protest but he cut him off. “Please, I don’t want work to consume our time in the evenings. We have so little to spend together as it is.”

His brother closed his mouth, seeing the logic to that and he stood up from the table. “What did you want to do then?”

“How does cuddling on the couch sound?” Mycroft asked.

Sherlock laughed and pulled him in for a kiss. “In relation to anyone else, it would sound ridiculous, but when you suggest it, it sounds perfect.”

They made their way into the living room and Mycroft poured them both a whiskey. Sherlock sat himself on the couch with his back against the armrest and his legs spread into a V and patted the space in between. Mycroft gratefully slotted himself between those long legs and leaned back against Sherlock’s chest, his brother’s arms coming round to circle him from behind.

“Better?” the younger man asked in a low murmur, nuzzling into the side of Mycroft’s neck.

He sighed happily and let his head fall back against his shoulder. “Yes. Coming home to this is just divine.” He grasped at the forearms wrapped around his stomach and squeezed them. “I’ve always found your embrace so comforting, even before my feelings for you changed. Perhaps because there were so few people you would willingly embrace, that it made me feel like I was special to you, especially back then.”

He felt those plush lips press a kiss to the nape of his neck before Sherlock asked, “You’re thinking of a specific time, aren’t you?”

He hummed. “Yes, I suppose I am.”

“Tell me?”

“I don’t even know if you’d remember, Sherlock. It was after you’d deleted your memories of Eurus.”

“I’m remembering more and more,” he said. “It pains me to think I deleted memories of you, along with those of our sister. I want to remember all of them, Mycie. Help me remember; tell me.”

He sighed and closed his eyes. “It was after Victor disappeared, but before the fire so we were still at Musgrave. Eurus had been particularly unkind to me one day...well, she wasn’t the only one. I’d had
a rough day at school - I’d been competing on the debating team and we had won - ”

“Of course,” Sherlock interjected.

“Indeed. Anyway, the boys on the opposing team were rather bitter and made some vicious remarks regarding my weight - the usual kind of thing. I’d been rather upset when I’d come home, but thought I was hiding it rather well. Eurus took one look at me, deducing exactly what had happened, and said ‘ But you are fat - they just forgot to mention you’re stupid as well ’.” Sherlock’s arms tightened around him but he didn’t interrupt. “I’d gone up to my room, ostensibly to study, completely forgetting I’d told you I’d help to collect water samples from the lake for you to examine. You came looking for me and found me lying on my bed - ”

“You’d been crying…” Sherlock whispered, obviously remembering.

“I tried to hide it from you.”

“But I could tell. I was so worried because what could be so bad to make my big brother cry?”

“You hadn’t mastered deducing by then, and I wouldn’t tell you what was wrong. So you just climbed up on the bed and settled down behind me and held me, and said - ”

“ ‘ I’ll never make you cry,’ ” they recounted at the same time.

Mycroft smiled at the memory and turned his head so he could kiss his brother. “You kept holding me until I felt better and then we went and got your water samples.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t keep my promise,” Sherlock whispered, his voice melancholy. “You’ve probably shed more tears over me than over anything else.”

Remembering the times he’d found his brother close to death in a drug den, sitting vigil by his hospital bed as he recovered from an overdose, watching as he went straight back out to do it all over again, Mycroft could only agree. But he didn't voice this, not wanting to depress Sherlock further. Instead he said, “Do you remember the time you begged Uncle Rudi to do your makeup?” Before Sherlock could answer, the doorbell rang, putting both men on alert. Mycroft was off the couch in an instant and crossed to the monitor just outside the living room in the hall. His lips pressed together tightly as he saw who it was. “Sherlock,” he said, his voice level. “I need you to wait in the next room, don’t make a sound.”

At the serious tone in his voice, his brother immediately obeyed, taking his glass and moving through the sliding door that separated the living room and the formal dining room. He slid shut the door, leaving it open just a crack. A final glance around the room told him no one would be able to tell there had been anyone else with him, and so Mycroft went to open the door.

Grimesby Roylott stood tall and imposing on his front step. He was alone, but a dark blue sedan was parked on the road, two burly men visible in the front seats. “Mr Roylott,” Mycroft greeted him in a frosty tone. “We need to talk, Mr Holmes,” he stated.

Mycroft eyed him for a long moment, and then finally nodded, standing back to allow him to enter. He led him down to the living room, and offered him a seat, but not a drink. There were limits to his hospitality. “What can I do for you that’s so important that you had to intrude upon my time outside of work?” he asked, his voice low and only this side of threatening as he sat in his armchair.

Roylott refused to sit, towering over him, huge and imposing. “Your brother has been snooping into
my life. Call him off,” he snarled.

“Has he?” he asked, acting surprised. “I’m afraid you’ll have to take that up with New Scotland Yard then, since it’s they he consults for.”

“Don’t give me that bullshit! I know for a fact that he does work for you as well. You keep your brother on a leash like a trained dog at your beck and call.”

He gave a thin lipped smile. “How little you know of Sherlock. He is at no one’s beck and call, especially mine. I do wonder though exactly what he could be investigating?”


“Or what, Mr Roylott?”

“Or you’ll regret it. And so will that ponce little brother of yours.”

“I must inform you that I find your threats to be very...unthreatening. You will not find the Holmes’ easily intimidated, sir, and further more, if you attempt to follow through with your vaguely implied threat, you’ll also discover that our bite is much worse than our bark.”

Roylott stalked even closer to Mycroft and prodded him in the chest. “I’m not mucking about, Mr Holmes. You make sure your little consulting detective keeps his nose out of my business or I’ll see to it that his nose is ripped off that pretty little face of his.”

“If you do not remove your hand, Roylott, I can assure you that you will leave here with it detached from the arm it belongs to,” Mycroft stated coldly.

Their eyes locked for a long moment until finally the businessman backed down, removing the finger pressed to Mycroft’s chest and stepping back. “I won’t tell you again,” he said. “No need to get up - I’ll see myself out.”

Mycroft ignored him and followed the man to the door, locking it behind him. He took a deep breath before heading back into the living room. Sherlock had re-entered the room and was standing at the window, watching the sedan drive off. “What an interesting man,” he murmured.

“And a dangerous one. You must be careful, Sherlock.”

“Do you want me to back off?”

He shook his head and picked up his whiskey, draining the rest of it. “No, between us we seem to be ruffling his feathers so we must keep on him. I just don’t want you taking unnecessary risks. Perhaps you should see if Doctor Watson wants to join you on this?”

“I’ll manage on my own for now,” he said, crossing back to the couch and sitting down. “But don’t worry about me, Mycie. I’ll be fine.”

He sighed but knew there was little point in pushing the issue. Sherlock patted the spot next to him and he sat, meeting his lips for a much needed kiss.

“Now,” Sherlock said. “Before we were interrupted, I believe we were discussing my brief foray into cross dressing with Uncle Rudi?”
Chapter 69

Creeping back into the room after a visit to the loo, Sherlock paused as he took in the sight of his brother asleep. Only a little light trickled through the gap in the curtains from the streetlight outside, but it was enough to see that he had turned onto his stomach, face buried in the pillow with an arm curled under it, one knee cocked up so he was almost in the recovery position. At the bottom of the blanket, one long, delicate foot poked out - Mycroft’s thermostat.

Sherlock was overcome with a sudden desire to cover that foot with kisses, maybe even suck one of the perfectly manicured toes into his mouth. It was so strong that for a moment he stood, torn between climbing back into bed, and acting upon the urge. He wasn’t sure why he wanted to do so now, as he’d never had much of an interest in feet before. Perhaps it was just because it was Mycroft’s foot? He gave his head a gentle shake and then moved to his side of the bed, burrowing into the warmth that was waiting for him.

Mycroft didn’t stir as Sherlock plastered himself along his back, slipping a knee over his leg and curling his arm around his waist. His face rested against one smooth shoulder and he pressed a kiss to the skin, knowing that he was kissing a multitude of freckles, hidden by the dark. He forced his hands to remain still, since he wanted to trail them over every inch of skin he could reach, but he didn’t want to wake his brother when he needed his sleep.

He may have held mastery over his hands, but another part of his anatomy wasn’t listening at all. His cock was very interested in the expanse of naked skin he was pressed against, growing rapidly and trapped at an awkward angle. Sherlock moved his hips back a little to allow it to spring upwards, sighing at the relief it brought, then moved back to lie as close to Mycroft as he could get. His erection nestled into the cleft of his brother’s arse and he wanted so badly to thrust gently, to slide it along the smooth skin, but by inhuman effort he resisted. Mycroft twitched and murmured in his sleep, and it sounded very much as if he had spoken his brother’s name. Knowing his brother was dreaming about him caused Sherlock’s heart to swell and his arm tightened around his waist, hugging him close.

That of course pressed his aching cock even harder against Mycroft’s arse, and Sherlock knew he would see no more sleep tonight until he’d taken care of matters. He briefly considered getting up again and going into the bathroom, but it was cold outside of the bed and he didn’t feel like making another naked dash across the room. Instead he rolled over, putting some distance between himself and Mycroft, since the last thing he wanted to do was use his brother’s body when he wasn’t fully awake and cognisant.

He loosely circled his fingers around his erection and began a slow caress of his cock, keeping the movement smooth and steady so he wouldn’t rustle the blanket overmuch. He allowed his eyes to close so he could better picture in his mind the way it felt when it was Mycroft touching him, reliving some of their most intimate moments over in his mind. A low whimper escaped his throat as pre-come pulsed from the head of his cock, and his slid his hand over his shaft just a little faster.

He felt the bed shift a little and then heard Mycroft say, “I could help you with that, you know.” His eyes flew open and his hand stilled, mortified that he’d been caught masturbating. Even in the darkened room, his brother seemed to know exactly what he was thinking and he rolled over completely and reached a hand down to cover Sherlock’s. “Don’t be embarrassed, brother mine. You have no idea how sexy it is that you’re doing that.” He began to move his hand, and by extension, Sherlock’s, and together they worked his cock. “Is this better?” he asked in a rather sultry voice.
Sherlock moaned and nodded, biting his lip as his pleasure began to build, so much quicker than when he did it by himself. His brother pressed kisses to his shoulder and then moved down to suck a nipple into his mouth, laving it with his tongue until it pebbled. Sherlock gasped and sped up his movements just a fraction, chasing more friction. Mycroft moved up a little and began to suck on the top of his pectoral muscle, just below his collarbone. Sherlock’s breath hitched as his brother added teeth to the equation, pain mingling with pleasure as he worked on creating a vivid love bite. Just as the pain grew almost too much, Sherlock cried out and spurted his release over his stomach. Mycroft sucked hard, one last time, and then let go of the muscle before moving up to kiss the younger man.

Once he’d cleaned up, Mycroft curled around Sherlock and burrowed his face in his neck. “That was rather lovely to wake up to.”

“Sorry I woke you.”

“’s okay,” he replied after he’d yawned.

“Would you like me to take care of you?”

Mycroft shook his head against his shoulder. “Too sleepy. Nigh nigh.”

Sherlock grinned in the darkness at how adorable his brother was when he was on the cusp of oblivion, knowing the older man would deny it vehemently if he mentioned it in the morning. “Goodnight, Mycie.” He pressed a kiss to his temple and then closed his eyes, listening to his brother’s breathing grow heavy as they both drifted to sleep.

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It was a crisp, clear day as Sherlock made his way across town. His destination was a small coffee shop and he planned his arrival so he would get there after the morning rush but before they got busy at lunchtime. He ordered a coffee and took a seat in the corner, his eyes busy watching the staff as they went about their work. A woman in her mid twenties, with mousey brown hair and a heart shaped face brought out a plate of scones for the elderly couple seated a few tables away, smiling at them sweetly once she was done.

Sherlock lifted a hand to grab her attention and she headed over to his table. “How can I help?” she asked, gracing him with the same smile.

“Helen Stoner?” he asked.

The smile immediately fell away and she glanced around the shop. Seeing no one needing her help, she slid into the chair opposite him. “I haven’t gone by that name in five years,” she whispered, her eyes angry. “Who the hell are you?”

“My name is Sherlock Holmes and I’m a consulting detective. I work with Scotland Yard.”

“And?” she demanded, her expression showing she recognised who he was but was not at all impressed. “What do you want with me?”

“They’ve reopened the case into your sister’s death.”

She stilled and if possible, her eyes went even colder. “Why?”

“You don’t seem surprised.”

“I’m only surprised they didn’t do it sooner. Like all the times I begged them to look into it. They
ruled it as a suicide, but didn’t listen at all when I told them my sister wasn’t the least bit suicidal.”

“Could you be so sure?”

“Do you have siblings, Mr Holmes?”

He nodded. “Yes.”

“And are you close?”

“Not particularly with my sister, but yes, I’m close with my brother.”

“And do you think you’d be able to tell if he wasn’t acting like himself? If something were wrong.”

Undoubtedly. “Yes, I think so.”

“Would you say that right now, this very day, he’s contemplating taking his own life?”

“Well, no…”

“Would you say he’s happy?”

Happier than I’ve ever seen him. “Yes.”

“So if he were to be found dead, and they tried to tell you it was suicide, would you fight that? Fight that with all your worth because you know, know in your very soul that there is no way he would kill himself, because he’s happy?”

He swallowed hard. “I see your point.” Even the thought of losing Mycie was enough to churn his stomach.

“My step father has money and influence, Mr Holmes. The way he made the investigation just...disappear, that set alarm bells ringing for me. I tried to rally the police and no one listened. I tried to take it to the papers and I was shut down. I even confronted my step father, and it was then that I feared for my life.”

“What did he do?”

She picked up a sugar packet and fiddled with it as she spoke. “Have you met him?” she asked.

“Indirectly.”

“Then you’re aware that he’s an intimidating man.”

“He definitely used his size to dominate, yes.”

“What people don’t see, behind closed doors, is how eccentric he is, how...unpredictable he is. Word has gotten out about his temper, but many people have short fuses so it’s usually dismissed if they’re not violent with it. He never touched a hair on our heads, not even after Mum died. But we were punished in other ways, ways that were made to look like accidents. I angered him one day after defending one of the housekeepers and that evening one of his - pets -” she spat the word, “got loose in the house.” She rolled up her sleeve and showed a nasty scar around her elbow. “I was mauled by a bobcat, Mr Holmes, as I was going from the bathroom to my bedroom. Just as it started to drag me down the hallway, I heard a whistle and it dropped me and moved to sit at the feet of my step father. He looked at me, didn’t say a word, and then just walked away.” She rolled her sleeve back down, buttoning the cuff. “There were many incidents like that, most involving the animals he kept for one
reason or another. Snakes in the kitchen cupboard if his tea was cold, finding the scat of a cougar in
the middle of your bed if you hadn’t acted just so at a dinner party, God forbid if you talked of
leaving and starting a life of your own…”

“Like Julia.”

She nodded. “Yes, like Julia. Her man was so sweet, treated her like a princess. On the surface it
seemed our step father was happy for her, accepted that she would be married, but we knew he was
angry. Julia even offered for me to come and live with them once they were married so I wouldn’t be
there by myself. Anyway, you know what happened next.”

Sherlock pursed his lips, pensive. “I do, when it comes to your unfortunate sister. What happened
with you? You said you confronted him. What happened?”

“It will sound silly,” she said, her hands shaking a little as she toyed with the sugar.

“But it obviously had you scared.”

“Yes.” She sighed and met his eyes. “After I accused him of having something to do with Julia’s
death, he just laughed at me. Told me my grief was causing me to see demons where there were
none. But then one night I woke to find the ceiling in my room was leaking. He called in for a
repairman and told me that in the meantime I should sleep in Julia’s old room - which was next to
his. I don’t know why, but I just knew that if I slept in that room, I wouldn’t wake in the morning. I
waited until he had left for work and I packed a bag and I left. I haven’t seen him since.”

“Yet you’ve remained in London. Aren’t you worried you’ll bump into him?”

“It’s a big city, Mr Holmes, and the circles I move in very rarely collide with his. I have a new name,
a new identity, and it’s been a very long time since he last saw me. I doubt he’d even recognise me
now.” She paused and looked out the window. “Though, you found me so perhaps that means he’ll
have little trouble finding me if he ever feels the need. Maybe I do need to move on.”

“I have a contact in the government who has access to the entire CCTV network along with facial
recognition. That’s the only reason I found you, Helen.”

She smiled sadly at him. “Please, call me Lucy. I left Helen behind a long time ago.”

“Apologies, Lucy.” He reached across the table and gave her hand a quick squeeze. “I’m not going
to let him get away with this. I will uncover the truth. You’ll be free to live your life once more.”

“That’s kind of you to say, Mr Holmes, but along with Helen, I also gave up my believe in fairy
tales.” She glanced across to the counter, noticing several people in the queue. “I’d best go help my
colleague so I don’t get fired.” She stood and then looked back. “I wish you all the luck in the world,
Mr Holmes, but please be careful. Grimesby Roylott is a man who doesn’t let anyone get in his way.
I wouldn’t want to be you if he decides you’re the one in his path.”
Chapter 70

Chapter Notes

So guess who totes forgot the British PM is a woman...oops. Lucky for me this is fiction!

The PM had just left from their meeting when Mycroft’s phone began to ring. He pulled it out of the drawer he had stashed it in (the PM insisted on meeting in Mycroft’s office so he had the opportunity to ogle the younger interns working downstairs as he left) and saw it was his brother calling.

“What about you?” he greeted him. “Is everything alright?”

“Just letting you know I’m heading to Bart’s to use the lab there. I might be home quite late.”

“Do you have a lead?”

“I’m not sure. I tracked down Roylott’s step daughter who went into hiding after the other one died mysteriously. She said something that gave me an idea - it might be related to the weapons, but it might just be about Julia Stoner’s death.”

“I see. Good luck. I’m not sure what time I’ll be home either - I’m meeting with Mark to get an update on what he’s gathered so far.”

“Oh,” Sherlock said, then continued, sounding rather shy. “Well, um, maybe you could, well, maybe just tell him I said hello?”

Mycroft chuckled. “Of course, brother dear. We’re meeting for dinner - you’re always welcome to come if you’d like.”

There was silence as his brother pondered this. “What time will you be meeting and where?”

“I’ve told him seven at the Diogenes. It’s the only secure place that does a decent steak.”

“Hmmmm, I’m not sure if that will give me enough time.”

“Don’t feel obliged to come, Sherlock. I just know you enjoy his company and haven’t seen a lot of him lately so I wanted to extend the invitation.”

“I suppose I could always head back to Bart’s afterwards if I haven’t finished…”

“So you will come?” he asked, a smile on his face. Mycroft wholeheartedly approved of the friendship between the young agent and Sherlock. He was someone his brother could rely upon, and not have to worry every five minutes if he was going to say the wrong thing or upset him. The fact he knew about and was supportive of their relationship was just a bonus.

“I’ll be there.”

“Excellent. See you then, brother mine.”

They disconnected and Mycroft couldn’t keep the smile off his face, something that Anthea
commented on when she brought him a cup of tea and a stack of reports. “It’s not like you to be smiling after a visit from the PM, sir.”

“It must be a figment of your imagination, Anthea. I most definitely would not be smiling after such a meeting. Most likely a grimace caused from stomach cramps.”

“Well let me know if I’ll need to alert the CDC. If you’re coming down with something, it’s probably highly contagious and we’ll want to lock you away to keep the general population safe from harm.”

“And here I was, thinking you had my back.”

“Oh, I do, sir. I’ll make sure the doctors in the hazmat suits take good care of you. I’ll even make sure you have a magazine or two to read so you have something to do. They might even be from this decade if you’re lucky.”

“You’re ever so kind.”

“So I’ve been told. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“No, that will be all for now. Thank you, Anthea.” He chuckled to himself as she left, grateful to the brunette. They had been working together for quite a number of years now and other than Sherlock, she was the closest person to a friend he had. They had moved passed polite professionalism rather quickly, Anthea displaying a sharp wit and delightful sense of humour which Mycroft appreciated very much. He may be the Iceman, but behind the closed door of his office, he quite enjoyed having a laugh with his PA. She recognised that he used humour as a way to unwind and decompress from stressful situations but also knew when a joke would not be appreciated. Besides his brother, she was the only person who could get a read on the politician.

Mycroft mused over this for a while, realising that it would probably only be a matter of time before Anthea noticed there was something more than simple brotherly affection between he and Sherlock. As much as he worried that too many people were already aware of the truth, it could possibly benefit them to include Anthea in that group. She was rather flexible when it came to morals and he believed she would be one of the few people who would be accepting of their relationship. Since she was in charge of his calendar, having her on board would help him to take advantage of the odd hour or two between meetings where he could schedule lunch with Sherlock, or the mornings that he could have a later start so he could enjoy a lie in with his brother if he had stayed the night. He filed the thought away to discuss with Sherlock at some point, knowing he couldn’t say anything without talking to him first.

He glanced over at the clock and realised it was just gone two. He needed to get a move on with these reports if he was going to get them finished in time to have a shower before his dinner meeting with Mark and Sherlock. Pushing aside all thoughts of his brother and their unique situation, he dug into his work.

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Stepping into the wooden panelled space of his private room at The Diogenes, Mycroft felt his whole body relax. The afternoon had been hectic, with a handful of small fires popping up here and there - one quite literally at an army base in the south - but he deemed none of them to have ongoing dire consequences, which were the only ones he concerned himself with. It was sheer joy to be able to walk out of the office and leave that all behind, even if technically he was heading into another work related meeting.
The others had not yet arrived and so Mycroft ensconced himself in the large armchair in front of the fire and enjoyed a nip of whiskey. One of their ancestors had been a founding member of the club and since then, there had always been a Holmes in this room. It was a place of sanctuary, where he could escape from the demands of the outside world and just concentrate. He found he did his best work here, and when he didn’t have meetings, he would often spend the entire day here. During those times his output would triple and he, as the young people were want to say ‘got shit done’.

There was a soft tap at the door before it opened and Mark was shown in. He waited until the door had closed fully before he spoke. “Mycroft, how are you?”

He rose and crossed to shake the agent’s hand. “I’m well, thank you, Mark. And yourself? Did you have any trouble coming here?”

He shook his head. “No, nothing I couldn’t manage anyway. Roylott is definitely feeling the pressure and he’s having all new employees monitored, but for me it seems to end at the office door. I took the usual precautions though, just to be safe.”

“Excellent. Can I get you a drink?”

“Sure. Whiskey would be great.”

Mycroft moved to the decanter and poured him a generous measure, refilling his own glass while he was at it. “My brother will be joining us as well,” he mentioned as he handed over the glass. “I hope you don’t mind.” He waved to the other armchair, inviting him to sit.

Mark broke out into a grin. “Not at all! It will be great to catch up with Sherlock.”

“He’s been helping with this mission as well, hitting it from another angle.”

The young man started to laugh, causing Mycroft to look at his strangely. “Sorry, sorry,” Mark apologised, holding up a hand in supplication. “That just explains Roylott’s foul mood today. He came in absolutely fuming and pulled two of the senior blokes aside, giving them a task. I overheard a little, but didn’t really understand - something about a project...Speckled Band? I haven’t come across it as yet, but when I saw how pissed he was, I put it on my list of things to look into. If it was Sherlock who made him so angry, I’ll make it my priority.”

“I’d appreciate that. Roylott was rather put out when he found out,” Mycroft told him. “He turned up last night at my home to demand I make Sherlock stop.”

Mark’s eyebrow raised at that. “I can’t imagine you were overly impressed.”

“No I wasn’t, especially when he threatened to remove Sherlock’s nose from his pretty little face.”

“How on earth did he get out of there alive?” Mark asked, incredulous.

“Scarcely. Luckily for him I have learned to control my base desires. If not, they would never have found the body.” His eyes grew dangerous and his voice cold. “Needless to say, if he moves from threats to an actual attempt to harm Sherlock, I will inflict upon him the most painful death a human being has ever experienced, and then I shall revive him and do it all over again.”

The door had opened without either of them noticing, allowing Sherlock to slip into the room. “That has got to be the sexiest thing you have ever said,” he quipped to Mycroft. He stalked across the room, nodding to Mark and saying, “Hello,” before throwing himself on Mycroft’s lap and snogging him senseless.
“Dinner and a show,” Mark said. “I’m in for a treat!”
Chapter 71

Sherlock pressed himself as close to Mycroft as he could, his tongue licking into his mouth, his hands holding his brother’s face as he kissed him. Mycroft’s own hands came up to tangle in his hair as he kissed him back enthusiastically, both of them free to express themselves in front of Mark without being judged. Eventually the older brother gently pushed Sherlock back, his kiss swollen lips pink and his eyes dark with desire. Sherlock whined as the contact was lost but the flicker of Mycroft’s eyes across the room told him he had reached the limit for his display of affection in front of another. Not wanting to make him uncomfortable, he regretfully shuffled back off his lap and got gracefully to his feet. Later tonight when they were alone, he would continue his demonstration of how turned on it made him when Mycroft became fiercely protective of him, but for now he would try to behave.

He turned to the other man in the room, a slightly sheepish expression on his face. “Hello, Mark.”

“Sherlock,” the man replied, a grin on his face. “Always a pleasure.” His expression turned serious. “How are you? Have you heard from John?”

He shook his head and leaned against the armrest of Mycroft’s chair, his brother’s hand coming to rest on the small of his back. “No, but I haven’t contacted him either. I’ll concentrate on this case first, then afterwards I’ll decide what I’m going to do.”

“Sounds like a plan. You need to do what’s right for you. Don’t forget what I said before.”

“I haven’t, trust me. If I do decide to continue my friendship with John, he’ll know he’s never to raise a hand to me again.”

Mark nodded in grim satisfaction. “Good.”

“How did you go at the lab?” Mycroft asked, stroking his hand in circles on Sherlock’s back.

“I believe I’ve solved the mystery of Julia Stoner’s death,” he announced.

“That’s excellent. How about we call for dinner and you can tell us about it while we eat?”

They moved across to the small table that had been laid for dinner and pressed the silent call signal for the valet to come. They ordered - Sherlock pleased to see Mycroft choosing the steak and not a salad - and then sat back, sipping at wine. “So, by Julia Stoner, do you mean Roylott’s step daughter?” Mark asked.

The consulting detective nodded. “Yes. Her death was ruled a suicide, even though her sister argued against her being suicidal. The official cause of death was asphyxiation, even though there wasn’t any clear evidence of how she would have done that. There was an odd result in her toxicology report, but it was never investigated further as they closed the case.”

“That’s either some massively incompetent police work or a blatant cover up,” Mark stated.

Sherlock hummed. “Exactly. I tracked down Helen Stoner - Julia’s sister - who went underground after she confronted Roylott. She said something that gave me an idea so I’ve spent the afternoon at Bart’s doing some research.”

“What did she say?”

“Roylott had a temper, but he was never violent. He took measures to punish those who had angered
him, but made it look like an accident or a tragic mistake. Helen mentioned that a housekeeper once served Roylott cold tea while he was in a rage and the following day she found a snake in the pantry. I went back and looked at the coroner’s report and found the chemical analysis of the substance found in Julia’s body. It had many of the same properties as snake venom - that from an Indian Cobra to be precise - so after a little experimenting I found that if you add several chemicals in order to aerosolise the venom, the composition matches that found in the body.”

“Wait,” Mark interjected. “You’re saying that Roylott murdered his step daughter using snake venom in a spray?”

Sherlock nodded. “In the police photographs you can see a vent in the wall of the room she was found in. That wall separates her bedroom and Roylott’s, and the vent can’t go anywhere but into his room. After Helen had confronted him, the ceiling of her room mysteriously began leaking and he told her she would have to move into Julia’s old room until it was fixed. She grew suspicious and left, which most assuredly saved her life.”

“A very convoluted scheme,” Mycroft murmured.

“Rather genius, I’d say,” Sherlock said. “The neurotoxin on the Indian Cobra is lethal within minutes without the anti venom being administered and it results in paralysis and respiratory failure. She was almost guaranteed to die, and if they had identified the venom in her blood work, they would assume she had been bitten accidentally by an escaped pet and never suspect murder. If it weren’t for Helen being adamant her sister didn’t have suicidal tendencies, no one would have questioned it.”

“Scotland Yard will be most happy to have wrapped the case,” Mycroft told him, pride in his voice.

Sherlock shook his head. “Mycie, I don’t think that’s all of it. I know most biological weapons these days seem to focus on things such as anthrax or smallpox, but there have been successful attempts in the past to create such weapons from spiders, insects, and snakes. What if this wasn’t just a personal hobby of Roylott’s, but a prototype of what they’re creating to see to the Syrians?”

Mycroft paled. “There wouldn’t be enough anti venom to treat everyone affected.”

“It wouldn’t matter even if there was,” Sherlock said. “They’d be dead before it could be administered.”

Mark pushed a napkin and a pen across to Sherlock. “Can you write down the chemical equation for me? Our phones aren’t allowed into the building so you can’t message me it, but I can sneak this in so I can search their databases for it.”

“Have you managed to gain access?” Mycroft asked.

The agent nodded. “As I said, we’re kept under very close scrutiny, but I’ve managed to find a backdoor into the system. I can’t access it from outside the building as yet, but as long as I’m inside I can search the system.”

Sherlock scribbled on the napkin and handed it over.

“Obviously the best outcome will be to stop the production of the weapon or intercept it before it is delivered,” Mycroft stated, “however knowing what exactly it is will be of great help.”

“I’ll get on it first thing tomorrow,” the agent promised.

“Any other issues?”
“Nope, all good. They’re focusing mostly on Daniels since they know you’ve planted him, so I’ve been skimming along under the radar.”

“Just don’t get complacent,” Mycroft warned him. “Roylott isn’t daft.”

“I know. I’ll be careful, I promise.”

“You’d better,” Sherlock told him. “I’ll be very put out with you if you go and get yourself killed.”

“Awww, that’s the sweetest thing anyone has ever said to me,” Mark said with a cheeky grin.

The detective scowled at him, but it held no heat. “Yes well, you’re a bit useful to me…”

“It’s okay, Sher, I know you love me.”

He huffed. “I do not.”

Mark grinned even wider. “Yeah, you do. You’re totally heartbroken that we don’t get to play lovers anymore. You miss seeing my sexy arse all the time.”

“Myce, make him stop!” he whined at his brother.

Mycroft laughed. “Why, brother mine? We both know he’s telling the truth.”

“I am not in love with Mark!” he protested.

“I didn’t say in love with me, I said you love me, Sher.”

“What’s the difference?”

He looked a little sad as he explained, and the detective realised it was something that (as John would put it) normal people understood without help. “It just means that you’re going to be in my life for a good long while and I’m very grateful to have you in it. You’re a good friend, Sher, and I’m very glad I met you.”

His throat tightened as a wave of emotion rolled over Sherlock, something he hadn’t felt since he met John Watson. The valet entered with their meals and he was saved from replying, but each man in the room knew that Sherlock was grateful to have a friend like Mark as well.
Mycroft watched Sherlock closely as they got ready for bed. His brother had been quiet and subdued for most of the evening, and it was clear he was evaluating certain aspects of his life. He was so deep in thought that he didn’t even acknowledge Mycroft asking him to pass the toothpaste, moving about the bathroom like a zombie. When they climbed into bed, he lay on his back, staring at the ceiling.

Leaving a lamp on, Mycroft turned onto his side and propped an elbow up so he could rest his chin on his palm. With his other hand he reached out and rubbed circles on the flat planes of his brother’s stomach. “Sherlock?” he asked quietly.

“How?” the younger man said, his eyes seeming to come into focus as he turned his head.

“Do you want to talk?”

“About what?”

“You’re obviously thinking about John.”

He shrugged but didn't reply.

“You know you shouldn’t think about other men whilst in bed with your lover;” Mycroft teased.

That caused a short huff of laughter and Sherlock graced him with a smile. “You’re the only one I think about in a sexy way.”

He ducked his head forward to press a kiss to his cheek. “Good to know. Seriously though, perhaps we should talk. It might help.”

Sherlock sighed. “What good will it do? I can’t change what’s happened.”

“No, but perhaps you can gain some clarity over the situation. Tell me, over the past several weeks when you’ve stayed with me for periods of time, did you miss John? Feel the need to see him?”

His brother chewed on his lower lip as he thought. “That would be hard to answer even if we hadn’t had a falling out,” he explained. “All I’ve thought about for this past month or so is you. You’re the first thing I think of when I wake up, and the last thing I think of when I fall asleep. You occupy almost every waking moment as well. There’s not been much room for anything else but you.”

“As romantic as that was, dear brother, we both know it to be quite untrue,” he said gently. “You’ve worked cases since then which have occupied your mind, and considering you solved them, you’ve obviously not thought of me always.”

Sherlock rolled his eyes. “Could you try and not be pedantic for just one moment?”

“But then I wouldn’t be me.”

“Yes you would, just a little less annoying.”

“Only a little?”

They giggled together, and Mycroft shuffled closer, throwing an arm over Sherlock’s waist. His brother covered it with one of his hands, his slender fingers squeezing the muscles of Mycroft’s forearm once. “I change my answer then to you occupy every spare waking moment. Better?”
Mycroft smiled. “As much as I would be flattered if you thought of me every second of every day, one must try and be accurate when one can. However, I understand the point you are trying to make - even if you and John were as close as you’d ever been, he would still have faded to the background as you rode your new relationship high.”

The younger man scowled at that. “You make me sound like a teenager with a crush.”

“I rather thought I was making you sound like a man in love.”

“Well you did a rubbish job at it.”

“Apologies.”

Sherlock turned his head to give him a kiss. “Apology accepted. Now, what exactly is the point you’ve been trying to make?”

It was Mycroft’s turn to sigh. “I’m just trying to understand what it is exactly about John Watson that you miss so much. Is it something that only he of your current acquaintances can fulfil? Or is it more fear of the unknown that’s holding you back? Changing the status quo and moving into unknown waters so to speak.”

“I suppose that if I were to break it down into simple qualities and personality traits, like a friendship pick-n-mix, then I would say I could find his traits amongst my other friends. Loyalty and strength from Lestrade, humour and the ability to be analytical from Mark, compassion and smarts from Molly...but I can’t think of it like that anymore. Maybe once, when I was more like Eurus, I would have been able to break it down like that, but now I couldn’t. I suppose it’s the history we have together. It’s hard to explain, and I know what we’ve been through doesn’t excuse the way he’s treated me, but…” He paused, trying to find the words to express himself.

“You feel like you can’t just discard everything you have with him?”

“Exactly! He saved my life, Mycie, after knowing me for only a moment. Shot the cabbie to stop me from taking that damn pill. If I’d been able to overcome my arrogance and that stupid need to always know, then he wouldn’t have had to. But he took a life for me, and I know most people would say that was a red flag for his tendency to violence, but at that moment, he was the only one I thought had my back.”

Mycroft smiled sadly, overcome with melancholy as he remembered those events - being worried sick about the new man in Sherlock’s life; scared he would be yet another to take advantage of his brother and lead him astray; heartbroken as he realised they had made a connection that could possibly lead to more.

Sherlock shifted onto his side and pulled him in for a gentle kiss. “I know now how wrong I was. You were there, watching over me, always there. Don’t think I haven’t realised that you always had my back, brother mine. But at the time…”

“John seemed to be the only person who cared,” he finished for him.

“Yes, at the time. And since then...well, up until my ‘death’, he made things easier. The work, interacting with other people, my life in general. I couldn’t have functioned without him. People were always making the assumption that we were together and I couldn’t understand why they thought we had to be sleeping together to be that close. If we were women, no one would have batted an eye at how close we were, but we have male genitalia and so we must be sticking them in each other.” He huffed and rolled his eyes. “Anyway, I just feel that I would be doing both myself
and John a disservice if I discarded our history and didn't give him one more chance. I’m not saying he’d be welcomed back with open arms - he’d have to earn my trust back, and I wouldn’t let him treat me like the way he has been lately, but I would like to try.” He fell silent for a long moment and Mycroft allowed his eyes to close briefly. Then, very quietly, Sherlock whispered, “You don’t approve.”

Mycroft swallowed hard, not wanting to upset his brother. “It’s not that I don’t approve, Sherlock, I’m just...concerned. I don’t want to see you get hurt again. I think you miss the John Watson you knew from before you went away -” He could never bring himself to say ‘when you died’, “- but I think he is a very different man now. A lot has happened to him, and he’s not who he used to be. I just worry that you’ll allow nostalgia to cloud your judgement and it will only lead to heartbreak for you.” He leaned his forehead against the younger man’s. “But only you can make this decision. If you chose to give him another chance, I will support you in every way that I can.”

“Thank you. I need to think some more on it, and we need to decide how we’ll address the issue that he knows Mark was a cover for who I’m really seeing, but I appreciate your support.”

“Anything for you, Sherlock. But trust me when I say I was not exaggerating when I told him I would kill him if he ever struck you again. I don’t care that he is a father, I don’t care that a court of law would convict me, if he ever does that again, it will be the last thing he ever does, and it will not be - oof.”

He was cut off by Sherlock crushing their lips together and plundering his mouth with his tongue. His arms snaked around Sherlock’s neck as he returned the kiss, just as enthusiastically. He didn’t think he’d ever grow tired of kissing the younger man, feeling those plush lips beneath his, the curve of his cupid’s bow, the warmth of his breath.

Sherlock rolled them without breaking the kiss so he was straddling Mycroft and trailed a hand down his brother’s ribs. He pulled back, both of them breathing hard, and his blue-green eyes were dark with desire. “I told myself earlier I was going to show you how much I love it when you get all protective over me.” He licked a stripe up Mycroft’s sternum and bit gently at his throat. “I think it’s time I did just that.” And then he leaned back down and kissed him again.
A draught blew over Sherlock’s bare form and he shivered, rousing from his slumber. He raised his head blearily, searching for the reason he was suddenly cold. His eyes fell on Mycroft, wrapped up like a burrito in the blankets, having pulled them entirely off his brother. He reached across and poked him through the thick quilt. “Mycie, you’ve nicked all the blanket,” he moaned at him.

Mycroft remained soundly asleep, oblivious to the Sherlock sized icicle that was resting on the mattress next to him. The younger man placed a hand on his brother’s shoulder and shook him, eliciting only a faint grumble from the man. “Mycroft, wake up - I’m cold!” he said, much louder this time.

When he still failed to wake up, Sherlock decided that desperate measures were called for. He climbed onto his knees, hovered over his brother, and then flopped himself on top of him bodily. He heard the whoosh as the air was forced from Mycroft’s lungs and his brother’s eyes flew open. “Wha? Sherlock?” he wheezed.

Sherlock grinned at him in the semi-darkness. “Glad to see you’re awake, brother mine.”

“What’s wrong? Is it time to get up?”

“No, it’s only gone 3am.”

“Why did you wake me then?” he asked, confused.

“Because you are a fiendish blanket hogger who has left his poor, miserable brother exposed to the elements.”

“Huh?”

“Stop stealing the damn blanket!” he said loudly.

Mycroft seemed to notice the insulated cocoon he was encased in for the first time. “Oh. Sorry.”

It took a bit to untangle him from the blanket but eventually Sherlock was graced with a share of the warmth. He immediately burrowed himself against Mycroft, making sure he plastered his cold hands and feet to his brother’s limbs. Mycroft gasped at the contact but smartly chose not to comment, knowing he’d suffer a much worse fate if he did.

Soon enough Sherlock’s body temperature had returned to normal and his eyes grew heavy. His body clock had seemed to have adjusted to his nights spent with Mycroft and he found he could sleep much easier now. He had no idea how he would manage the next time he had to pull an all-nighter with Lestrade, but pushed those thoughts aside. It was something he would deal with when he needed to - for now, it was time to go back to sleep.

To punish his brother for his unconscious thievery, Sherlock made sure he remained in bed when Mycroft’s alarm went off. He wasn’t asleep however, and once the shower shut off and Mycroft returned to dress, he sat up in bed with the blankets around his shoulders, watching.

The process of donning his armour was as sexy to Sherlock as watching him remove it. Mycroft was precise and systematic as he dressed, always following the same pattern - pants, socks, cologne,
trousers, shirt, waistcoat, tie, tin pin, sleeve garters...and then he got no further as Sherlock was off the bed and covering him in kisses.

“Mmmph! Sherlock,” he whined as he broke away, “You’ll make me late.”

“Can’t help it,” he gasped, crushing their lips together again. He took a minute to devour his brother’s mouth, noting the moment that Mycroft gave up and let him, melting into the kiss. The kisses then calmed, turning into soft, sweet pecks, and then he stilled, leaning their foreheads together. “Dammit, Mycie, the things you do to me.”

“I didn't do anything!”

“Yes, you did. Watching you dress...fucking hell, do you know how sexy you make sleeve garters?”

Mycroft blinked at him, then turned his head to look down at his sleeve. “Really?”

“The night that John and I played that stupid prank on you…” He swallowed hard, regretting now what he’d put his brother through, knowing that Eurus had been more terrifying than any horror film. “I was watching you from above, and I remember just staring at you, frozen for a moment. I didn’t realise at the time what it meant, didn’t acknowledge the way my body was reacting, but I do remember thinking that you should take your jackets off more often.” He ran his hands up and down Mycroft’s arms, squeezing gently around the garters. “I don’t know what it is, perhaps it’s the old world charm of them, or maybe it’s because you keep them hidden away, under those bespoke jackets…” He paused as he noticed his brother trying not to laugh. “What?” he demanded.

Mycroft shook his head and leaned in to kiss him. “Nothing, Sherlock. Nothing at all.”

“You’re a liar as well as a thief, Mycie.”

“Guilty as charged.”

He scowled at him. “I hate you.”

Mycroft kissed the tip of his nose. “No you don’t, you love me.”

“Nope,” he said, popping the P.

“Yes, you do. You can’t deny it.”

“Why would I love an annoying tosser like you?”

“Because you find my sleeve garters sexy,” he replied with a grin.

Sherlock huffed. “I regret telling you that already.”

His expression turned serious and he lifted a hand to cup his cheek. “Oh, Sherlock. You have no idea, do you? What it means to me when you tell me things like that?” His blue eyes were soft in the light and he smiled at him warmly. “I was always so envious of you, with your gorgeous cheekbones and hair, and just how perfect you are. I thought it so unfair that you got all the looks and all I got was my red hair and freckles.”

“It’s auburn, you dolt,” Sherlock grumbled. “And I adore your freckles.”

“But I don’t. I figured that I couldn’t change genetics, but I could make the effort with my clothes...it’s an annoying habit of society that people are judged by the way they look, and so I wanted to make an impression. The mere fact that you find it sexy, the way I dress - well, it makes
me feel good about myself and I haven’t felt that in a very long time. So thank you for telling me.”

“You’re so good at seeing other people and deducing every little thing about them, but you’re crap at
doing it to yourself,” Sherlock told him. “You are gorgeous, Mycie - not just your brains, even
though I find that the sexiest part about you, but everything about you. I could go on about how
expressive your eyes are or how your smile makes me want to just crawl inside you and never leave,
but I’ve made you late enough as it is. Besides, if I get any more sentimental, you might think I’m a
clone, escaped from Baskerville…” His brother jolted at that, and Sherlock’s looked at him
curiously, wondering why Mycroft would react so strangely to the mention of the top secret facility.
He didn’t push the issue though, just gave him one last kiss. “Finish dressing and I’ll go make you
some tea.”

There was enough time for them to share a cuppa together, and then Mycroft was off, kissing
Sherlock goodbye and dashing out the door. The detective watched him go, serenity washing over
him at sharing such a normal, domestic moment with his brother. He wished once again that the
world was different, but it would never change so he wasted no more time thinking such things. He
collected his wallet and phone, slipped into his Belstaff and headed out the door, hailing a cab to take
him to Bart’s. One of the universities were sending him a sample of Indian Cobra venom so he could
run some more experiments and hopefully Mark would come through from his end so they would
have something concrete for Mycroft to use against Roylott.

His phone chirped and he opened his message app.

How is it possible that I miss you already? - MH

I suppose that’s just the affect I have on you - SH

But I miss you too - SH

I have a meeting with the PM first thing but nothing after that so at least I’ll be able to message you -
MH

I’ll make sure my phone is set to vibrate then so I don’t drive Molly crazy with my alerts - SH

And now I’m picturing your phone vibrating in your pocket…- MH

The more you message me, the more fun I’ll have ;-) - SH

You are incorrigible, brother mine - MH

And you love it - SH

I cannot deny that. Talk soon - MH

Have fun with your meeting - SH

The cab pulled up at Bart’s not long afterwards, swinging around the back of the building where the
employee entrance was. He’d nicked an access card from Stamford years ago so he could head
straight to Molly’s lab without needing to go through the main entrance. There was a van in the
loading bay so he stepped around it, pausing as he realised it wasn’t one of the regular delivery
trucks. Before he could even react, a man approached from the front, as another crept up behind him,
striking him over the back of the head. He stumbled forward, directly into the waiting arms of the
man in front, and was dragged towards the van.
Pain flared through Sherlock’s shoulder and head as he was shoved into the back of a van. His hands were tied behind his back and he was bound and gagged. He could tell there were at least two men in the back watching over him, and another up front with the driver. His phone had been taken from him, and he heard them mumble and curse as they tried to unlock it and failed to get past the extra security features that came with having The British Government as your sibling. Unfortunately the men determined it would be able to be tracked and Sherlock’s ears popped as they wound down a window in the front of the van and hurled the phone from it.

They remained in the van for well over an hour, driving north as far as he could tell. He’d tracked their movements through the city but as they reached the outskirts, his knowledge of the streets grew less and once they passed the city limits he couldn’t be certain where they were headed. Eventually the van turned onto a gravel road, most likely a long driveway and they came to a stop after following it for some time. Sherlock was manhandled from the van and into a large house, then down into a dank basement room. He was tied to a chair and then his gag and blindfold were removed and he was allowed a drink of water. His captors then left him, leaving by the only door in the room which was at the top of a rusty old staircase. The detective spent a small amount of time testing his bonds, but even with his skin slick with blood from rubbing against the rope, Sherlock was unable to free his hands. He slumped back into the chair, giving up, realising there was no way he could escape by himself.

He lost track of the time as the pain in his shoulders grew worse and worse from sitting for so long with them bound behind him. Every few hours a man would come and give him water, and much later he was allowed to stand and take a piss before he was given a sandwich to eat. He took as long as he could, savouring having his arms free and he stretched them out as much as he could. Then he was bound back to the chair and left alone once more. He took to escaping to his mind palace so he could ignore the fragility of his body, hiding away in Mycroft’s room, surrounding himself with memories of his brother.

It seemed that the day ended and another began as he was led upstairs to a proper bathroom and allowed to relieve himself, and then he was given toast to eat. The men who held him appeared to be hired guards and he could glean nothing of use from them. They laughed at his deductions about themselves, calling him a ‘clever pup’ before leading him back to the basement.

He was given water several more times, and once - to his surprise - a cup of tea. He swallowed that gratefully down, his head pounding from the beginning of a caffeine withdrawal headache, knowing it didn’t contain much of the drug but desperate for any of it he could get. It must have been nearing evening of his second day of captivity when the door at the top of the stairs opened and two men entered, carrying a small blonde man between them. John Watson.

A second chair was dragged across the room to sit a short distance away from Sherlock and the doctor was tied to it securely. His gag and blindfold were removed and he blinked against the light of the single bulb burning above them. His eyes widened when he saw Sherlock was being held in the room, but he didn't say anything until the men had left.

“Sherlock.”

“John. How nice of you to visit.”

“How long have you been here?”
“Not too sure, but I think it’s close to two days.”

“So, any idea what’s going on?” the blonde asked, his voice clipped.

Sherlock sighed. “I have a vague idea, yes.”

“And? Care to elaborate?”

“I’ve been helping Mycroft investigate a man whose company is believed to be manufacturing and selling biological weapons. I dug a little deeper into his personal life since it appears he murdered his step daughter using an aerosolised snake venom.”

“I take it he wasn’t impressed with your snooping?”

“No, he wasn’t, but I doubt he’d go to this much trouble over that. I’d say he’s realised just how close Mycroft is to shutting down his operation in Syria and thought taking me would be the fastest way to get him to back off.”

John nodded. “Any idea why I’ve been dragged into it?”

He shrugged as best he could whilst being tied up. “Probably because when I’m investigating something, people assume you are as well.”

“Fantastic, just fan-fucking-tastic,” the doctor muttered.

They fell silent for a long time, until Sherlock decided to break the silence. “How’s Rosie?”

John looked over at him, seeming to decide if he would answer or not. Eventually he said, “She’s fine.”

“I’ve missed her,” the younger man said. “Do you think that I might be able to see her at some stage?”

“You mean, if we get out of here alive?” John asked, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

“Mycroft will come for us,” he assured him.

“Sherlock, we’re in the middle of nowhere! I doubt he’ll even know where to look.”

“If there’s a record of this place on his system, he and Mark will know about it.”

John looked incredulous. “Mark? As in, the man who pretended to be your partner in order to trick me? That Mark?”

He nodded, swallowing hard. “Yes, he’s been working for the company to gather information from the inside.”

“Huh. Great, just great. All my favourite people are involved.”

“There’s no point in being mad at him,” Sherlock said. “He was just doing what he was paid to do.”

John took a deep breath as he glared at his flatmate, his lips pressed into a hard line. “I just don’t understand why you did it,” he finally said. “Why go to so much trouble just to keep from me who you’re seeing.”

“I can’t tell anyone, John - it wasn’t personal!”
"You can’t tell anyone? Why on earth not? Is it a member of the royal fucking family, Sherlock?"

"Something like that,” he whispered.

"Then why not just say you couldn’t tell me?" John thundered, his voice echoing around the enclosed room. “Instead of paying someone to deceive me? You couldn’t trust me enough to tell me the truth? I thought our friendship meant more to you than that. Why could you not just tell me the truth?"

"Because you would never have believed me!” he shot back. “You specifically said you didn’t believe me that first morning! You thought I was making it up so I didn’t have to reject you.”

John opened his mouth to protest, but closed it again as he realised the truth of the statement. He went to speak several times, stopping as he tried to formulate what he wanted to say. “They must be very important,” he said eventually. “If Mycroft had to get involved to help you.”

"They are,” he said softly. “But most of all, they’re very important to me.”

"Do I know him?"

"I can’t say."

"Because you don’t trust me?"

He met John’s eyes and then shrugged, looking away. “You’ve not been a very good friend to me lately, John. I have no idea how you’ll react if I tell you.”

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"It means that you switch between being happy for me, and trying to punch me so often that not even I can predict what you’ll do next!"

"That’s not fair!” John protested. “You do things and say things that are so hurtful and upsetting, Sherlock - you make me so mad at times.”

"And? What if I do? People say hurtful things to me all the time and I don’t go around beating them up! It’s not an excuse, John.”

"This is so like you,” the blonde snapped. “Always trying to shirk responsibility. It’s never your fault.”

"If I upset you so much, move out! Cut me out of your life! You have options, John, other than striking me.”

"You’re a fucking hypocrite, Sherlock. You almost broke your brother’s arm not that long ago! And don’t say it was only because you were high, because I know for a fact you’ve wanted to do that to him for a long time. I’m not the only one who has resorted to violence.”

"Once! It was only one time that I hurt Mycroft and I have never regretted anything more. I would never do it again, but you continue to think that your problems can be solved with your fists.”

“Have you ever stopped to think that you bring it on yourself?” John screamed. “You think you’re so clever, you think you can rattle off deductions about people, expose their secrets and their embarrassing moments, and just get away with it? There are consequences, Sherlock, and sometimes those consequences are going to be a punch in the face.”
“You don’t treat friends like that!”

“How would you know? You don’t have friends, remember? You just have me,” he spat.

“You think because you’re the only one I considered a friend that it gives you the right to treat me the way you do? It’s true that at one point I didn’t have other friends, John, but that’s surely not the case now. I have other people who care about me, who want to spend time with me. I don’t need you in my life, and if you continue to act like this, I’ll happily walk away.”

“I’ll call your bluff on that,” the doctor said. “Who else will help you with cases? You’ve said you need me on those - you tried it with someone else and it didn’t work. And what about Rosie? You’ll just waltz out of her life like she meant nothing to you?”

Sherlock gaped at him, resentful that he’d played that card. John knew how much Sherlock loved the baby and he had naively believed that if his friendship deteriorated with John that he would still be allowed to see her. Obviously he’d been wrong. He fought to find the words to protest, but didn’t have the chance to speak them as there came the sounds of gunshots from the room above.
Chapter 75

Chapter Notes

Posted early before I go to work since I'm out tonight and figured it's best to be early than late!

The meeting with the Prime Minister didn’t take as long as expected, for which Mycroft was grateful. The man was finally growing more confident in the post and didn’t need his hand held over every little decision, which left the elder Holmes free for the more important things. He called for the latest reports he would need to look over and then sent Sherlock a text while he waited for them to arrive.

Meeting is over. Did your venom arrive as yet? - MH

He didn’t get a response immediately so he assumed his brother was engrossed in an experiment and pushed his phone to one side when the reports were delivered.

Anthea popped in sometime later with a cup of tea. “News from inside Roylott Industries, sir,” she said as she placed the cup on his desk. “Mark has found a way through the firewall and can now access all their files, plus their network settings. He can now get information to us, and is sending us encrypted files.”

“Excellent. Make sure we make analysing those our top priority. Any news from Daniels?”

She shook her head. “Not that I’ve heard.”

“Thank you, Anthea. Please keep me informed.”

She nodded and left, and he had a quick look at the folder in which the decrypted files were been saved by the analysts downstairs. So far there was nothing out of the ordinary but Mark would send through any information he gathered, trusting the team here to sort through it.

Another half an hour passed and Mycroft checked his phone several times. It was unlike Sherlock to go so long without responding, but perhaps he couldn’t feel his phone vibrate in his pocket as much as he claimed he could. He sent another text, telling himself he was just keeping Sherlock updated, and wasn’t being clingy at all.

Have access to information from within RI, will let you know if anything pertinent to your experiments turns up - MH

There was no reply, and he ignored the uneasy feeling in his stomach, telling himself he was worrying unnecessarily. He concentrated on another report, signing it off as an email arrived from an unknown sender. The title was ‘Quail’, the codeword that Mark used and he opened the email, not bothering with the software that would decrypt it as he could do it just as fast mentally.

Mycroft,

Something is going down here, not too sure what. Daniels has been dragged off and as far as I can tell, he’s no longer in the building. I caught a glimpse of Roylott first thing this morning and he looked furious - is it possible he discovered that Sherlock tracked down his step-daughter?
The feeling of unease returned in full force and Mycroft quickly brought up the program that would track the location of his brother’s phone. It was not at Bart’s, but stationary on the motorway just north of the city. He cursed under his breath, and pulled the CCTV footage of the area surrounding the hospital. It didn’t take him long to find the moment where Sherlock was attacked and dragged into a waiting van. He called for Anthea and she appeared almost immediately.

“Sir?” she asked.

“My brother has been taken,” he said, waving at the screen. “I need this van tracked via CCTV for as long as possible. Get them to start at these coordinates as his phone looks to have been discarded there. Also, send someone to retrieve the phone.”

“Roylott?” she asked, busy typing instructions into her Blackberry.

“Almost certainly, but my brother does have a tendency to annoy people so there is a slim possibility he was taken by someone else. I want extra eyes on Roylott though - I want to know every move he makes We also need a team to track down Daniels. He was escorted from his workstation and Mark does not believe him to be on the premises anymore.”

“On it, sir.”

She left and Mycroft was thankful for her efficiency. Taking a deep breath to force down the panic that was rising inside him, he typed out a reply to Mark, knowing the young man could decode the email mentally almost as easily as he himself could.

Mark,

At 9:12am Sherlock was abducted outside of Bart’s. Unable to track his phone, looks to be heading north. CCTV is intermittent outside the city so I can’t rely upon that to find him. Is there a record anywhere on their system for a property or building they own that way?

Mycroft

While he waited for a response, he ran a search for all the properties that the man owned personally, but of the dozen in his name, none of them were in that direction. He sent off instructions for the holiday home and also a hobby farm in the south of the country to be checked, but he didn’t hold out much hope. He eyes flew to the screen as an email arrived.

Attached is a list of all the properties the business owns but none look promising. Since Daniels was taken, security around us has dropped off so I don’t think they suspect me. I’m going to go for a snoop around and see what I can come up with. Will advise once I’m back.

Mark

Not bothering to reply as he knew the agent would have left his station, Mycroft picked up his phone and dialled it. It rang only once before a voice answered. “Mr Holmes,” Roylott said cheerfully. “Whatever can I do for you?”

“You know exactly why I’m ringing,” he said, fighting to keep the snarl from his voice. “What have you done with Sherlock?”

“Oh, Mr Holmes, I did warn you what would happen if you didn’t call him off. If you can’t control your mutt, then I had to take matters into my own hands.”
“If you harm a single hair on his head…”

Roylott laughed. “His hair will be left unharmed, trust me. However, I did intercept a sample of some lovely Indian Cobra venom addressed to him. Perhaps I’ll help him with his experiment. Let him become personally acquainted with the effects. Even better - since the authentic experience is so much nicer - perhaps I’ll introduce him to one of my pets...see who wins between snake and dog.”

He couldn’t help it this time - a snarl ripped from his throat. “I’m warning you, Roylott.”

“No, I warned you!” the businessman interjected. “I know your brother won’t be the only one looking into what my company is developing, so you are to stop all investigations immediately.”

“And what exactly is it that your company is developing, Mr Roylott?”

“Oh, I think you know, Mr Holmes. I also think you know you can’t trick me into saying it out loud.” He paused and Mycroft could feel the smile from here. “It’s simple really - so simple that one doesn’t even require a Holmes brain to follow. You cease all investigations, or your brother - and your agent, but I have a feeling he’s disposable to you - get to experience firsthand what my company is developing. I won’t warn you again. Good day, Mr Holmes.”

The call disconnected and Mycroft sat, breathing heavily. He couldn’t believe he’d gotten Sherlock into this mess. Would his brother ever stop paying for Mycroft’s mistakes? He rubbed at his eyes and then straightened his back, pulling his Iceman persona around himself, knowing he needed to distance his emotions from this. He called for Anthea once more. “Roylott knows we’re investigating the biological weapons aspect of his company,” he told her. “Considering Sherlock was following the lead on the death of his step-daughter, and Daniels was only a decoy and didn't get a chance to discover anything, I believe he’s got someone on our staff passing along information. I want the analysts downstairs to be given the instruction to cease their work on anything related to Roylott Industries, and then I want our own team to look into each of them to find out who he’s paid off. They’re not to do anything once they find out who it is - I need the mole to advise Roylott that they’ve been instructed to drop the investigation, plus pass along any disinformation we feed them.”

“Of course, sir. What’s our next move?”

He smiled grimly at her. “I need to find my brother, and to do that, I need everything we have examined by someone who can see even further down the rabbit hole than myself. Organise a helicopter, Anthea - I’m going to Sherrinford.”
I'm taking my mum to chemo today so will be gone all day so figured I'd post early again :) Since there's just two more to go and I won't want to leave you all hanging like crazy, I'll keep posting in the morning so there's only 24 hours between them :)

Cold, black eyes stared at Mycroft as he entered the room, and he suppressed a shudder as he regarded Eurus. She stood from where she had been sitting on the bed and crossed to the glass, her eyes searching his. “What’s happened?” she asked in a toneless voice, sounding as if she didn’t care at all. He crossed his fingers that her connection with Sherlock would be enough to convince her to help, to make her cease her games for once.

“Sherlock has been abducted,” he told her, not even bothering to hide his worry. She knew what they were to each other after all.

There was a brief flicker of concern across her features. “When?”

“Going on seven hours ago now.”

“You need my help.”

He nodded. “Yes,” he admitted. “I’ve not been able to locate where they’re holding him and my hands are tied officially. I can’t bring in Roylott - the man responsible - for questioning as I don’t have enough proof and if I ignore protocol, I risk losing access to the resources I’ll need to rescue him.”

“But you’re sure it’s this Roylott?”

“Yes, positive.”

She considered this, seeming to accept that his deduction was correct. “What have you got for me?” she asked, eyeing the bag he carried.

“You’re going to help me?” He couldn’t hide his surprise.

“But you could help me? I hadn’t thought... after all I’ve done to you…”

She rolled her eyes. “You’re being redundant now and wasting time. Now what do you have for me?”

He went to the hatch and put the bag inside. “A laptop with a copy of everything we have on Roylott, plus the notes Sherlock made.”

She looked up at him and this time it was Eurus who couldn’t hide her surprise. “You work together?”
“Of course, sister. Quite often of late. Sherlock’s methods are invaluable to me.”

Something else that he couldn’t quite recognise passed over her features. Regret perhaps? Or maybe longing? As she collected the items and turned the computer on, Mycroft took a moment to consider how different his life would have been if his sister hadn’t become a complete sociopath. Presently he gave her treats in return for her help on certain problems, but if she had been free and willing to put her considerable brain power to his cause...the world would probably be a very different place.

“It would never have happened,” she said, not looking up as she continued to rapidly devour the information. “I was never destined for the outside world.”

Mycroft didn’t even blink as she seemingly read his mind - this was the exact reason he needed her help now. Eurus saw everything. Well, almost everything. She hadn’t predicted Sherlock turning the gun on himself...He shuddered and pushed that thought from his mind. “Is that why you didn’t take the opportunity to disappear when you had it?” he asked. He’d always wondered why she had never just fled somewhere else in the world when she used her control over the Governor to leave Sherrinford.

“I suppose that’s where Sherlock and I are similar,” she mused, still reading through the files. “The game is what matters to us. I could have run, gone anywhere in the world, but then I wouldn’t have gotten to spend such quality bonding time with my brothers.” She looked up and smiled widely at him. “It was such fun, wasn’t it?”

His eyes narrowed. “I wouldn’t describe it as such, no.”

“No?” She cocked her head at him. “Hmm, odd. I thought that my little games were the reason you and Sherlock became...so close.”

He stared stonily at her, refusing to voice his agreement, knowing every word was being recorded.

“Oh, Mycroft, always so serious.” She tutted and shook her head. “I suppose a sense of whimsy is another personality trait that your siblings share that you do not.”

“Eurus, can we get back to the matter at hand? As riveting as this is, Sherlock is missing and we need to find him.”

“I’m afraid, brother dear, that I can’t help you there.”

“But you said you would help!” His voice was a touch shrill, but he couldn’t help it. He was terrified for Sherlock and that fear was starting to break through the icy facade.

“Can’t, Mycroft, not won’t. There’s nothing here - you’ve not missed anything. Wherever they’re holding our brother, it’s not connected to Roylott or his company.”

It felt like he’d been kicked in the guts. He had no idea where to go from here - Eurus had been his last hope. He turned and leaned against the glass, sliding down until he was sitting slumped on the ground, his head hanging low. “So, that’s it, is it? For me to get Sherlock back I have to give in to this man, let him sell a weapon that will kill thousands of people?”

“A weapon made of snake venom - I like his style,” she said from behind him. He noticed a movement in his peripheral vision and realised that his sister was mimicking his movement, sliding her back down the glass so she was sitting behind him. “Or, I would have liked his style if he hadn’t targeted Sherlock. Family should stick together, don’t you think?”

He grunted, not bothering to answer as his dejection washed over him.
“I would never have let Sherlock shoot you,” she announced suddenly. “I just wanted to see what he would do. There was a reason I had three tranquiliser darts on hand.”

“Huh,” he said, recognising the words she spoke but simply not caring about them.

“I told Sherlock that I wanted to try to be a good sister to him, but the truth is, I want to try and be a good sister to you too. I know you carry a lot of guilt for keeping me here, but you treated me much better than Uncle Rudi did. He never gave me anything...wouldn’t let me have a violin. But you did. I know Mummy thinks you hate me, but I know you don’t. I know you do what you have to do to keep the world safe from me, and really, if I were you, I’d do the same thing.” She twisted a little until her cheek was pressed against the glass. “Mycroft,” she whispered, even though her voice was still projected through the speakers.

“What?” he asked, his voice flat, lifeless.

“I want you to agree to my plan for John Watson. I want to help you and Sherlock.”

“Does it matter anymore? I’ve probably lost him.” His voice caught. “Even if I do what Roylott wants me to do, he might have already killed him.”

“He won’t have. He wants to see you, to know that he’s beaten you. Even if you don’t find them, he’ll find you. But you are going to find them.”

“Oh, Eurus, if you can’t discover where they’re holding him from that information, no one can.”

“You’re overlooking the simple things, brother mine.”

He turned his head a little, his cheek pressed against the same bit of glass that hers was. “And what’s that?”

“When the great Consulting Detective solves his crimes, who is his trusty sidekick? His loyal blogger? His flatmate and best friend?”

“What does John Watson have to do with anything?”

“If Sherlock is investigating someone, chances are John is as well. Put eyes on John and then when he’s taken - and I guarantee he will be - follow them. They’ll lead you right to Sherlock.”

He gasped and straightened from his slump. “Of course! Why didn't I think of that?”

She smirked at him. “Because I’m the smart one.”

He scrambled to his feet. “Thank you, sister,” he told her sincerely. He hurried to the door but stopped when she called his name.

“Mycroft, please - come back soon and bring John Watson with you.”

He stood for a moment, considering, but didn’t look back at her. “Perhaps,” he eventually told her, before leaving the room. As soon as he was out of the room he pulled his phone from his jacket and called Anthea. “I need eyes on Doctor Watson immediately,” he said. “And recall Mark from Roylott Industries. I’m going to need his assistance.”

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It took almost twenty four hours before Roylott’s men had an opportunity and snatched John off the street as he was exiting 221B. Neither would admit it out loud, but both Mycroft and Mark found it...
quite satisfying as the Doctor’s eyes glazed over from the blow to the back of his head. They followed behind at a discreet distance, Mark expertly tailing them. They drove for over an hour, neither saying much, little need to express their concerns over what they would find when they got to the end. Images of Sherlock, beaten and bloody in the cell in Serbia flickered through Mycroft’s mind’s eye and he swallowed hard, hoping for the best but mentally preparing for the worst.

Their final destination was an old property off the beaten track and Mycroft ran a quick search for the owner’s details but the results meant nothing to him. A random name - Jocelyn Masters, seemingly without a connection to Roylott. He chewed on his lip as he pondered this as they sat in the car, parked a short distance up the road, hidden by a large tree.

“He’s smart, Mycroft. Probably belongs to the great aunt of one of his flunkies,” Mark told him. “Stop beating yourself up over not being able to find it earlier.”

He nodded and slipped his phone into his pocket. The sun was sinking low on the horizon and before they lost the light entirely, they left the vehicle and made their way towards the property. There were no signs of a security system - another nod to it being chosen at random - and they climbed over the low fence and made their way towards the house.

A short, stocky man was sitting on the front steps having a smoke, but otherwise there was no one outside as they circled the building. Leaving Mycroft to keep an eye on the smoker, Mark darted up to the house, peering into any windows he could. He returned and they crouched low near a shed. “Hard to tell, but looks like eight men altogether - seven inside and the one out front,” he whispered. They watched as the smoker crushed out his butt and went back inside. “It’s worrying me why they don’t have guards stationed outside,” the agent admitted.

“I’d say the isolation and the randomly picked location have given them the belief that they won’t be discovered,” Mycroft postulated.

“But still, that’s a fucking amateur move.”

“I concur - however it does work to our advantage and since we’ve been on the back foot up until now, I won’t look the proverbial horse in the mouth.”

The younger man nodded as he conceded the point and they waited the few minutes for the sun to set completely so they could approach under the cover of darkness. Mycroft used the time to double check his weapons - his pistol a comforting weight in his hand, with a smaller gun strapped to a holster on his ankle under the cargo pants he wore. When he’d first dressed for the mission, the unfamiliar clothes had made him uncomfortable; it had been many years since he’d worn anything outside of his house other than his suits. He was now grateful for the ease of movement he had, and had gotten used to not being restricted by bespoke tailoring. He slipped his coat off before they made a move towards the house, noticing Mark doing the same. They shivered in the cold, now wearing simple black t shirts, Mycroft’s pale skin almost glowing next to the dark material.

They crept towards the house and moved to the rear door. It was locked but Mark slipped a set of picks from his pocket and within moments the door was swinging open. A set of servant’s stairs led to the upper floor and they moved up them together so they could methodically check the house. There were no signs of life from above but the last thing they needed was to be taken by surprise.

The top floor was indeed empty, and they moved silently down the stairs again. They went from room to room, clearing it and moving inexorably toward the front room where lights were shining. A quick glance inside showed all eight men, sitting around a table, mid-round in a game of poker. Various guns were resting on the table, or holstered at their backs - they were heavily armed. Several of the men were keeping watch on the door under the front stairs, most likely leading down to a
basement room. After no signs of Sherlock or John so far, Mycroft had guessed they would be being held in such a place but the doorway was a nice clue to confirm his suspicions.

There were grumbles from some of the men as a tall, blonde man won the round and he pulled the chips toward him.

“I’ll win that back, you can count on it, ya plonker,” a heavily tattooed man told him jovially.

“Yeah, well, that’ll have to wait, Jenkins,” the blonde answered. “Our client will be here soon so best we look sharp.”

Mycroft and Mark exchanged a look, nodding as they silently agreed to move now. If Roylott was on his way, they didn’t have long. They launched themselves into the room, guns held in front of them. The men automatically grabbed their own weapons as they registered the threat and Mycroft knew the men wouldn’t surrender, and would shoot to kill. He shot a man in the shoulder, hoping to disarm him, and although the man dropped his gun, he threw himself towards the bureaucrat, a snarl on his face. Resigned, Mycroft fired again, this time a kill shot and the man went down. He spun and kicked out the legs of a man approaching from the side, and used his pistol to whip his across the face and he crumpled to the ground. Without thinking, his training kicking back in and distancing his emotions from the action, he put a bullet through the man’s head so he wouldn’t get up again. He then ducked behind the couch as a volley of bullets were fired in his direction, noticing that Mark was taking cover in the hall. He chanced a glance over the couch and then fired two more shots, hearing the satisfying *thunk* as two bodies hit the ground. There were more shots from the two men remaining standing, and answering shots from Mark. Mycroft poked his head over the couch again and fired at one of the men, hitting him in the chest as the other fell backwards from a bullet of Mark’s, stumbling through the door to the basement.

He scrambled to his feet in time to see Mark step through the open door “Mycroft!” he called. “I’ve found them.”

And then the front door burst open and three heavily armed men rushed inside, Roylott standing smugly behind them.
Sherlock and John froze, their eyes snapping to the door at the top of the stairs. There were more gunshots, then the door slammed open and the body of one of their captors flew through it, hitting the metal railing and then tumbling down the stairs to lie lifeless at the bottom. Their eyes were drawn back to the top as a gun was pointed through the doorway, followed closely by the person wielding it, revealing himself to be Mark. “Mycroft! I’ve found them.”

Sherlock’s heart did an odd double thump as he realised his brother had come for him. He had known he would, but it was still a relief nonetheless. He’d gone over in his head everything he had on Roylott at least three times, and he’d not been able to figure out where he was being kept. There had been nothing to indicate a property such as this one belonging to either the businessman or his company. He’d been confident that Mycroft would find him, but he knew it would take some time. And now he was here, and he’d soon be in his arms. He’d have to be careful to curb his affection, to make it look to John as they were nothing more than brothers, but as soon as they were alone, he would make sure Mycroft knew just how grateful he was.

At the top of the stairs, Mark turned at a sound and then ducked. “Fuck,” he muttered, ducking to dodge a bullet.

“Mark, get them out of here,” Sherlock heard Mycroft shout. “I’ve got this.”

The young agent slammed the door shut and hurried down the stairs, jumping over the body and pulling out a switchblade, flicking it open. “Forget about us,” Sherlock hissed at him. “Go and help Mycie!” Fear clutched at his heart as he heard the shots ring out from the room above, and he prayed to every deity he’d ever read about that his brother would stay safe.

Mark shook his head. “Sorry, Sher, boss’s orders.” He bent behind him and started sawing at the cords that bound him.

The door once again burst open and a burly man with a beard appeared at the top. He fired down at them and Mark pulled at Sherlock’s arms, bringing him crashing to the ground to avoid the bullet. Whilst firing back, he kicked his legs out and knocked John’s chair down as well, making him a smaller target. His bullet had hit the shooter in the arm, and he leapt over Sherlock, putting himself between the genius and the gun. He fired two more shots, his aim true, hitting the man in the chest. The bearded man clutched at the wounds and then stumbled, falling down the stairs to land on top of the man already lying dead at the bottom.

There were the sounds of more gunfire from above, and also a voice screaming at his men, which Sherlock recognised as Roylott’s. Keeping one eye on the stairs, Mark began once more to cut away at Sherlock’s bonds.

“How many are there?” John asked Mark.

“No idea,” he answered, his eyes flicking up to the door. “I only caught a glimpse as they came in - maybe three or four.” He paused as the door once again opened, more slowly and deliberately this time.

Sherlock’s breath caught as Mycroft stepped through it, a gun being held to the back of his head -
Roylott’s hand holding it. Their eyes met and his concern for Mycroft was reflected back at him in those pale blue eyes. He could read just how worried his brother had been for him, how he had been frantic to find him. He tried to communicate to him that he was uninjured, but he didn’t know how much of that got across over his fear for Mycroft’s own safely.

“Mister Spencer,” Roylott said in a jovial voice to Mark. “Though I doubt that’s your real name. I should have known it would be just my luck that such a promising new employee would end up being a spy. Fancy switching sides? I could use a man of your many talents working for me and you’d be handsomely compensated, of course.”

The young agent had continued to saw at the cords, and they finally snapped free, but Sherlock chose to stay where he was, not wanting to give away that he was free. “I think you know my answer to that,” Mark replied, his voice cold.

“Pity,” the businessman said. “I hate to waste such talent.” He pressed the muzzle of the gun harder against Mycroft’s head. “Step away from his brother and show me your hands.”

Mark eased himself to his feet, holding his hands in the air, no longer holding the knife having passed it to a certain consulting detective. “What now?” he asked.

“I’ve never been one to allow an opportunity to go to waste,” Roylott told him. “I think I’ll run one last trial on my product. It will be good to examine the effects the gas has on human subjects in person. I’ve only read about them, you see. One gets so busy when one has a business to run, don’t you know. Sometimes you don’t get a chance to have any fun. It’s the one thing I miss about the days when I started my company and it was me and two others doing all the research.”

“This isn’t exactly a clinical setting,” Sherlock snarled at him. “Your results will be skewed.”

Roylott laughed at him. “And yet you’ll still be dead. I’m happy with that outcome.”

“And you call yourself a scientist? Most likely you got your degree from a cereal box.”

Holding onto Mycroft’s shoulder, he pointed the gun at Sherlock. “I’m happy to change the experiment to how many bullets a body can take before it dies.”

Suddenly, Mycroft twisted away, ducking down and jerking the gun away from being pointed at his brother. It fired into the wall and he turned and threw himself against Roylott, clamping his arms around the man and throwing them both down the stairs. They tumbled to the bottom, rolling over the two bodies at the foot of the stairs, both fighting for dominance. Roylott landed on top and his greater weight and strength was giving him an edge, the hand holding the gun moving towards Mycroft even as the smaller man grappled to stop it. Finding some grip on the floor, Mycroft grunted and pushed hard, rolling them over. His hands were grasping Roylott’s wrists and he pounded their joined hands onto the ground, trying to force the man to let go of the weapon. Instead, the bigger man managed to roll them again, jerking his hand downwards, the nozzle of the gun moving back down to point at Mycroft. He fought against him, trying to find purchase on the floor, something to give him the advantage. They continued to grapple against each other, the gun trapped between their torsos.

Sherlock struggled to right himself as Mark grabbed the knife from him and began to work on freeing John. Before he could even get to his feet, a gunshot rang out around the small room, and the two men went limp.

“Mycie!” Sherlock screamed, scrambling up and dashing across to them. “No, no, no,” he cried, tugging at Roylott’s form, pulling him from his brother. He shoved the man off him and gasped as he
saw the glistening wetness of blood on the black t-shirt his brother wore, right above his heart.

Chapter End Notes

Yes, yes, I know I am an evil git...look at it this way - this is the last cliffhanger you'll have to live through for this story!
“Mycie, oh God, Mycie.” Sherlock knelt down and cupped his brother’s face in his hands. Eyelashes fluttered against freckled cheeks, and then blue eyes were meeting his.

“Sherlock,” Mycroft gasped.

He heard Mark free John behind him but he dismissed the sounds of the two men moving about as he concentrated on his brother. “Please don’t leave me,” he cried, tears spilling over his cheeks. “Don’t go. I love you so much, you can’t leave me, Mycie. You can’t.”

“Sherlock,” his brother said again, stronger this time. “It’s okay, I’m fine. Just winded.”

His eyes snapped down to the blood on Mycroft’s shirt. “But…”

“Roylott’s, not mine.” He grunted as he held onto Sherlock’s shoulders and pulled himself into a sitting position. “I managed to turn the gun in time.”

Sherlock looked behind him to see Mark rolling the businessman onto his back, checking for a pulse. There was a large bloodstain on his white shirt. Their eyes met and the agent nodded, indicating the man was dead. A slightly hysterical laugh escaped his throat as he turned back to face his brother. “You’re okay?”

Mycroft nodded and lifted a hand to rest on his cheek, his thumb wiping away the tears. “I am, brother mine, especially now that I have you back.”

More tears escaped his eyes, this time from relief. “I thought I’d lost you,” Sherlock cried. “Mycie, I thought I’d lost you forever.”

“Shhh, it’s okay, Sherlock,” his brother whispered, kissing away some of the tears on his cheek. “I’m here, love, I’m not going anywhere.”

“I love you so much,” Sherlock gasped, before crushing their lips together, the need to feel Mycroft beneath him, to know that he was alive and well overwhelming.

They broke apart and Mycroft leaned his forehead against Sherlock’s. “I love you too. Always. I’m never leaving you, Sherlock. I promise.”

“What the actual fuck?” they heard John growl from behind them.

Sherlock’s head whipped around and he saw horror and repulsion on the doctor’s face. “John -” he began.

“This is sick,” he cut him off. “Absolutely fucking sick. This is who you’re seeing? Your brother? You’ve been fucking your damn sibling?” His face had twisted into a mask of rage.

The detective’s back straightened and he glared at the man in defiance. “Mycroft and I love each other,” he said. “We don’t need your approval, John.”

The doctor pointed his finger at them. “That is so typical of you Holmeses. You think you’re so far above the rest of us, superior to everyone else and so the rules don’t apply to you. Well, I’m here to
tell you that they do! Those rules are put in place for a reason, Sherlock, and you can’t just pick and
chose which ones you follow.”

“And what are the reasons for the rules against incest, John?” Mycroft asked him calmly.

“What?” John asked, his attention turning to the elder brother.

“I asked you to explain the reasons behind incest being taboo.”

“You know the damn reasons!”

“I do,” Mycroft replied with a nod. “I’m curious as to which ones apply to Sherlock and I, and why
breaking them appalls you so very much.”

“I’m not having a philosophical debate with you about this,” he spat. “It’s wrong.”

“If they could reproduce,” Mark said, three pairs of eyes turning to him as if they’d forgotten he was
there. “Which they can’t, John. Plus, since they’re both of age and neither have been coerced, that
takes care of the consent issues.”

“Hang on a second - you knew about this?” he demanded of the agent.

Mark gave the couple a smile. “Not at first, but it didn’t take me long to figure it out.”

“I should have known, I should have bloody well known you were in on this. What about that Elliott
guy? Was his attack on Mycroft all a ruse as well?”

Mycroft stiffened in Sherlock’s arms, his face paling even more. Sherlock tightened his embrace and
glared at John. “The attack was very real, John. I would never have treated such a matter lightly.”

“Oh, so there are some lines you won’t cross. Buggering your brother is fine, but fibbing about an
assault is not.”

“You seem to forget that one of those is consensual!” the detective snapped.

“Incest is still incest, Sherlock!”

“It’s obvious they love each other, and are good for each other,” Mark defended them. “No one else
can understand them like each other. What the hell is your problem with that?”

“That’s besides the point! They’re brothers. You can’t just go around shagging family members. It’s
wrong.”

“John, repeating ‘it’s wrong’ doesn’t validate or explain your argument,” Mycroft told him. “Either
give us a convincing argument about the matter or keep your opinions to yourself.”

The doctor glared at him. “And just what did your employers have to say about your relationship,
Mycroft? Does Her Majesty’s Government approve? Oh wait, I bet you haven’t told them. And why
would that be? Oh, because it’s illegal!”

“Oh, do shut up, John!” Sherlock snapped. “Your moral compass is just as wonky as ours. Everyone
here knows the real reason you’re getting your knickers in a twist over this.”

“And why would that be?” he asked, his back ramrod straight as he fell back into his military bearing
- his usual form of defence.
“Jealousy,” the detective said flatly. “You want me but I don’t want you. You can’t accept that friendship is all you’ll ever get from me, and so you’re determined to destroy the one thing that I value above all else. Well it won’t work, John. If you want to remain in my life, then you’ll have to accept the fact that Mycroft and I are together. I don’t want to lose your friendship, but I won’t choose you over the man I love. I made that mistake once and I’ll never hurt him like that again.”

“So, that’s it then?” John asked. “You’re throwing away everything we’ve been through? Years of friendship?”

“I don’t want to. I would prefer to remain your friend.”

“As do I!” John exclaimed. “Yes, my feelings for you have changed, but underneath all of that you are still the best friend I’ve ever had. I want you to always be my best friend. But Sherlock, I can’t - I won’t, accept this.”

Sherlock squeezed Mycroft’s hand once and then stood. He’d heard what he needed to hear from the doctor, that he wanted to remain friends. If he’d said he never wanted to see Sherlock again, then he would have accepted that and let him go. But he didn’t, and so there was only one option left to him.

“You may not be able to accept it now, John,” he said, standing and crossing to him. “But that doesn’t mean you won’t.” He swung his fist back and it collided with John’s jaw, and he fell to the floor, unconscious. Sherlock looked down at him for a brief moment and then turned to see Mark helping Mycroft to his feet. “Brother, it’s time we took our sister up on her offer. Phone Sherrinford and tell Eurus we’re coming.”

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It had taken a lot of fast talking and assurances on his part, but Mycroft had finally convinced the new Governor to allow this once off breach of security. Mycroft’s respect for the man increased as he was fought on the matter, and he felt confident that a repeat of the previous events wouldn’t occur under the new Governor’s administration. After he and Sherlock were granted access to their sister and had spoken to Eurus, they all agreed upon what they wanted the outcome to be. Once they were all happy with the decision, they brought John into the room and then left him on the visitor’s side of the glass. They had watched via a closed circuit camera as their sister had started talking to him, Mycroft on the phone to Anthea to tie up the loose ends of the day. Daniels had gotten free from where he had been held, and other than being bloody and bruised, he’d escaped unharmed. A team would head to the property for clean up duty and removal of the bodies. Mycroft then placed a call to Lady Smallwood, advising her of the death of Roylott and the confirmation that he had a product ready to sell. She authorised a raid on Roylott Industries and told Mycroft she would keep him informed of what they found. He thanked her and hung up, turning his attention back to the doctor and his deranged sister. The ex-soldier was staring at her, stony faced and defiant, but after an hour, John’s demeanour started to change, indicating his resistance was wearing down and he was now susceptible to her words. Instead of pacing the room, searching for a way out, he had moved closer to the divider, and appeared to be listening intently.

Having seen enough, Mycroft reached over and threaded his fingers through Sherlock’s and turned to Mark. “If she goes off script at all, make sure you shut her down,” he said.

The agent nodded. Mycroft had only agreed to the arrangement if he could have someone he trusted watching at all times. Eurus had protested but eventually had relented, and it soothed the oldest sibling’s fears a little, knowing she would be watched. The chances of her playing them and brainwashing John into acting on her behalf were just too great.

He smiled his thanks at Mark and then tugged at Sherlock’s hand, leading him towards the door. “Where are we going?” his brother asked.
“This is going to take the better part of a day, Sherlock, and you’re exhausted from your ordeal. We’re going to find an empty room in the staff sleeping quarters and you’re going to get some rest.”

The younger man paused and turned worried eyes to his brother. “You’ll stay with me?” he asked in a small voice.

Mycroft leant over and kissed him. “Of course I will, Sherlock,” he replied. “Always.”

~fin~

Chapter End Notes

I'm a bit sad as I post this final chapter, since this story has been a huge part of my life for the past several months - in fact, it's BEEN my life. Thank you so much to everyone for reading, for your comments, and kudos, and above all else, your enthusiasm and encouragement. Also, without LadyGlinda, I may have given up a long time ago, so thanks, sweetpea for pushing me on!

I'm sure you've probably noticed the little change to this story...if you haven't look up there, no, further up, nope, that's too high, down a little...there! Oh lookie, it's part of a series! There was no bloody way I could leave our boys here - that would have killed me as well as you! Over the next few weeks there will be a few one shots, little snippets into their lives after these events, and then I shall start writing A Matter of Family, the companion piece to this. So subscribe to the series to be kept updated on when something new is posted!

And now I will go and let my husband know his wife is still alive and hasn't been living in a cave for the past few months...

Works inspired by this one: [Worth standing up for by Caoilainn](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!