Liminal

by distantstarlight

Summary

Doctor John Watson is a freshly Emerged Sentinel but no one can know. He lives in fear that he will be forced into government service, made to work for the Tower, and paired with a Guide of their choosing. For John this is a fate that must be avoided at all costs, he's willing to do anything he has to prevent it. Just as things seem to be getting worse John meets Sherlock Holmes, a Guide with no taste for government Sentinels. It seems like a match made in heaven except that John isn't gay and Sherlock has no interest in relationships but what are the boys going to do? Let the Tower take them?

Notes

For a very long time a very patient person has been waiting for me to create this particular story. I've only read a few Sentinel fics and bearing that in mind I have come up with my own AU to showcase my very favorite pairing, John and Sherlock. It definitely not canon-compliant but occasionally you will recognize elements.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Panic

John Watson didn’t come easily to John Watson but if he wanted to get out of the army while he was still technically human it was going to take a bit of effort. The fluorescent lights were far too bright to be comforting and John was almost gagging from the stomach-turning combination of sickness and medication that pervaded the entire building. The harsh cleansers they used didn’t help either, he felt like he was choking. He could hear someone walking down the hallway on the floor beneath them, they had something wrong with one shoe and it was squeaking with every other step. The doctor in front of him smelled of weak coffee, latex, and hand-cramè he used to soften his much-washed hands. Taking a deep breath John did everything he could to scale back the level of data that was crashing into his untrained mind and lied to the medic who was examining him, “Apart from the fact that my arm is totally fucked and my hip seems to have joined it I can’t say that there’s anything else I feel needs looking at, well, on the outside at least.” His PTSD was clearly marked in his files, a therapist had already been arranged for him. There was no option. If he wanted to collect his pension on the outside John Watson needed to lie and keep lying until his lies were indistinguishable from the truth and no one ever guessed his terrible secret.

Everyone knew of them, of course they did, they were unmistakable. More and more of them were seen every single day. It used to be only certain families but now it seemed like there were new collared and tattooed Pairs everywhere. John supressed a shudder, he was so close now, he couldn’t let himself slip. This was his very last official appointment and he’d been so lucky so far. All he needed was a single signature and he would be safe. When he was in everyone talked about how incredible it would be to have your physical strength massively increase, to have all your senses maximized beyond imagining, to have all your mind expand to deal with the changes. You couldn’t tell who would Emerge next and John wasn’t about to let on. The Tower was never going to get its soulless hands on John Watson! He needed to figure out how to remain free.

“Sign these.” Said the medic who handed John a stack of paper. John’s hand trembled with each line but with bandages still on his wounded shoulder the medic said nothing. “The nurse has some information for you. Good-day Dr. Watson.”

John blinked at having his civilian title used. He’d been Captain Watson for so long, this was going to be another adjustment. The nurse handed him pamphlets to tell him how to obtain housing, and how to go about collecting his pension, where to meet his therapist and that was it. Limping slightly John clutched his cane and tapped his way to freedom. It was almost fate that the first people he bumped into were a bonded Pair and they frowned at him in tandem, “Sorry, still getting the hang of walking.” He clutched his cane dramatically and emanated an aura of weakness and weariness. Their expressions instantly eased. John’s eyes darted to their matching collars and elaborate facial tattoos before dropping politely to the ground. He didn’t want to catch their attention further by accidentally seeming confrontational.

They could hear his heart thundering with the panic he felt at recognizing what they were and instantly they attempted to soothe him. “Walk with care brave soldier, we thank you for your sacrifice. Be at ease, we mean you no harm.” Emergent were always polite, that seemed true enough. Sentinel and Guide together, bonded mind, heart, and soul forever. John barely supressed a second shudder. What would that be like having someone else’s thoughts in your head, to have someone else’s mind ruling yours, the government controlling them so you were both puppets on a string? That’s what Guides did, they played their Sentinels like hand-puppets, controlling their emotions and thoughts by overruling their minds with their own, warriors that were directed like well-trained pets with their owners in matching leather and ink! Before terror took him completely the Pair turned away as one and walked off, already forgetting his existence. With relief John kept going.

It took the rest of the day but John soon had his meagre belongings gathered up and tucked into a corner of his sister’s spare room. It was actually her TV room but John was bunking on the sofa-bed until his bedsit was arranged for and after ten minutes of being ranted at by his drunken sibling John was wondering if staying in rehab would have been a better choice. Clara had left her yet again for drinking too much and bitterly Harry accused John of being the most recent cause, “If you hadn’t got shot Johnny I wouldn’t have started up again. Worrying about you drives me to drink. It’s your fault.”

That night John took the maximum dosage of medicine he was allowed and let himself fall into a
dragged stupor to escape her endless ravings. The next morning he was driven out before she even woke, the stench of stale alcohol and misery more than he could deal with. The chaos of the city streets nearly overwhelmed him but even the headache he eventually had was better than an extra minute with his only sister. The light was too bright and reluctantly John invested in a pair of sunglasses which helped a small amount and at least hid the pain in his eyes so no one else noticed they had an un-bonded Emergent Sentinel limping next to them. Music seemed to help so John went from one store to another to listen to demo music for as long as they would tolerate him before moving on to another location. Parks were as chaotic as the streets but all the green made John relax a bit more and gave him a chance to practice filtering out conversations he could hear everywhere, or the distressing sounds of the hidden darkness of distant wrongs being committed. He wished he could shut it all off because he could hear screams just as clearly as he could hear laughter and it was all around him. John couldn’t stop hearing it all and it wasn’t until someone bumped into him standing in the path that he snapped out of his daze. It was just very late in the day now. How long had he been standing there distracted by all the noise which now had faded away properly?

Agreeing to the first place that was available the very next day John moved out, simply leaving the key Harry had given him on her small kitchen table. The bedsit was dump, bland, and miserable but it was mercifully quiet, the silent rooms around him filled with people just as low as he was. No one had it in them to make a fuss any longer. John lay huddled on his narrow and sagging bed nearly whimpering as his mind tore itself apart. Here in the sanctuary of his social isolation he was safe to suffer, safe to weep when he needed to, safe to try and learn some rudimentary control over his new self. The nightmare that had begun while he was away had followed him home.

When John was bleeding out on the burning sands of the Afghanistan desert something had happened. The sniper shot had torn through his shoulder, the fierceness of the impact so shocking he hadn’t felt a second of pain while it happened. Instead John had felt a moment of disconnect and then a strange kind of euphoria as he fell to his face, his own blood pooling beneath him. He should have died there with everyone else but despite the odds he’d survived. They called it a miracle but now John knew what had happened. Something inside him had been activated and John was now one of the Emergent. He was becoming a Sentinel.

Despair gripped him as tightly as fear. Sentinels and Guides were not legal citizens, not once they Emerged. They became part of a separate social class, bound by harsh rules, their lives given over to the service of the realm. John would be forced to choose a Guide and bond with them. Man or woman it would make no difference, everyone knew that. Apparently he would meet someone and he would just know and so would they. Once the government found out John was a Sentinel his life would be over. He had to hide somehow. He had to master his new body and senses and somehow stay hidden. Without a collar or tattoo John looked like a regular human. If he was careful no one would ever know about his enhanced strength and coordination, or the fact that he could hear and smell things for blocks around. Food was both wonderful and revolting now, for much of the time all John could tolerate was the familiar fragrance and rich flavor of tea. If he had the money he could rent a shielded flat. They were all the rage back in the early seventies when Sentinels and Guides finally became public knowledge. Back then it had been considered chic to have Pairs as guests and many an overly-wealthy dilettante had their homes fitted with shields to protect the delicate senses of bonded Pairs. Now at least half of all rentals were shielded but it was pricey. John could never afford it, not alone.

Six months of struggle and depression later a new fear gripped John. He was on the verge of being homeless. While mastering the art of masking his abilities John had overcompensated faking his slow return to health while in therapy and they had delayed clearing him for work. His hip and shoulder were still a problem but not enough to stop him from applying at various hospitals but without full clearance from the army no one would hire him even if they were interested. He couldn’t get a job. Renting the bedsit was eating its way through his slim savings and John would soon be left with no money at all. Then even the charity worker who came once a week would stop coming. John would be forced to choose a Guide and bond with them. She’d see right through any lie he tried to tell so he stayed silent and he would just know and they would too. Once the government found out John was a Sentinel his life would be over. He had to hide somehow. He had to master his new body and senses and somehow stay hidden. Without a collar or tattoo John looked like a regular human. If he was careful no one would ever know about his enhanced strength and coordination, or the fact that he could hear and smell things for blocks around. Food was both wonderful and revolting now, for much of the time all John could tolerate was the familiar fragrance and rich flavor of tea. If he had the money he could rent a shielded flat. They were all the rage back in the early seventies when Sentinels and Guides finally became public knowledge. Back then it had been considered chic to have Pairs as guests and many an overly-wealthy dilettante had their homes fitted with shields to protect the delicate senses of bonded Pairs. Now at least half of all rentals were shielded but it was pricey. John could never afford it, not alone.

Mike Stamford had been a decent friend back in uni and though it had taken a moment for John to recollect him when he did he was happy to sit down and enjoy the coffee Mike bought him while they reminisced. John didn’t want Mike to ask questions about his injuries so he complained about his bedsit instead. “Who’d want me for a flatmate?” he demanded almost angrily and was surprised when Mike just smiled as he replied and took John to meet someone.

John was completely blown away by the overwhelming and almost forceful personality of the person in front of him. He came off condescending but John immediately realized that the stranger was simply so packed tight with information that it leaked out constantly, he couldn’t help it and John was instantly intrigued. The man was tall, narrow, seemingly made entirely of edges and points, his body as sharp as the mind behind eyes that were taunting and teasing at the same time. Raven black curls were stark against milk white skin, and his mouth! John had never seen a woman it was so very…different. John barely remembered the words he’d heard but the last mouthful were burned into his brain, “The name’s Sherlock Holmes and the address is 221 B Baker Street.” The wink was completely uncalled for and made John want to chase after him in a way that surprised him. He didn’t.

Mike was almost unbearably smug after that and John was grateful that he had to leave for his therapy appointment. Ella was disappointed yet again when John simply sat there saying and doing nothing. He didn’t trust himself and he most definitely didn’t trust her. She was a government appointed therapist. She’d see right through any lie he tried to tell so he stayed silent even if it frustrated her. To stave off another well-meaned lecture he said, “I might have found a flatmate. I’ve got an interview tonight.”

“Oh? A new living arrangement might be just what you need John.” Ella smiled encouragingly at
him and he nodded tentatively. This was the most information he’d divulged so far and she seemed very pleased, “I hope it goes well, do you have to leave soon?”

The meeting wasn’t until seven. John had hours to go but any excuse to skive off early was a good one, “Yeah, I’ll just make the train if I limp off now.” She smiled understandingly and wished him luck once again. John tried not to make a show of his cane but he still leaned a little harder than he needed to but kept his pace steady as he left. Hiding from Ella was the most important deceit right now. Maybe she could have helped with his nightmares if he’d opened up to her but he was afraid of accidentally revealing himself so he suffered night after night without relief. His bedsit was a prison of blankness and grief, he needed out.

He rode the busses for a long time to pass the hours before finding his way to the address he didn’t need to write down. 221B Baker Street was kept by one Mrs. Hudson, a sweetly smiling lady who led John up to the flat. He was going to say no, there was no way to afford a place in this neighborhood, he had…to…say…oh. The door to the street shut and all the noise, all the smell, everything that bothered John simply went away. Mrs. Hudson was saying something and John was saying something back but he was hardly paying attention.

The flat was…amazing. The shielding clearly covered the entire building because it was peaceful and quiet, well, except for the explosion of color from the mass of things that were already filling shelves and spilling off of surfaces. Sherlock had moved in already and before John could react the tall strange man was flying out the door, his long coat flaring behind him at the speed of his departure. Disconfirmed John sat while Mrs. Hudson made him tea, angrily tapping at his leg for being so bloody useless. Until now he’d faked how bad it was but he hadn’t needed to fake the problem itself. His leg just didn’t work right and no one could figure out why. “You’re a doctor. An army doctor.” Sherlock was back, somehow silently ghosting up the stairs to startle John out of his musings, “Seen a lot of bodies?”

“What more than enough for one lifetime.” Replied John fervently and he could see them all, torn flesh of friend and foe alike as he and others like him worked endlessly to patch them back up, to keep them together long enough to be passed along to someone who didn’t have bullets razing past their helmets, or dirt blowing all over their surgery.

“Want to see some more?” offered Sherlock with another cheeky smile and how could John resist?

“Oh god yes.” he said and was up and out of his chair without another thought. It was brilliant and exciting, thrilling and it made John’s heart race once more but not with the thrill of the hunt as his new flatmate amazed him over and over again with his perceptions. Was Sherlock a Sentinel? Did he also have enhanced senses? John was unsure but now he needed to know. Could he have bumbled into someone who knew how to hide himself somehow?

One of the coppers, Donovan he thought her name was, had pulled John aside, or rather, pushed him aside and gave him some hard words about the man he was going to live with. Her eyes were hard and flat with distaste and more than a touch of hate filled them when she looked at Sherlock. John didn’t like her and recoiled from her unwelcome touch. He could smell something rank on her, something that smelled like shame combined with frustration. Before he could think of a way to extricate himself a silver-haired man in a trench-coat made her allow him to go inside with Sherlock.

John had worked for months learning to hide his reactions so he didn’t even flinch when he saw the body of a woman in a cheerful ensemble laid out on the floor but he could smell the stench of death hanging in the air. She looked as if she were hailing a cab, if that meant doing so while being face-down on the floor while also being very thoroughly dead. Sherlock made John examine her so with eyes made sharp with experience he did. He could smell something on her breath but he couldn’t tell anyone but there was a burning high in his nose that told him whatever it was that she had ingested was toxic and likely how she had been killed but until someone did an autopsy and found the pill or powder or liquid or whatever it was, then John had no way of plausibly telling anyone how she died.

Sherlock was excited about something and was going on about something that wasn’t there. Everyone attending simply got on with their jobs of collecting information, the other officers pretending that Sherlock simply wasn’t there, all of them sighing in relief when he ran off leaving John with a corps of a small crowd of very unwelcoming police officers. One of them reminded John of a rat for some reason and he was smirking at John before informing him that he had just been abandoned. No one hid their laughter and John limped down the stairs angrily. He was mad enough to lose control over his senses which cast wide, revealing all of John’s surroundings in stunning detail via smell and sound. Even his skin seemed sensitive to the vibrations around him, like a spider in its web John found Sherlock running around the exterior of the building, clearly delighted, clearly completely distraught.

When he went to have a shout at his new flatmate John was picked up on the street by a beautiful woman in a long dark car. Confused and wary he got in, his fingers clenching reflexively on the handle of his cane as he was delivered to a dim damp warehouse. A man even taller than Sherlock was waiting, his suit of the most expensive cut and material, his obvious wealth and power evident in his posture and expression. John disliked him intently, his nose flitting as he took in the man’s scent, noted the tiny details on his tie-pin, the thinness of his hair, and the faint traces of make-up that muted the freckles that John could still see. Whoever this was wanted John to feel intimidated. Not likely!

John simply stood there and looked at the man. By the time their conversation concluded John was furious! Who was this creep and why would he offer John money to spy on his flatmate? John would never do it, he’d never betray someone like that! How dare anyone even suggest it? He’d
been in the army and secrets often unintentionally spilled out when so many people were packed so tight. The very least a decent person could do was grant the others the gift of silence. If John was going to room with someone he would expect the same treatment in return, he would never spy on Sherlock, not for any amount of money.

John felt an extreme level of anger for some reason. He was mad at the strange man and he didn’t know why. Frustrated John also realized he didn’t know where he was. With almost no cash left he took the Tube back toward Baker Street and eventually painfully limped his way to the door where Mrs. Hudson fluttered over him. Sherlock was obviously upstairs and John shook off her attempts to soothe his temper and went up to yell at his flatmate for leaving him. “Ah John, I knew you’d make your way back. In the future just know that I have a service contract with the cabs, here’s the card for it, charge all your rides to that. My brother pays for it all and as far as I’m concerned I don’t make him pay enough. Be a good chap and help me with that would you and look, I found it. I can’t believe the police hadn’t even checked the nearby alleys or bins yet. I mean…”

“Sherlock you left me behind.” said John firmly, “I don’t know those people and I barely knew where we were! I got kidnapped on the street and some arse with an umbrella tried to pay me to spy on you! Care to explain?”

Sherlock looked stunned for a moment, completely derailed from his excited chatting about the contents of the suitcase he had located which was colored to match the dead woman’s clothing. He stood tall and blinked down at John before narrowing his eyes, “My brother. His name is Mycroft and he tirelessly interferes with my life. The next time he offers you money, take it. He has plenty and then you can feed him any lie you choose. I apologize for leaving you behind, I’m not accustomed to working with a partner and Lestrade would have brought you back here if you’d asked. Also I would have hated to deprive Donovan who was simply itching for a chance to pour her bile in your ear so let’s have it. What did she call me this time because I’m going to say it was her saying that I am insane which is clearly wrong.”

“As a matter of fact she may have heavily hinted something of the sort.” said John. For some reason Sherlock was making him smile, especially now that the man was dramatically rolling his eyes and huffing like a child. He should be furious right now but learning that the tall man had been his over-protective brother seemed to take the sting away from all of it, and then listening to Sherlock’s disparaging tone when speaking of the detective for some reason amused him.

“High-functioning sociopath is that so difficult to recall?” John was more than a little taken aback. Sherlock looked put out too and continued in a voice that was a little too careless to be natural. This topic clearly troubled the pale man. John could smell faint anxiety and uncertainty buried in Sherlock’s scent. “Apparently I don’t feel things the way people ought to feel things, people have been more than a little concerned that I might have been born…defective.”

“I don’t buy that for a second.” said John. Sherlock was brilliant and no one as observant as him could possibly be lacking for feelings. John was a doctor, he understood very well the label Sherlock had produced for himself.

Sherlock looked instantly mutinous and ready to say something except Mrs. Hudson rushed in nearly in tears, “Sherlock what have you done now?” she shouted. Behind her a flood of people poured into the flat. They spread out and infiltrated every room, upturning everything and making the chaos even worse.

Lestrade was there, “Drugs bust. Everyone volunteered oddly enough.” John couldn’t believe it, not Sherlock. The detective didn’t look like a drug-user but his silent plea for John to say nothing had told the doctor everything he needed. John considered the little he did know about the man, too thin, too jittery, too much of everything and somehow he understood but it was still a shock. Sherlock was a junkie, or ex-junkie and the police knew it with such certainty that they had produced the flat. They spread out and infiltrated every room, upturning everything and making the chaos even worse.

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John’s fingers trembled. The blessed silence of the flat was shattered. There were nearly a dozen strangers rummaging around, spreading their stench, exhaling endlessly and John could smell every bit of them. He wanted to be ill, the smells were too much. Once triggered by his sense of smell all his other senses seemed to grow rapidly acute. He could hear every heartbeat. He could feel how the strangers were moving around the flat by the disturbance they made in the air. John’s entire body became one huge receiver for information and it nearly shattered him except a long pale hand reached out and rested on his shoulder. Abruptly the world snapped back into normal focus and he fixed his eyes on Sherlock’s face. The tall man looked apologetic and wary, “I’m sorry John.”

Sherlock’s eyes flickered to the people around them and John realized Sherlock was apologizing for being the cause of the invasion and instantly he softened. “We’ll deal with it,” he said with a smile which grew bigger when Sherlock’s face became relieved looking. Was John’s approval already so important to the dark-haired man? They hadn’t even known each other a day!

Regardless Sherlock managed to not only rid the flat of everyone uninvited but also managed to keep hold of the suitcase he’d located in the alley. He even silently listened to the detective inspector’s lecture about stealing evidence without rolling his eyes which frankly even John had a hard time not doing. Sherlock wasn’t wrong. Why hadn’t the police simply looked? Sherlock must have found it right away but everyone on scene except for Lestrade pretended he wasn’t even there so who’s fault was it really? John found himself staunchly on Sherlock’s side. The man was clearly able to solve the case without help from the so-called professionals and John wasn’t interested in being friendly with the authorities anyway.

Lestrade was winding up his lecture to Sherlock. John could smell something on the DI, it smelled expensive, almost like Sherlock but not. It made his nose wrinkle. Mycroft. Was the DI spying on
Sherlock for his brother? Even more determined to protect his flatmate’s privacy John moved to position himself defensively beside the taller man, if anything happened John wasn’t going down easy. “Don’t make me bring in a Sentinel in here Sherlock, you know what trouble that causes.”

John was amazed when Sherlock abruptly stiffened beside him and almost spat his answer in the DI’s face. “You can tell my brother to fuck off. His Sentinels are not welcome here. Both of you can cease your efforts to match me with one.”

John was reeling. *Sherlock was a Guide!* How? He just admitted to having emotional issues and Guides were all about feelings. They were masters of empathy, capable of understanding someone so deeply that they could reach out and actually get inside someone enough to manipulate their emotions, soothing them, taking away violent impulses instead of hurting people though Sentinels were capable of wreaking immense damage. Guides were the masters of the Pairing. *That went without saying.* John felt ill. How could he get out of this? *Mycroft controlled the Sentinels and Sherlock was an un-bonded Guide!* John had to get away but Sherlock surprised him when the tall man’s anger escalated into a hard demand, “You tell your husband that John is off limits for him or any of his associates is that clear Lestrade? Just because he lives here with me doesn’t give any of you the right to use your despicable tactics to pressure him. Leave me and John alone and let me do what I do best.”

John was staring at Lestrade. *The DI was married to Sherlock’s Sentinel controlling brother!* Was he a Guide or perhaps a Sentinel himself? He wasn’t collared or tattooed, John couldn’t tell and he certainly wasn’t going to ask. The last thing he wanted to do was expose himself and end up being sent to the Tower for training. Lestrade didn’t sound dangerous when he spoke, he sounded tired, “I’ll tell Mycroft to back off of John but you know as well as I do he’ll never stop watching out for you Sherlock, not ever.

“Leave Lestrade. Text me any new information on the case but otherwise don’t talk to me. I’m sweeping the flat for bugs again and when I find them tell Mycroft I will shove them someplace easy. ‘Don’t make me bring in a Sentinel in here Sherlock, you know what trouble that causes.’

John was shaking. *Sherlock knew!* He knew John had Emerged and was a Sentinel, albeit an untrained one. John was going to the Tower. He was being to collared and tattooed, bound forever to some person he didn’t even know for the rest of his existence. For once he couldn’t stop himself and rushing to the bathroom John made it there in time to be tremendously ill. Dimly he realized Sherlock was in the bathroom with him and the man was still talking! He was also wiping John’s neck with a damp cloth and speculating on John’s physical condition, “Of course you needed a shielded flat, I should have guessed when you first got here, the relief on your face was palpable. Naturally someone like you would want to hide your new condition. Have you **zoned** yet? Gone into a trance or lost time? Oh, you wouldn’t know if you had you. You wouldn’t even notice unless it went on for some time.” Sherlock sounded disappointed.

“The park.” Said John hoarsely, “It happened in the park. Someone bumped into me and I snapped out of it. I must have stood there for hours.” John realized he could have been spotted then, the government had cameras everywhere it seemed. He should be going into shock but something about Sherlock’s presence steadied him.

“When were you triggered?” Sherlock was now rubbing circles onto John’s back but completely absentmindedly as if his hand were moving on its own because his mind was definitely off in another universe of thought, *The army. Your shoulder. The incident is what triggered you but the changes?*”

John was reeling. *Sherlock was actually saying, “Why would this be a present for you? It seems like a big fat piece of hell to me.”*

John still felt sick but Sherlock’s hand was making him feel better and the weird level of attention he was receiving felt kind of nice even though it was obvious to John Sherlock didn’t even realize he was doing anything. He was thinking and his body was just hanging around occupying itself, John found the presence of the much larger man to be oddly calming even if he never stopped talking but suddenly he paid attention to what Sherlock was actually saying, “Why would this be a present for you? It seems like a big fat piece of hell to me.”

Sherlock’s body stiffened once again and John regretted the harshness of his words but Sherlock merely helped John stand upright and kept his hand on John’s sore shoulder as he handed John mouthwash and let him clean up. When they were seated back out front he answered, “It is perfect because the last thing in the world I want in my life is a well-trained and thoroughly brainwashed dog who’s waiting to come to heel, and it’s clear to me that the last thing **you’d** ever find acceptable is being forced to comply to the faceless dictates of the Tower. You are a soldier, you are accustomed to taking orders but you are also an individual. You don’t need someone planning your every moment, you have a deeply developed personality that will not accept being subsumed
by the normal Sentinel/Guide paradigm therefore I have a proposal to make. John. Bond with me. Be my Sentinel and we can live our lives anyway we like. The Tower is only for unbonded Sentinels. I was privately trained, you wouldn’t have to go. I don’t want to bond with one of the people trained at my brother’s facility and you don’t want to have a Guide that treats you like a meat-puppet. We’d be free of all of it and no one could change it. We could be partners, real partners, not one of those…Pairs.” Sherlock sounded as revolted as John, his entire long lean body shuddering delicately.

It sounded almost too good to be true. Sherlock would make an ideal partner. John already like him. Maybe they could even have been friends and he was already feeling very loyal toward his flatmate. Maybe it was impetuous, maybe it was rash but John heard his answer as clearly as Sherlock did, “Yes.” It felt right.

Sherlock looked as surprised as John felt when the word rang out clearly, “Sooner rather than later John. My brother has eyes everywhere. You won’t be able to hide for long and if he discovers you he will take you from me out of spite.” John wondered at the possessive note in Sherlock’s voice, and the sense of urgency that was beginning to tug at him.

“I don’t know how to do it;” admitted John. He was only vaguely aware that bonds existed. He didn’t know how they were formed, “Actually I know nothing at all for certain about Sentinels or Guides.”

“Well it’s not difficult. We have to have sex and at the point of orgasm you will bite me here.”
Sherlock used his index finger to circle a patch of skin at the base of his neck. He sounded entirely matter-of-fact. “That will activate a chemical cascade that creates a bond between us and that’s pretty much the entire process. A bond grows deeper over time but even initially we will feel very strongly for one another, it will cause some physical reactions but we’re both adults. I have zero interest in a physical relationship, in fact I have considered a lifetime of celibacy entirely acceptable, but I can’t see why we can’t deal with whatever issue arises like grownups.”

John was gaping at the clear innuendo. He needed to have sex with a man, specifically this man and Sherlock didn’t even care for sex. Like bonds John was vaguely aware that Sentinels and Guides came in all combinations of the gender binary. Being male or female was a technicality now, he was a Sentinel and he needed a Guide, that Sherlock was a man was irrelevant. “I’ve never had sex with a man before. Does it require penetration?” John didn’t want to do that. Anal sex had never interested him and Sherlock was a man…there weren’t a lot of office options.

“Good question and yes. At least one of us needs to be inside the other, though how two women are able to bond I can’t quite figure out though they do manage somehow, I will penetrate your body and then you will bite into mine. That seems fair doesn’t it? Actually I have no real preference, I’ve never had sex before. Did you want to top?” Sherlock seemed to genuinely be offering because he literally had no idea how it would feel either way and simply didn’t care. John needed to sit down. He’d agreed to become Sherlock’s Sentinel without hesitation and now he was learning how he might have to be buggered silly by a virgin just before he bit into that virgin’s long neck to chemically induce a bond. “I don’t think I can even reach your neck!”

A nervous giggle escaped him and Sherlock looked chagrined, “It would be a bit awkward with our height difference. I suppose you’ll have to take me from behind and bite me that way, actually, come here and let’s figure this out.”

Sherlock just stood up and bent invitingly over the couch, presenting himself while John stood there in shock. “You want me to…” Were they really doing this? They were! They were working out the logistics of having anal sex with each other!

“Just lay over my back John, I just want to see if you can reach my neck! It would be pretty odd to be having sex for the purpose of bonding only to discover we can’t manage!” that was how John found himself actually stretched over Sherlock’s long hard back, his groin mashed into Sherlock bumbags as he craned his neck up to reach. He couldn’t quite make it so Sherlock arched his back but John still couldn’t quite reach, “Well that answers that. Come here John.” Sherlock pushed John off his back and sat on the sofa, “We’ll have to do it this way I suppose, here, kneel over me. If I penetrated you like this you could easily reach my neck.”

John stood there while Sherlock patted his knees as if that would make John sit astride them. It made John acutely aware of how vulnerable it felt. He’d never been touched by anyone but doctors before and now he was planning to let some man stick his dick into him. This was unreal, “I don’t know if I want to be fucked actually.” John had never once considered having anal sex with him as the receiver. In fact it had never once happened to him to ever want anal sex at all, what was the point? He was straight, his cock worked perfectly fine, and every woman he slept with was a brand new adventure. John didn’t care if other people liked anal sex, they could do what they liked with their bodies, it wasn’t his business but he was pretty certain he only liked sex with women and all the ones he’d slept with had never once requested it. There wasn’t really an option here though.

“Well I know for a fact that I don’t want to have sex but we have to or the bond won’t activate. We can manage one time John even if it’s not the best experience in the world. Wouldn’t a single round of bad sex be infinitely better than a lifetime being governed by the Tower and Mycroft?”

John blinked. Sherlock was a virgin of some years and clearly stating that he was not a sexual creature. He was willing to have sex only to bond. John wasn’t gay but Sherlock wasn’t wrong.

Even if it was the worst most painful sex he ever had it would be better than a lifetime on a government leash, their every move monitored, all their work selected for them. John would never be a doctor again unless Sherlock let him but even that was a better risk to take than falling into the hands of the government. The Tower wouldn’t care a jot for any of John’s old training. He
would be run through their programs and taught whatever they felt like he needed to learn. No, Sherlock was entirely correct, “If you lean back a bit it might be easier.” he conceded. Sherlock smirked but obeyed. Shaking his head John sat on Sherlock’s lap and shuffled forward so that Sherlock’s flaccid cock was near his backside. Leaning forward John easily reached the section of skin Sherlock had indicated and latched his mouth onto it experimentally. Sherlock’s skin was salty and sweet at the same time and without thinking John licked the damp patch he’d left behind, “Yeah this will work.”

Sherlock had gone still and John felt him swallow hard as he pulled away, “Yes John. I believe it will.” John sat back and Sherlock looked up at him sitting there, “When do you want to bond?”

John shrugged. This was hardly a romantic relationship, it was a whirlwind bonding, not a courtship, he wasn’t sexually attracted to Sherlock this was a deal they were making with one another to save themselves. Both of them were grabbing tight to what freedom they could find for themselves and both of them knew they were using the other to do it. It was a practical arrangement that satisfied their greater needs, that was it. John had already Emerged, he wouldn’t have to hide it any longer not that he’d be able to. Even now he found himself slipping and Sherlock’s first question had been about falling into what he’d called a zone, “I don’t know. Like you said, sooner rather than later right? Do you want to do it now?”

Sherlock looked seriously at John, “I think we can at least make the attempt. We’ll need lubrication of course. I am regularly tested thanks to my brother and his spouse, what is your health status?”

“Clean. I got checked due to the injury and I haven’t been with anyone since well before that.” John had been going on leave in just two more weeks before he was shot. He was perfectly healthy that way at least. “I’ve got lube.” John had the best lube he could afford. A man had to treat himself to something and wanking was at least free.

“Well then I’m going to take a shower first, you can have one after. I’ll meet you in my bedroom when you’re ready. I think I’ve got clean sheets.” Sherlock just dumped John off his lap and left. This was the least romantic sex the doctor ever imagined he’d be planning to have. John was still sitting in a heap when he heard the shower turn on and it galvanized him into action. He went upstairs and stripped off his clothing, dumping everything into the hamper. He wrapped on his robe and stuck the bottle of lube in his pocket before returning downstairs and ensuring that the door was as locked as it could get. He even drew the curtains though he was certainly keeping their carnal activities limited to the bedroom! When he was satisfied that he was as secured as he could get John puttered around the kitchen until Sherlock was out of the shower.

When the coast was clear John went to wash up, conscientiously scrubbing himself everywhere zealously. This might be the only time Sherlock ever had sex, John was determined to do his best even if it was one neither of them particularly cared to have the experience. This was a practical solution he told himself as he shaved closely. Making sure to rinse all over thoroughly John debated about deodorant before deciding he was showering later anyway so there was no point, he wasn’t going to get that rank in whatever time it took for Sherlock to…to…but whatever, no matter what John was showering again later. Stepping out of the tub John began to dry himself and noticed how steamy the mirrors had gotten. It was actually quite lovely. Droplets of condensation were gathering and beginning to bead. One trailed down the surface of the glass and got caught on a bit of dried on toothpaste or something but it looked so beautiful John couldn’t stop staring. Unmoving and unblinking John Watson simply stood, his mind disconnected with his body as his senses short-circuited.
John Watson has made a decision that surprised him but it's all for the best. He and Sherlock have the same desire, to remain free of the Tower. To save themselves they have decided to bond as Sentinel and Guide to become a Pair.

Something lovely woke him, a gentle caress across his mind and it felt comforting and familiar. John? John felt so relaxed, it felt marvelous, like all his stresses were melting away bit at a time. “John?” John blinked and time rushed forward. His skin was cool, all the steam was gone, and he realized he was standing in the bathroom still naked and holding his towel. His face was fully shaven and his razor was in its place. How long had he been standing there? Sherlock was beside him wearing only his bathrobe and clearly read the question right off of John’s face, “No more than ten minutes, I heard the taps go off but then nothing. I just came to check. You haven’t blinked for two minutes so I brought you back.”

“You what?” exclaimed John. Sherlock was frowning at him, clearly perturbed. What did that mean?

“I brought you back. You were in a zone John. You were caught in a sensory loop where you fixated on something that caught your attention to such a degree that everything else you might have noticed was muted. This is serious. You shouldn’t be zoning so easily. If it happened like this practically right in front of me who knows how many times you’ve zoned before this? Come along John, the sooner we bond the better. I’ll need to sort out whatever is troubling you and that will be much easier to do after we’re bonded, I could do it now but I think waiting is a bad idea. You’ll automatically begin to stabilize and there are some techniques I’m aware of that will help you focus. I had no idea you were so far along. Normally zoning only happens to Sentinels who’ve had their gifts for a very long time or who are very powerful. How long have you been out of the army?”

John was more than a little surprised about what he was learning. Was it so? Was he capable of being incapacitated by too much information? “A little over six months now,” said John. Six long dismal months of worry, fear, pain, misery, and loneliness because of the isolation he was forced to maintain. John was a social person, he’s spent most of his life in the company of many. Sherlock frowned, “What?”

“You shouldn’t be zoning at all, it’s far too soon,” Sherlock looked serious even standing there in only a thin robe and his slippers. “You should be barely aware of your enhancements at all in fact. If you’re this powerful... we have to bond immediately John. Mycroft will find out, he always finds out and if he learns before we bond he will definitely take you and whomever you do bond with will be of his choosing and most certainly to his advantage.”

Nothing could have spurred John into action faster, “Your room now,” Sherlock had pulled the duvet off his bed and considerably lain down a large towel and set some damp flannels to the side, “Good idea.”
Sherlock shrugged and just dropped his robe before crawling to the center of the bed. His body was fitter than John would have thought. Sherlock was so lean John never expected that his muscles would be dense if flat, and clearly well-used. He had a sparse flatch of chest hair and a small thicket of pubic hair. John saw that Sherlock’s penis was uncircumcised and currently disinterested in the proceedings. Laying back the detective propped himself up on some pillows and patted his thighs again, “Up you go.”

John’s brows knitted in a frown, “That’s not how it works you dolt. We’re going to have to do some stuff first.” Sherlock rolled his eyes, “Sherlock I’m not looking to be seduced but you’re not even erect and even if you were I’m not prepared to take you, we have things to do.”

“I did a preliminary search online and I believe I understand the basics enough to proceed. Come over here John, don’t worry about me. I want to give this a go, this might be my only chance to gather this data.” Now John was the one rolling his eyes. Sherlock was reducing their sexual encounter into a study. Well, whatever worked for him, all John wanted was to avoid a fate he was sure was worse than death. He paused, “Do we have to get collared and tattooed?”

Sherlock’s eyes must be conditioned to endure a lot of rolling because he did it again, “That’s only for government Pairs. It denotes their rank and departmental affiliations. We are only bonding one another though legally I suppose we’re getting married. Neither of us can marry anyone else once we do this, you realize this right? The law won’t allow it so if you want to back out you may as well do it now. If not I’ll get us registered tomorrow as soon as the offices open. Do you want a ring?” Sherlock was clearly assuming John wasn’t going to back out and he was right.

John almost laughed at the situation he was in, this was incredible! A year ago he wouldn’t have been able to even fathom being in this situation. A year ago he’d been wading through mayhem in another country, doing his duty, leading his men to battle or taking his turn as medic. He’d never imagined getting married. He’d joked about a wife and a house someplace quiet but in reality John had simply never met a woman who interested him enough that he could picture himself with her forever but now look at him. In essence John was eloping with Sherlock Holmes. This was as close to marriage as he’d ever get and even if marriage had meant everything to him he would still bond with Sherlock to protect himself so why not? “Yeah maybe, we’ll see. For now let’s just see if we can even get an erection.”

Sherlock unaccountably blushed and wouldn’t look at John, “Don’t worry John, I’ll be fine.”

John silently chastised himself. This was Sherlock’s first and possibly only sexual encounter, John had no business making it awkward for him, “What about kissing? I like it and it seems to make everyone feel good.”

Sherlock shrugged again, “If that’s what it takes to make this better for you then fine, whatever you want.” Sherlock seriously had no idea about sex! John was amazed all over again. This was a man who apparently knew everything about nearly everything but the things he didn’t know about, he really didn’t know about.

Okay then what I want is to begin a bit slow and I’ll let you know when I’m ready for each new step so don’t just charge in and take control.” His voice was a bit sharp toward the end and John definitely did not miss Sherlock’s eyes growing darker or the blush that deepened on his cheek. Did Sherlock have an authority kink? He was supposed the dominant one! “Flatten your legs for a minute.” ordered John and Sherlock’s legs instantly sagged down to the mattress at the same moment his penis gave a very definite twitch. John kept his voice firm, “Put another pillow behind your lower back, we could be at this for a while.” Another twitch was followed by an almost visible swelling of the once quiescent member and John had to take a moment to consider what was going to be going on. This wasn’t a date. He was voluntarily allowing Sherlock Holmes to have gay sex with him. In just a few minutes John would be working to open himself right in front of a man who was as good as a stranger, worse than a stranger. John might not have minded so much in front of a one-off but he would be seeing Sherlock every single day for the rest of his life, his entire life. Bonds could not be broken and he barely knew the man he was straddling now. This was beyond awkward no matter what Sherlock’s hidden needs might be.

John had to collect himself. He looked Sherlock over, trying to find something arousing about him. Sherlock’s skin was pale and delicate looking. His chest hair was very fine, and his nipples were small disks of brown, flat and non-reactive. Sherlock’s hair shone thick and luscious, the curls tousled enticingly. Sherlock had sectoral heterochromia and John realized it was actually amusingly lovely to see markings making Sherlock’s iris look like rare jewels. Sherlock’s expression was one of pure curiosity as he examined John. The soldier felt no qualms at being looked at, he’d been in the army for a long time, he was inured to being exposed or seeing others exposed. He wasn’t particularly excited about Sherlock’s body but he was attractive in his own strange way and his mouth was actually very inviting. Since John had an invitation to do whatever he wanted he leaned forward and kissed Sherlock.

The man’s mouth was soft and uncertain as he tentatively mimicked John. It was rather nice and when Sherlock obligingly allowed John entry the kiss became deep and almost intense. John was shocked at how much he liked it. Sherlock’s mouth was sweet and hot, his tongue quickly mastering an assortment of John’s particular tricks and the kiss became heated. Breathing a bit harder John sat back, “Alright?”

Sherlock was clearly considering the experience, John could see him practically filing the information away. “That was better than I anticipated but not unpleasant. I believe kissing would be acceptable in non-sexual circumstances.” John really was growing fond of how Sherlock spoke. Who else had pillow talk like this? He relaxed a bit.

“We’ll take things one step at a time,” bargained John. They hadn’t discussed their relationship
outside the bond. Just because they couldn’t marry someone shouldn’t stop John from dating, not as long as his partners knew it would never be serious. If Sherlock really wasn’t sexual then John would eventually need some kind of outlet but that was a problem for another day. Right now John had sex to accomplish and so far only Sherlock had anything resembling an erection.

Sherlock had noticed the same fact, “We must massage and loosen the anal sphincters in order to prevent tearing. If you don’t mind I would like to try, I think if you kneel with your back facing me that would be easiest.”

Oh. John hadn’t considered that Sherlock would want to. Still, it would be a lot easier not looking at Sherlock’s face and it would be a bit awkward for John to reach deeply enough. His fingers definitely weren’t as long as Sherlock’s and well… “Yeah okay.”

This definitely was the least erotic thing John had ever done. He knelt over Sherlock’s legs, his arse spread wide while the detective clinically smeared on lube and began. John swallowed hard and distracted himself by examining Sherlock’s knobby knees, the slender curve of his calf, and the almost unreal length of his toes. Sherlock was methodical and cautious, sensibly taking the time to allow John to become familiar with his touches before penetrating John with his index finger but otherwise doing nothing to arouse or stimulate him. John was surprised at the lack of actual pain. Being stretched felt odd to be sure, not exactly comfortable, and definitely foreign but that didn’t mean it felt bad. It didn’t help that Sherlock kept reporting things to him. “I’m almost fully erect John, it’s interesting, I didn’t think my foreskin would retract as much as it did.” And then, “I’m not sure I’m going to fit. By my calculations I think it prudent to use another finger, is that alright?” He was already up to two but what could John say? He nodded his head and Sherlock proceeded in silence until he eventually said, “You’re not even a bit erect John, are we sure this is going to work?”

Deciding an answer was impossible at this point John assessed himself, he felt well and truly stretched. Sherlock had been liberal with the lube at least but now John felt sticky, cool in strange places, and a bit shaky in the thigh department. Awkwardly he turned himself around to face Sherlock once more. He still needed to make Sherlock orgasm and to bite his bonding gland, “I don’t know Sherlock but we’re going to give this a try, is that okay?”

Sherlock looked strange as he used a damp flannel to clean the excess lube from his hand. He was pale and flushed at the same time. His eyes were dramatically dilated and John realized that Sherlock was well and truly aroused. He felt something stir inside him as he took in the man’s obvious desire because Sherlock could hardly stop himself from looking at John’s body and now his hands were beginning to wander because John was finally feeling a twinge of interest. He was making Sherlock feel that way and that information made a little something spark deep inside him. Sherlock’s cock had indeed filled out and it was dauntingly large looking. John reminded himself that no matter what this was going to happen eventually and Sherlock was always going to be a better choice than his alternatives. Sherlock looked intently at John, “I don’t want to hurt you. I want you to enjoy this as much as you can. What can I do to increase the pleasure you can experience?”

So artless. John was charmed all over again and answered Sherlock honestly, “I’m not sure. I like a lot of physical contact normally but I’ve never been with a man and this is going to hurt a bit. Maybe you can begin touching me? Caresses are good normally.”

“Like this?” Sherlock’s hands began to wander slowly. He rubbed over John’s back and sides, and moved to slide over his chest. It felt nice. Sherlock’s hands were large and warm, and John shivered when Sherlock slid two fingers around one of John’s nipples and watched it peak. John was surprised when Sherlock leaned forward and licked at it before beginning to kiss his way over John’s chest and up his throat. It felt nicer and nicer and John realized that he was kissing Sherlock back and that he was now finally becoming aroused.

Reaching back John grasped Sherlock and positioned the head of his cock against his anus. Bearing down John slowly pushed himself onto Sherlock who was clawing his hips a bit. John’s eyes were wide as he felt the wide flare of the glans. That did not feel marvelous. Sherlock’s cock was heavier at the end and John was relieved when he slowly worked the glans in and made his way to the slightly narrower shaft closer to the base. Like Sherlock’s fingers the stretch was foreign but not exactly painful. Exhaling carefully he kept sliding down slowly, cautiously. John lost the beginnings of his erection but he could hear Sherlock’s heart thundering and his breath begin to catch. It took a long time and both of them were flushed and sweaty by the time John was done working all of Sherlock into his body and John was pretty certain he didn’t like it. He did however very much like kissing Sherlock, and the way Sherlock was touching him was extremely pleasant. Sherlock seemed concerned, his brows knitting before he reached out and began caressing John with greater care. Taking his limp cock in hand Sherlock began to stroke John as John began to move. It seemed to make everything come along nicely and he finally got hard, “Let me try this…” Sherlock shifted a bit, thrusting slow and cautiously as he watched John’s face closely. John gasped as Sherlock managed to stimulate his prostate a bit. That was very nice indeed and Sherlock did it again.

Sherlock was definitely a master of observation because he seemed to be figuring out what John liked before John did. Each thrust and caress seemed to deliver a measure of confidence to the dark haired man and after a while John realized he was rocking back and forth on Sherlock’s cock, his breath coming hard and ragged as his cock fucked through Sherlock’s long fingers. The pale slim hand pulled away for a minute and John almost growled as he watched Sherlock lick a broad strip across his own palm before returning it to John’s cock. A familiar curl of heat was building and John felt triumphant. This was happening so much faster than he would ever have anticipated! He was close, so very close to orgasm. Sherlock was moaning softly each time John pushed back down and his long fingers were digging into John’s hips and thighs as he began to push John down harder. There was a look of almost hidden surprise on Sherlock’s face. Clearly
he hadn’t been able to factor in the actual level of pleasure having sex brought and he was having a bit of difficulty restraining himself.

John instinctively kissed and licked at Sherlock’s neck and exulted in the almost pained cries of delight coming from the man. John couldn’t believe how good this really was, how incredible it felt to have a cock sliding in and out of him, to have another man’s hand on his shaft. It wasn’t going to be long now and suddenly Sherlock almost stilled, his hips still jerking a bit and his eyes beginning to squeeze shut. He was on the precipice of orgasm so without hesitation John pushed Sherlock’s head to the side and bit down as hard as he could while he rode Sherlock with short fast thrusts. Fluid washed over his tongue and it was bitter at first, then John’s mouth filled with something thick, rich, and delicious. He found he was holding Sherlock tight, his arms wrapped around Sherlock’s head and shoulders to keep him in place while his hips worked instinctively and he swallowed convulsively.

Sherlock moaned loudly, his body almost thrashing and his fingernails raking down John’s back, tearing his skin a bit but for some reason the pain was just what John needed to tip over the edge and with his mouth still latched onto Sherlock’s neck John reached orgasm. It began deep inside him and rushed outward but it was different now. It was as if John were having two orgasms, as if his body were feeling what Sherlock was feeling and for a disorienting minute John wasn’t sure where he was or who he was with because the unexpected euphoria of the bonding chemicals had slammed into his brain and he was growing his way through an overload of pleasure. It grew and grew and John heard Sherlock’s heart racing in time with his, heard their gasps coming in harmony as they jerked against each other, grinding together as they held on tighter and tighter.

The entire universe was spinning around them and John could feel it all, hear it all, smell it all, and if he could open his eyes John was sure he could see right through the bits and pieces that made up the matter around them and view infinity itself. Distantly he could hear Sherlock sobbing his name, his thin arms wrapped so tight around John’s ribs that he could barely breathe but then John realized he was still holding onto Sherlock tightly, his fingers curled painfully in Sherlock’s hair, and that he was drinking down the blood and chemicals that seeped from the wound on the tall man’s neck like it was ambrosia.

When John opened his eyes next it was late the next morning and Sherlock was sleeping beside him, his arms still snaked around John, his face completely lax. The bite on his neck already looked well healed, merely a jagged ring of red that would eventually fade into pale scars shaped like John’s teeth. John could feel something different. He felt calm and when he looked around he found that his reflexes had changed. Now when he wanted to look closely at something his vision zoomed in slowly instead of racing in with dizzying speeds that made John ill and gave him vertigo. He listened and heard Sherlock’s heartbeat. It was beautiful, booming, strong, and steady. John pressed his ear to his mate’s chest and closed his eyes to listen to it. He listened to Sherlock’s lungs and decided to encourage his lover to quit smoking or to at least slow down, before he also decided that Sherlock’s personal scent was possibly one of the most divine things John had ever encountered. John now understood what Sherlock meant when he’d explained how he’d feel about his new mate. He felt so drawn to his lover, Sherlock was incredible. Without a thought John leaned in and tenderly kissed him, Sherlock’s eyes opened and he was giving John a confused look. “What are you doing?” he mumbled against John’s mouth.

John pulled back, entirely embarrassed with his impulse, “Um…sorry? I don’t know. I woke up and you looked…kissing you? Is that bad?”

Sherlock looked suspicious but slowly said, “No.” and looked confused as if surprised by his own answer. His cheeks pinked the tiniest bit, no one would have noticed except for John who suddenly felt like he could see everything about Sherlock. His lover was uncomfortable, ill-at-ease, and unsure.

John blushed a bit more and felt awful as he pulled back further. “Sorry. I guess it’s the new bond. I just felt very affectionate and very attracted so I wanted to kiss you. I’m sorry. I guess I over-stepped.”

Now Sherlock was the one blushing and he reached out for John, laying his large hand over John’s heart without pause, “Apologies John, I didn’t mean to make you feel bad. I’m just not used to being kissed awake. It was a bit of a surprise but not an unwelcome one.” Sherlock’s hand slid up until he cupped John’s jaw and it felt good.

“You’re not angry?” John felt the need to ensure Sherlock’s comfort. Everything about him seemed oriented toward the tall spare man laying naked by his side. John felt protective and wondered at the strength of his compulsions because he wanted to kiss Sherlock again. Instead he reached out and laid his hand on Sherlock’s chest, and Sherlock covered it with his and pressed it tight.

“No I’m not angry John.” John was relieved when Sherlock pulled him into his arms and treated him to a very thorough morning kiss. Both of them were smiling foolishly when it was done and Sherlock bit his lip before shrugging and saying, “It’s the bonding chemicals.”

Ah yes. Both of them were filled to the brim with them, their bodies literally becoming attuned to the other. John was merely reacting to the instincts they encouraged, it wasn’t like he was falling in love with Sherlock, not really. John kept smiling despite the facts, “I know but it feels nice doesn’t it?” It felt like contentment and satisfaction had blended themselves together and knitted him to Sherlock. John had never felt so wonderful. He felt strong and powerful, but calm and centred.

Sherlock was staring at him, his beautiful eyes wide, “It is remarkable.” he said softly. “I can feel my mind processing at an exponentially higher rate. I can feel you like I’m tapped right into you, it’s astonishing. I can see how you feel, it’s as if your emotions have colors of their own and I can
see that you are happy right now. It’s lovely. This is very different than what I’d been led to expect in a bond. I didn’t realize it would sink so deeply.” Sherlock’s brow knitted again, this time in confusion, “You are able to sense so many different things at once John. How it must have been driving you mad. I’m sorry John, I wish I’d met you sooner. It didn’t need to be so difficult but that’s over now. I can help you, even now.”

John was the one who was feeling confused until he felt something fill his mind. It was outrageously bright, an explosive maelstrom of razor sharp edges, a prickly invasion and absolutely beautiful blissful chaotic storm of energy that tickled his mind and sliced away all the little shackles he’d created to restrain his newly enhanced senses. He was overwhelmed with his mate’s presence but it wasn’t a threat, it was incredible. Sherlock rooted out everything John had done to cripple himself, deftly undoing one block after another before smoothing everything back down and when he was done their minds were in exquisite synchronicity with one another. John opened eyes he hadn’t realized were closed and found Sherlock staring rapely at him, “John you are absolutely the most magnificent person I’ve ever encountered. Such savagery! Such control. I…the things you could do John!”

John felt pride at his mate’s words. He was worthy in Sherlock’s eyes and it felt good. “Not too damaged then?” He didn’t want his mate to fear for their safety. John was more than capable of protecting them both, he’s spent years in the army learning a thousand different ways to protect Sherlock. He’d use all his knowledge to keep his mate safe.

Sherlock shook his head slowly, “I don’t know what you have been told John Watson but you are anything but damaged. You are stupendous. You are nothing like any Sentinel I’ve ever encountered. You have no idea how powerful you are do you John? You shouldn’t even be able to sense anything beyond this room, even without the shielding but you can, can’t you? How far can you sense John?” Sherlock lay him back onto the pillow and stroked John’s eyes gently shut, “Allow yourself to drift John, let your senses reach out. Don’t worry, I’m right here to bring you back. Go as far as you can, I’m right here.”

Sherlock was inside John’s mind but unlike the fears he had fostered all his Guide’s presence seemed to do was enable John to feel moored and liberated at the same time. Sherlock was John’s rock, his anchor. He was so smart, so fucking brilliant, John had faith that every possible contingency had been considered. His mate would never endanger him but Sherlock was so curious and so was John. He wasn’t afraid to close his eyes so he could hear, so he could smell, so he could touch the air. He reached out beyond the room, into the hallway, beyond the exterior wall and kept going. He was high above Baker Street, racing over buildings, reaching and reaching until… “Someone is playing live music at the park. I can feel the vibrations in the ground.”

“Which park John?” asked Sherlock softly, his hand resting on John’s belly, “Can you tell?”

John thought he could smell water, suddenly an impression passed through him, “Hyde Park.”

Sherlock pulled away again, once more appearing to be completely astounded, “That’s over four miles away John! Only Sentinels with advanced training can reach even half that distance!”

John didn’t know what to say, “That’s bad?” Was that wrong?

Sherlock was shaking his head slowly and smiling softly, approval in his voice, “No John, that’s not bad at all. In fact, this is only reinforcing my claim of you being the best present I could ever have gotten.” Sherlock pulled John over for a quick kiss before letting him lay back again while he explained, “Sentinels and Guides operate on a system of authority based on strength. All sorts of variables are calculated in to determine a Pair’s actual status but I’m going to say that our attributes combined make us Prime contenders. It’s something my family had always hoped for me, especially when Mycroft failed to Emerge.”

A jolt of fear and horror gripped John. Primes were never spoken of. They were the ultimate power for Guides and Sentinels, mysterious and much feared judges and executioners who roamed the streets exacting their brand of justice. Primes very seldom took the law into their own hands but when they did there was no reprisal. They were above the law even as they dedicated their lives to it. They’d be beyond anyone’s reach but the mere idea was terrifying that his mate might be able to have that kind of power and that his family had sought it for him, “Is that what you want?”

Sherlock felt John’s reaction and instantly pulled his Sentinel close to soothe him, “I had not given it serious consideration though not being troubled by anyone would be nice. There are a great many obligations to being a Prime, I feel I am far too busy to honor those many commitments. I prefer to exact my own sort of justice.” Consulting detective, the career that obviously annoyed Mycroft and probably was not sanctioned by a Tower dominated family. John was suddenly proud of Sherlock’s defiance. It couldn’t have been easy to keep refusing to bond with a Tower Sentinel.

Letting John go Sherlock rolled out of bed and padded away naked without another word. John heard the shower go on, “Hurry up John, the hot water won’t last forever!” Sherlock sounded irritable but he smelled bashful and John was nearly in the bathroom before he realized he’d just obeyed.

“Oh! None of that mind-control crap!” he frowned. This was exactly what he’d been dreading and it was already beginning. John could smell the shy scent from Sherlock become concerned and then irritated. He could smell how Sherlock was feeling? Was that normal?

“Oh for goodness sake John, I didn’t use my abilities on you. You were in the army for two
decades, you’re conditioned to obey a firm voice. This is what it feels like to be controlled.” John found himself walking to the stall, pushing aside the curtain and stepping in beside his mate. As soon as the curtain was drawn shut Sherlock obviously withdrew but he looked sick, “I will never do that to you unless it’s entirely unavoidable John. I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

John was sickened as well and rigid with stress and fear. He was horrified, this was his worst nightmare manifest! He hadn’t felt Sherlock take him, he had just moved, his mind not even noticing that his body was being motivated by another mind. Sentinels were made for this, made to be used like a mobile force of destruction while their Guide remained safe. John was now no better than a walking weapon, something to be used at will or set aside. His hands were shaking and Sherlock looked entirely distressed when John said, “I think I’m going to throw up.”

He got ill right there in the shower but Sherlock didn’t protest. He cleaned John up without hesitation, washing the mess away without a word. The detective poured out a handful of body wash and cleaned John all over before wrapping his long arms around the soldier, “I’m sorry John. Never again, I swear, not unless there’s absolutely no choice. I promise John. You are not mindless and I won’t have you that way.” Sherlock was obviously as distraught as John was and for a moment John wondered if it was because of their bond. Sherlock was inside his mind, tenderly dousing the little flares of upset that existed, his penitence genuine, “You are a fascinating man John Watson. You are strong, experienced, and I will not allow anyone to control you. I will protect you from all that has gone wrong with Pairs. You are my Sentinel, and mine alone. You are very new and entirely untaught but I will help you. We won’t be anything like those others, I won’t have it. You will be your own man John Watson, I insist upon it.”

Sherlock pressed his lips to John’s temple and John closed his eyes. Suddenly both of them seemed to be standing in the front room even though John could feel the shower raining warm water down on them, and Sherlock appeared to be locking the front door. He held up a shining key and showed it to John, “You are mine.” his voice boomed. It seemed to be coming from all directions. “My Sentinel. No one else will ever be able to enter here except for us.” John felt Sherlock. He was in John’s mind, sinking into his brain, into all the molecules that made up his being. All the stresses of the last several months bled away slowly until John felt perfectly normal, almost like he had before he joined the army.

“What did you do?” he felt clear. His shoulder was barely aching and his hip felt perfect too. John realized there had been a dull pressure on his brain for so long he’d grown accustomed to it but Sherlock had removed it somehow. It was like waking up after having a headache and he felt renewed.

“I have shielded you. One of the things they don’t mention is that any Guide can access any Sentinel. That’s how Sentinels are made. Many Guides wear Sentinels like gloves, taking them off and on at will, and do not stop behaving that way even after they bond to a Sentinel of their own. I will not permit another to use what is mine, and you are mine John.” Possessiveness filled Sherlock but instead of being repelled John was comforted. Sherlock was helping him! Sherlock was protecting him from the one thing John could not protect himself from! “Ordinary people won’t know about us. We’ll just seem like regular men to them. If you want, we don’t have to mention our bond. I know you’re straight, you’ll want to pursue a relationship eventually but John, no woman is going to want to be with a Sentinel no matter how shielded they are. I won’t stand in your way though, if you want to try.”

Well that hurt. Sherlock was done with him already? John stiffened and pulled out of his Guide’s embrace, “Er. Okay.” he said miserably. Why did he feel so down? Sherlock wasn’t lying, John was straight. He’d already thought about dating and here his Guide was, making it possible for him but he didn’t feel grateful. He felt rejected and his heart hurt a bit.

Sherlock sighed and shut the water off. They dried off, John’s jaw clenched tight. He made to leave the bathroom but Sherlock’s hand stayed him, “John?” John stopped moving and Sherlock sighed again, “John I’m not like most people, you must certainly realize this by now. I consider my body to be mere transport and I bow to its needs as little as possible. My mind is what is important, and what I can do with it. I tend it constantly but I also understand that you are not this way. You ironically are a very feeling person where I am not though it should be in my nature to be so. You will desire the comfort and intimacy of a close relationship I may never be able to provide you. Already your welfare is my primary concern, that fact will never change John, not ever. If keeping you happy means letting you date and hiding that you are a Sentinel then that is what I shall do.”

Sherlock looked stoic but John could see he wasn’t. His Guide would keep his word, John could see that but it would not make Sherlock happy and it made John feel awful. “We’ll play it by ear. I can’t imagine I’ll get a lot of dates though, not with wearing your wedding ring.”

Sherlock tried not to smile but he did, and he smelled pleased. John felt good when Sherlock patted a bit and nodded. “Well I suppose John. We’ll get that sorted later on.” John felt better knowing that Sherlock wanted people to see that they were paired, even if it was mistaken as merely being spouses. It didn’t feel odd to want to be known as Sherlock’s, it felt right. They got dressed and John cooked breakfast for both of them while Sherlock checked his emails. “Case John.” stated Sherlock firmly and then glanced at the table where John was just setting down two plates, “I don’t eat while on a case. It slows me down.”

“Well until we get there, we’re not on the case. We have things to do first, right? Lucky you!” John slid the bacon and eggs closer to Sherlock and set a stack of toast down, “Most important meal of the day.” he said cheerily and made tea to go with it.

Sherlock was a bit scowly but he ate his plate clean, ignoring his toast and tea. “I hope you appreciate the efforts I’m going through John Watson.” he snapped when he was done.
John sipped his tea, “All of it.” he said and kept his smile to himself as Sherlock almost snarled but crunched his toast down quickly and guzzled his tea. “Excellent.” praised John and Sherlock narrowed his eyes.

“I know what you are doing John Watson.” he said, his voice dire, “It will not work.”

“My job is to protect you and to look after you, that’s what I’m doing except I’m doing it my way. That’s what you wanted wasn’t it, for us to be nothing like Them?” asked John sweetly and enjoyed the disgruntled look on Sherlock’s face. “We might be gone for ages today. I won’t make you eat again until I think you need it but if I decide then that’s it Sherlock, you’ll eat.”

“Why in the world should I…” began the detective but John cut him right off.

“We are a Pair now Sherlock, I need you healthy so you can keep me sane. You have a risky job, I have none. If something happens to you I lose everything. I’m your Sentinel but I’m also a doctor, or I was. Your BMI is way off. You’re too thin for someone your height even factoring in your natural slimness. You need to eat more, it will help you concentrate. You do your job Sherlock and I’ll do mine. Agreed?”

Sherlock wouldn’t agree but instead said in a testy voice, “You are still a doctor. Nothing is stopping you from getting a boring clinic job though I would have thought working with me would have interested you.”

John could smell the hurt on Sherlock and he was aghast at how much of it there was, “Hey,” he said, moving close to his mate instinctively, “Hey don’t,” John took Sherlock’s hand because he could still smell distress, “Don’t feel that way. I’d love to work with you all the time. I just want to pay my own way. I don’t want to be a burden or an obligation to you.” John had his pride, he could look after himself.

Sherlock rolled his eyes yet again but the hurt smell was fading away and John decided Sherlock could roll his eyes all he wanted, “You cannot be an obligation John, or a burden, not to me. You are my Sentinel and we are bonded now. You are part of me, I want to look after you as well. Fine. If I have to eat regularly then you have to sleep with me.”

“What? Why?” John rather liked his little room. It was snug and all for him. All his few things fit perfectly in there and John felt safe.

“You have night terrors John, I can help you but I can’t unless I’m there. You are my Sentinel so you can sleep in my bed, or rather, our bed.” Sherlock sounded perfectly reasonable.

“Our bed?”

“Yes of course John, ours. What’s mine is yours and what’s yours is mine, we’re bonded. We’re going to register right now in fact.” Sherlock got up and grabbed his jacket, “Now John.” Sherlock was standing by the door and looking impatient. John still had his breakfast fork in his hand, he hadn’t even finished his tea yet.

“Keep your pants on.” groused John who took a minute to dump the dishes in the sink before tugging on his coat and following his Guide to the street. Sherlock flagged down a cab and soon they were weaving their way through a part of London John had always avoided. He swallowed nervously and began to feel that familiar sense of dread. He didn’t want to do this but they had to. They were going to the Tower.
Sherlock and John have bonded and it is such a change for both men. Despite the distraction of a case it is imperative to register their union at the Tower, the very last place in the world John Watson wants to be, the place he has feared for so long.

Dread built the closer they got. Logically John knew he had no reason to fear he was already bonded. If he wanted to he could waltz through the Tower and no Guide anywhere could trouble him. Sherlock had seen to that. John didn’t notice his breath coming faster or his fists curling tight. He could hear something knocking in the engine and the sound of the tires rolling over the pavements was uneven, the tires needed rotating. The smell of so many things began to whirl around him and John’s head began to hurt.

Bliss filled him suddenly and a voice in his mind just went Shhh John. We are fine. We will be fine. Sherlock’s hand was covering his and John felt all the worry and fear trickle away as if lanced, just leaking out of his psyche until he was sure and calm. John glanced at Sherlock but his Guide was looking out the window, no one would need to know he was holding John’s hand and filling him with marvelous calm and confidence. He needed it and he squeezed his Guide’s hand gratefully.

The Tower was as menacing as John thought it would be. The building was stark, all straight lines and reflective glass. You couldn’t get anywhere near it, it was surrounded by a thick heavy wall that stretched up nearly two stories. No one ever tried to breach it. Not a soul wanted to be close to the place Sentinels and Guides ruled with impunity. Sherlock strode in as if he owned it. He ignored the functionaries that tried to get him to sign in and swept John off to a dimly lit and blandly colored room. A clerk was entering data and looked startled when Sherlock stopped right in front of him. John somehow knew the man was an un-bonded Guide, “Attend!” Sherlock demanded haughtily, the Guide was practically radiating power, the force of his personality barely leashed and the clerk’s expression grew awed. Sherlock nodded at John, “I am here to register my Sentinel, Captain John Hamish Watson, MD. Make sure his medical license remains active; I need that. Ensure all his paperwork is up to date. You have twenty minutes.” Sherlock glared balefully at the young man who was nearly jumping out his chair to serve the overwhelming Guide.

John and Sherlock were brought to a testing room where Sherlock breezed through a series of exams that only confirmed what was in his official records, his status as an incredibly powerful and adept Guide. When it came time to test John another Guide stepped forward but Sherlock interceded, “No. John was not Tower trained. These tests are irrelevant. Skip to the last exam, the only one that matters.”

John and Sherlock were brought to separate small white rooms furnished only with a single comfortable chair and a microphone and speaker. Uncomfortably he allowed the door to be closed and felt Sherlock’s gentle mental touch caress his mind just before shields muted his contact. Sherlock was sealed away from him and only the Guide’s personal assurance that he would be entirely unharmed kept John from growing tense.

A disembodied voice asked him to perceive a series of things. He was asked to listen for different sounds, all in various locations of the Tower, all in unshielded hallways or open spaces. After a while the questions lead him to cast various senses out further and further, monitors at the other end verifying that what he was reporting was so. The room darkened at one point and images flowed across the blank walls. John was asked to find or identify various shapes and themes and he grew irritated. His work with Sherlock had already taught John the value of seeing deeply, with his enhancements seeing and observing was a process that occurred nearly as quickly as it did for Sherlock. Restlessly he spoke his answers out and hoped that this wasn’t all for nothing. Finally the test ended with John sensing a small device at the wall of the property and unexpectedly the door opened. John was allowed out and eagerly he pushed the door to Sherlock’s cell open. The Guide’s hand was already on the knob and with relief they reunited. Sherlock cupped John’s face in his hand and looked intently at him, assessing John’s level of distress but apart from some minor anxiety he was fine, “What are they looking for?”

Sherlock’s hand dropped away and they walked back to the registration office. Everything had taken only an hour but John felt wrung out. “They’re determining your status John. Your physical requirement was assessed based on your military records, and even detracting several points for your injuries your rating is still very high, especially compared to Sentinels who have spent years living right here and doing nothing more strenuous than talking about London. The rest of your sensory capabilities have been gauged, the variables are calculated, and the system will automatically determine your overall status and rating.” Sherlock was tense, poised to find out and clearly trying to be patient. John was a soldier used to the uncomfortable times between battles and distracted his mate by idly toy ing with his fingers, tapping little jokes in Morse code that made Sherlock’s lips twitch with suppressed laughter.

After another wait the clerk produced two registration forms and Sherlock nearly shouted at him. “Were you not listening? John was a Captain in the army, why does this not reflect that? Are you trying to annoy me? Fix this mess!” Sherlock tore the cards up and tossed them back. The clerk
was flustered and refilled the forms one more time, confirming each window of information with Sherlock before proceeding. He hit a key before pausing and blanched, “What is it?” demanded Sherlock who sounded entirely annoyed.

“My apologies Guide Holmes. I cannot complete your registration, your rating is above my current level of authority to approve. There is a password requirement Sir, I can’t process anything without it,” said the young Guide politely. He smelled of anxiety and a little bit of reverence. His head nodded to the monitor and Sherlock twisted it around, “Only one person has the …” John heard Sherlock’s heart beat faster for only a moment before the Guide exerted control over his own body and relaxed back into arrogant complacency.

“I know what the password is. I am the reason it even exists. Turn your head.” the man wouldn’t and John stepped forward to glare at him. Sherlock had made his request clear! The Guide blanched and turned his face. John turned away as well but he could hear the keys Sherlock tapped in. His ears measured the cadence of the strikes and John knew which letters Sherlock was choosing R-E-D-B-E-A-R-D. Suddenly the printer kicked into life and began to spew a stack of forms out. Sherlock flipped through them, extracted several, drew a large line through those, initialed them and set them aside. Sherlock took a different pen from the desk, grabbed the remaining stack and signed everything quickly. “John? Do you trust me?”

Sherlock’s voice was so gentle compared to how he had spoken to the clerk and he was offering the pen to his Sentinel with a small hopeful smile, “Yes.” said John, smiling back. He did, even if he didn’t exactly know why but John could feel that time wasn’t on their side and that signing expeditiously was only prudent. He leaned over the stack and carefully penned his name where indicated. The clerk stood them against a backdrop, snapped off several shots of them, and when Sherlock chose the ones he liked both of them sat down and waited for the registration process to complete. The clerk worked efficiently now, printing and noting details. A knock at the door half an hour later produced another clerk, a woman this time, who respectfully handed Sherlock a small packet. Without a word Sherlock took it and led John out of the building. No one tried to stop them.

It wasn’t until they got back into the cab that Sherlock exhaled, “I can’t believe I just did that.” John was going to ask but Sherlock quickly shook his head and eyed the driver. Sherlock looked wound up but not unhappy. He smelled of anticipation and eagerness. His Guide had something big to tell John but they would have to wait for a discrete place to speak. He knew how to be patient so John remained silent but curiosity was eating at him. He realized he was holding Sherlock’s hand again and neither of them had noticed, they were just sitting there with their fingers laced together. Sherlock leaned forward and gave the driver the address to a jeweler. When they arrived John paid for the ride with the card Sherlock had given him and Sherlock led him inside a small ancient looking building, “Gold or silver John?” asked Sherlock, and that softness was in his voice once more, and in his smile as well.

John looked. There were long cases filled with rings of all sorts. He thought for only a second, “Silver.” that would look best on Sherlock and he was pleased to see a small blush grace the detective’s cheeks as he clearly caught John’s feelings of appreciation. They browsed the selection slowly, their hands still linked. The woman behind the counter was human and clearly she thought their affection was sweet.

“That one?” asked John. He pointed to a ring that was silver but instead of the round fatness of a normal wedding ring this one was made of a squared off strip of metal bent into a circle. For some reason John liked it.

“Excellent choice John, I was looking at that one too.” said Sherlock softly. He caught the woman’s eye and soon they were trying different sizes to see what worked for them. Sherlock needed a slightly larger ring because his knuckles were so large, but John’s ring wasn’t much smaller for all his fingers were shorter. He was compact compared to his Guide, stocky almost. John was fine with his appearance and Sherlock didn’t seem to mind either. As soon as they paid they took turns putting their new rings on each other and smiled at each other.

John felt very satisfied. He and Sherlock had sidestepped every single extraneous part of becoming Paired, had foregone a human wedding, and were now linked inextricably together both physically and legally. The rings were like bows on a present, mere adornment but John loved his. He felt a surge of warm feeling for his Guide and grinned up at him and saw that Sherlock’s face looked as content as John felt, “When do the bonding chemicals wear off?” asked John with an ever bigger smile. It had to be the bonding agents but still, how had he not thought Sherlock attractive? The Guide was strangely beautiful, his eyes and his hair and his pale skin making him seem ethereal. “I really want to kiss you. Would that be alright?”

Sherlock just leaned in and caught John’s mouth with his and for a long minute they were wrapped up in only each other. A discrete cough reminded them that they were in a public space but Sherlock just said over his shoulder, “Excuse us please, only we’ve just bonded.”

“Oh that’s just lovely dears,” exclaimed the lady, “Congratulations on your union sirs!”

“Thank you,” said John with a grin, “Really. Thanks.” John felt almost giddy, euphoric even. Sherlock was amazing, just amazing and he smelled incredible, savory, sweet, complex, dark, rich, layered, just utter heaven.

It was obvious Sherlock could see how John was feeling, “Come along John.” said Sherlock, color high on his pale cheeks. Hand in hand they left the shop and as a unit they lost all their happy feelings as they watched Sherlock’s brother step out of a long black car now parked directly in front of them. Mycroft looked livid, “Let’s go John.” said Sherlock calmly.
Sherlock attempted to walk away but Mycroft stepped sharply forward, his voice carefully controlled. “Stop. You have gone too far Sherlock. Breaking into the Tower is an offense punishable by life imprisonment and tampering with the system to register a false bond is reprehensible!”

Sherlock turned on his heel and glared right back at his brother, his mouth opening to retort except John was there and he was white-hot with fury. “No one shouted at his Guide! No one, not even Mycroft Holmes, “We didn’t break in. We walking in off the street. Your security is abominable if you were trying to keep anyone out. The registration isn’t false. Sherlock and I are bonded.” John’s words were dripping with contempt.

Mycroft looked if possible even more furious than ever and he smelled of disbelief and anger. He glared at John, “Bonded? Impossible. Sherlock is of the highest ranks, he needs a strong Sentinel, not some broken toy soldier.”

Sherlock was in his brother’s face in an instant and he looked as furious as John felt, “Never dispare John in front of me.” With icy calm Sherlock tugged his shirt collar open and tilted his head dramatically. There was no mistaking the bond-bite and it was still very pink and clearly new and Mycroft reeked of exasperated anger, “I expect nothing but respect for my Sentinel.”

John stilled, his eyes fixed on Mycroft. If the man made a single wrong move he would be sorry so many different ways. John was relaxed, collected. He didn’t get flustered under pressure, this ponce had no idea what real pressure was like. Mycroft was standing there and John could practically smell the rage building. The tall man sneered, his mouth twisting into a darkly delighted smile, “If your little friend is indeed a Sentinel then he is under my jurisdiction.” He sounded triumphant.

“No. I don’t believe so,” tilting his head and dramatically whispering loudly the detective breathed out one word. “Redhead.” Sherlock smiled at his brother and John watched as the man went pale, staggered back two steps. Sherlock was practically gloating, “Yes, it’s done. Your system is lovely by the way. Thanks for streamlining all of that.”

“What did you do Sherlock?” asked Mycroft and he looked on the verge of cracking. Mycroft didn’t look good angry. His face looked pinched and petulant. He stank of rage and frustration and John was glad of it. Sherlock had done something that infuriated the government official to the point that Mycroft was a hair’s breadth away from foaming at the mouth.

“I simply utilized the plan you had already prepared Mycroft.” and John now noted that Mycroft smelled uneasy and Sherlock smelled of an anger that was not new. “I found it Mycroft. The file you said didn’t exist. The plans you said you never made. The plans you swore on our family name that you would never once consider.”

Sherlock smelled of cold fury and the hairs on the back of John’s neck pricked. What was this? His gaze latched onto the face in front of him and John watched Mycroft visibly attempt to rally, his mouth clearly attempting to spin the facts his way, “It’s not what you think Sherlock. You need a Sentinel.” He smelled desperate. “We need allies, it was prudent.” Mycroft was obviously losing ground here but he rallied, “You have suppressed yourself so much you have less emotional awareness than an ordinary human. Can you even function the way your Sentinel requires?” John could hear Mycroft’s heart pick up in pace, an infinitesimal rise that would probably be misunderstood by another Sentinel but John was a doctor, Mycroft had something else planned, something more than a simple street confrontation with his brother. He grew wary.

“His name is John,” said Sherlock softly and it sounded like a warning, “Don’t dismiss him out of hand Mycroft and never question my choice in this regard. You know as well as I that what has been done cannot be undone. As for the file…you should have known I would never endure an involuntary bond. I would kill myself first.”

John felt jealous rage shoot through him and a burst of adrenaline raced through his system. Something was threatening his Guide and without thought he cast his senses as wide as they would go and he felt them. In the streets around them Pairs were everywhere and they were heading toward them. “They’re coming.” John reported coldly. Pairs were converging on them from all directions. Mycroft must have called every single Pair in London. There was nowhere to run or hide though John searched desperately. He couldn’t find someplace they hadn’t covered.

“Stop,” asked Mycroft and he looked on the verge of cracking. Mycroft didn’t look good angry. His face looked pinched and petulant. He stank of rage and frustration and John was glad of it. Sherlock had done something that infuriated the government official to the point that Mycroft was a hair’s breadth away from foaming at the mouth.

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Well, he’d dug in before. Bracing himself John stood firm beside his Guide, his face as expressionless as Sherlock’s. He noted the proud scent that came from his Guide, as well as a thread of humility. Sherlock wasn’t accustomed to having anyone stand up for him or with him. John deliberately took his Guide’s hand. They were a Pair now, troubling one of them was troubling both of them.

Mycroft was examining John now and John did not care for the interest on the elder Holmes’ face. Turning away from John Mycroft looked at his brother and said condescendingly, “What did you think would happen Sherlock? Did you think I would just let you slip off to continue being a detective? That I would allow you to bond with some unknown from the streets? No. You are coming to work for the Tower. Victor is waiting.”

John did not mistake the scent of revulsion that filled his Guide. Without hesitation the soldier snarled, “We are bonded. Whoever Victor is, he can’t have Sherlock. He’s mine.” John stepped directly between his Guide and the man who ran the Sentinels of Europe. “Even I know bonds can’t be broken. He’s mine, you flat out can’t have him, and no one else can have him either. I don’t know who this Victor person is but he’s shit out of luck. Sherlock has a Sentinel now so don’t push me too hard Mycroft Holmes. I might be new to this but believe me, I can hold my own if I need to.”
“My brother doesn’t need to be bonded to work with another Sentinel and he knows it. He doesn’t have the authority to refuse. You are both coming to the Tower and Sherlock has a new partner to become very well acquainted with.” Mycroft glanced around at the assembled crowd, relaxing fully. “Take the Sentinel away,” he ordered.

They were surrounded. Pairs gathered thickly and John could smell the leather of their costumes, the ink in their skin, the frightening steadiness of their heartbeats. As soon as Mycroft spoke John felt a pressure come from all sides, his head felt tight, his skin tinged, but that was it. Sherlock was smirking. Mycroft scowled again as he looked at his Pairs and then at John who wasn’t going anywhere, “How is this possible?” he demanded, staring at John in horrified astonishment. “No Sentinel can do this!” John didn’t take his eyes off of Mycroft for a second, the Pairs were irrelevant. They acted on Mycroft’s word alone and if he moved to speak those words John would end him. John didn’t need enhanced strength to take down Mycroft Holmes, he could have done it with ease even before he emerged. John’s reputation in the army was for more than his wildly successful shag record. John was a warrior right down to the bone, he always had been. He had naturally balanced his great destructive skills with healing, the task that pleased him most, it made him feel good while to help people become better. Now that John was one of the Emergent, even if his bond was new, someone like Mycroft had no chance, not against John. He waited calmly and the Guides around him smelled uneasy and confused.

Sherlock looked directly into Mycroft’s eyes and spoke firmly, “He is mine Mycroft. Did you seriously think I would allow those creatures of yours into my Sentinel’s mind? Never, I worked out how to do this years ago, I knew I’d never bond with one of your lackeys. John isn’t like them and he never will be, I won’t allow it. Thanks by the way.” Sherlock was still smiling darkly.

“For what?” asked Mycroft, looking less and less certain of his position in a discussion he had clearly thought to dominate with ease.

Sherlock smelled satisfied and John was relaxing. Somewhere the danger was over. He didn’t know how he knew but he did. Sherlock had done something, John could tell and he trusted his Guide. Sherlock smirked and answered in a light tone, “For getting the paperwork in order. I didn’t bother with the service contract but I took all the rest. John has signed and everything has already been registered through your precious system.” Sherlock pulled out a stack of ID cards and extracted a dark blue one John didn’t recognize but that Mycroft clearly did. The tall man’s eyes widened in shock and John didn’t need enhanced hearing for the choked gasp that came with it, “Don’t your staff keep you notified of the creation of new Primes? Hello everyone and take a good look at us.”

There was stunned silence all around them and John was wondering if Mycroft was going to have a heart attack because his face was beet red with rage and he smelled strangely of anger and frustration. John felt calm, he wasn’t sure if Sherlock was keeping him that way or not but he wasn’t about to ask. Sherlock ignored his sibling and glared at the Pairs who were no longer attempting to crowd them, “Don’t come near us. Don’t interfere with us. Don’t engage with us unless we ask you first. You are not welcome on Baker Street and I mean the entire street, the alleys, and the streets surrounding it for a radius of no less than four miles without invitation.”

“Impossible.” Mycroft looked green. “You can’t have. You can’t be a Prime without a Sentinel from the Tower. No Prime status is issued until you’ve gone through the reviews, completed the tests!”

“Clearly it is not impossible and you have only yourself to blame. No law directly states that a Sentinel must be Tower affiliated, it is only implied and no one argues it. The law only demands that the Pair are bonded and we are. The reviews are based on Tower training, you know as well as I that I was privately trained, and that John is in no way required to attend the Tower now that he’s bonded. The system didn’t question the data it received and since you programmed it yourself you have only yourself to blame for the results it produces. John will never be subjected to your training, not that he needs it. He still excelled at your exams. I am the most powerful Guide in London even if I never bothered with it and John makes your Sentinels look like pathetic posers. You know as well as I that only a Pair stronger than us can strip our status away now that it’s been registered in your system. We’re free of you Mycroft, you’ll never have us under your thumb, you’ll never have me. I win.”

John instantly noticed when Sherlock’s scent began displaying traces of anxiety and John did his best to increase his presence to somehow soothe him. His Guide continued in an impassive voice, as if he weren’t deeply troubled by his own brother’s intentions, “You planned to physically restrain me and allow your bulldog to bond with me. You wanted my skills at your disposal forever didn’t you? Well, no working for free any more brother mine, neither you nor the family will ever gain from John and I will continue consulting as we see fit and we will conduct our duties in the same manner.” Smiling horribly Sherlock’s voice became light, “John has a handgun, register that for us Mycroft, there’s a good chap, not that it matters if you do.” Sherlock turned and walked away and John stayed right with him. He took a hard look at the pairs around them, setting their faces and marks into his mind firmly. These were enemy ranks as far as he was concerned, he would not forget them. No set was tattooed exactly the same way but they all had the same look about them. The Sentinels were dead of eye and disturbingly motionless where the Guides looked animated but soft almost, as if unaccustomed to exerting themselves. All of them gave way, allowing them passage without protest. John shuddered again and reached for Sherlock’s hand without thought once more. His Guide had saved him from this and John would never be ungrateful.

They walked away with their heads high and their backs straight. They walked until they found a cab and then they remained silent for the entire ride home. Sherlock didn’t let go of John for an instant, not even when they got back to Baker Street. It wasn’t until they were in their flat that Sherlock allowed his well contained distress to manifest and John hurried him to the sofa. Sherlock clung to him, shaking and heaving, “You have your greatest fear and I have mine. They
“They’ll never get their hands on you,” swore John as he rocked Sherlock in his arms, kissing his curls and stroking his arm. What a strange shift in everything John once knew. How far they had come in such a short amount of time. Not so long ago John was alone and in pain. Now he was as far from that condition as he could get, safe with his bond-mate, immune from the reaches of all who threatened him, and filled with protective concern over someone who John knew he’d gladly sacrifice himself over. Sherlock was simply brilliant. He was amazing. He was fantastic. In less than a day he almost magically transformed their world from one of isolated uncertainty into being one of strength and power. They literally could live their lives as they chose, they were above all the laws of the land as a Pair, and above the Tower as Primes. He wondered how Sherlock had discovered his brother’s plans, how long ago he’d found out. No wonder Sherlock had turned to drugs! What kind of stress would that place on someone who was most certainly not a high-functioning sociopath. Erase the last word and replace it with *empath*, then you’d have Sherlock. What would it have been like to feel the feelings of everyone around him all the time, those unguarded and ugly things that people experienced but never said out loud. What would an intelligent and feeling child do with all of that? Lock himself away in a safe place, his *mind palace* where only facts existed and *not* emotions, someplace safe where Sherlock could be free, even for a bit. Mycroft said Sherlock was even less feeling than a normal person but that wasn’t true, he wasn’t. John had seen both enough to know that John had been as a child and like John Sherlock could not handle the excess information, or he couldn’t. Their bond had sealed them together, their strengths and weaknesses balancing the other out until John knew Sherlock would always give him what he needed just as he would always give Sherlock what he needed.

“We’re safe now, you’ve made us safe,” John made a promise, “No one will ever touch you. I’ll kill them first.” Mycroft Holmes was now John’s enemy. He had planned to have his own brother raped and bonded against his will! Rage surged up and a possessiveness John would never expected himself capable of welled up with it, “You’re mine Sherlock, only mine. No one can have you, not ever. I’ll never let it happen.” he swore fervently and felt Sherlock’s tremors slowly fade.

Sherlock said nothing so John kept holding him until Sherlock’s body grew limp. Settling himself back John sat grimly holding his mate, allowing his lover to overcome the shock of betrayal and the clear trauma of being so threatened by his kin. *How long had Sherlock been hiding this fear?* It was old, well grown, and deep, he would have been so young. John would root out all of it. Sherlock would never be afraid again, not of anyone, not while John was alive. For a whole hour John sat there patiently and allowed his Guide to recuperate. He didn’t know what it would be like for someone like Sherlock, who had obviously suppressed his empathy to suddenly be required to in top form practically overnight. Sherlock was no ordinary Guide, John knew Sherlock wasn’t fond of emotions and he understood. Sherlock would have spent his entire life listening to people who told him that *being emotional* was his fate. Sherlock would have dug his heels in, it was natural. John would have done the same. He heard Sherlock’s heart-rate increase and his breath become a tiny bit faster. He was awake and he spoke softly, “I love my family but they do not love me. Power matters to them and they can’t have it, not the way they’ve always wanted. I am the first Holmes to Emerge in two generations. They have such hopes of avarice but I cannot permit myself to be used. My brother might have been a good man at one point. He used to protect me but something changed along the way. *Lestrade* is a good man and he loves Mycroft, there must be goodness left but I have not seen it in so long I am beginning to lose hope.”

“We’re Primes now.” stated John baldly, “What does that mean?” He was uncertain now. John knew he knew almost nothing about Sentinels and Guides, and what little he did know was obviously inaccurate. He would have to rely on Sherlock to be exactly what he was meant to be, his Guide. John knew Primes were in a category of their own but his knowledge ended right there.

Sherlock flushed and sounded apologetic, “I couldn’t let the opportunity pass us by. John, *were right there in the Tower unobserved!* Mycroft would never give us that chance to access the system again. I couldn’t explain what it meant when the password was requested, not until we were back here where it was safe. Obviously my brother wanted me to bond with his chosen Sentinel which would be one Victor Trevor, a brute with a well-connected family. I’ve only met Victor once and he is the epitome of everything I find repugnant about Sentinels. *You are so different John, you have no idea how precious you are, how rare.* Sherlock took a shuddering breath, “I know I took huge steps for both of us today but I did it to keep up safe, to keep us free. Yes we are Primes, and we are officially registered as such within Mycroft’s system which is the official database used by the entire European Union to track Pairs everywhere. Mycroft intended to approve the registration personally, that’s why the password was there but he didn’t realize I’d learned what it was. He thought that I wouldn’t recall such a sentimental detail nor believe that he would choose such a word to try and sting me. Redbeard was the name of our dog, he died when I was just a small child, it was very traumatic for me. I suppose Mycroft imagined I would never consider how cold he really is. I came across traces of his plans for Victor and I several months ago, I’ve been looking for a way to stop it this entire time and then you fell into my life.” Sherlock sat up and looked at John gravely, “I have taken you out of the world you are familiar with and without permission I have done the very thing I’ve spent my entire life preventing others from doing to me. I’m sorry John, I know that’s meaningless after the fact but I am, I’m truly sorry for not giving you a chance to choose.”

John wasn’t sure how to feel about that. He had been so terrified of being known as a Sentinel but that was because he did not want to be enslaved by the Tower and used like a faceless nameless tool for the rest of his life. Now he was a bonded Sentinel Prime, immune from all laws except that which he and Sherlock decided to honor together. There was nothing to fear, “You helped us both. I know enough to know you made the only choice possible. No matter what comes of this you don’t have to be sorry for that. I can’t say I particularly enjoy the idea of being so powerful because I can’t think many people do well with that sort of freedom, but if this is what
we are then from now on you and I are going to be equal partners. Did you see those other Sentinels? They were like zombies!”

“Exactly John, and it’s another reason I find you so fascinating, you are more complicated than you appear and I enjoy that quality very much.” Sherlock sighed ruefully. “We’ll still have to deal with Victor and his family. Even if they can’t act directly against us they can still trouble us in a multitude of other ways. You have the status they desired, Victor is a very powerful Sentinel nowhere near your calibre but not weak by any means. Mycroft is tied up with them and has been for years, he and the rest of their cronies fester at the Diogenes Club to hatch their pathetic plans for world domination. I’ll take you there sometime and you can examine the callus on their hands from tenting their fingers diabolically for so long.”

John was giggling at the complete lack of respect in Sherlock’s voice. He could suddenly picture a vast room filled with plush leather chairs and a haze of smoke, filled with elderly people hunched over their myriad plans for conquest and he giggled again. “I feel like I’ve fallen into an alternate dimension.”

“You have John Watson, you most certainly have.” Sherlock was still upset. John knew that this wasn’t something his lover was going to just shake off. He’d been dealing with this for months if not years, the feeling of being betrayed by your own blood wasn’t something anyone should be able to feel easy about, not ever. John only had Harry left and he thought of how horrid she’d made him feel on the one day he’d stayed with her. Sherlock was exposed to Mycroft’s vitriol all the time, and he was a Guide, super-aware of people’s true feelings. He would have felt their contempt for him, how they viewed Sherlock as merely a resource they could capitalize on! Resolute John decided that Sherlock could act any way he wanted in whatever manner pleased him as long as he didn’t hurt anyone, no one was hemming him in! He was too incredible to be forced into a rigid form like the rest of the Sentinels and Guides. John was never letting anyone make Sherlock feel like this again.

“Would you like some tea?” asked John softly, combing his fingers through Sherlock’s hair. After a moment Sherlock nodded, “Alright. I’ll be back in a tic.”

He left Sherlock on the sofa and went to the kitchen to put together tea. He plated some biscuits for his Guide and made himself a sandwich. He was just loading everything onto a tray when a soft delicate sound reached him. It started like a whisper but grew louder and sweeter, Sherlock was playing a violin! Enraptured John almost drifted back into the front room. He set the tray down and sank into his chair. Sherlock put the violin down right away and sipped his tea and ate a biscuit. When John finished his sandwich he eyed the violin, “Have you played for long?”

“Since I was very small, it helped calm me, allowed me to contain the feelings I could not stop.” Sherlock set his cup down carefully, “I was kept in isolation, my family had no idea how to handle a someone who Emerged as a toddler. I was strong even then. Mycroft was always jealous, he wanted to Emerge, he wanted the power of being a Pair and when that didn’t happen he went to work for the government. Now he and his ilk have changed everything about how Pairs used to be, they’ve made them servants of the government instead of watchdogs for the people. London practically exists under a military dictatorship now and no one realizes because the guards aren’t armed they’re just tattooed and collared, allowed to roam the streets to do whatever the Tower tells them to do.” John eyed the violin again, the notes had felt lovely in his ears, against his skin and Sherlock softly asked, “Would you like me to play?”

John nodded and a small blush graced Sherlock’s cheeks again but he stood immediately and picked his instrument up. With his eyes on his Sentinel Sherlock stroked his bow delicately over the strings and began. John’s eyes slid shut and he sagged back into his seat, tea forgotten, and allowed the honeyed notes carry him away. He could smell Sherlock’s reaction, his Guide was bashful, proud, pleased, and oddly eager to continue soothing John as well as himself. The music lifted both of them up until John’s heart was pounding and his mind felt filled with utter tranquility. He opened his eyes and saw that Sherlock was still watching him, a small smile on his face, his eyes bright and warm. Once again without thought John got to his feet, crossed the room, and kissed Sherlock who set his violin down the second John began to move. Their arms wrapped around each other and they kissed passionately, both men stroking the other’s back as they took comfort in one another. Their entire world was changed, the upheaval would be chaotic, and right now they needed each other.

Sherlock’s mobile rang and the discordant noise jarred them out of their blissful communion. With a scowl Sherlock snapped it up and nearly shouted, “What!” into it. His scowl faded away, “Oh, Lestrade. Is it the case? What have you found?”

John heard the DI speaking faintly at first and with only a little effort John heard him clearly. “Mycroft called, said you were off all cases as of now. I’m sorry Sherlock, you can’t work for the MET any more, Tower request.”

“Well that’s unfortunate for the MET but it will hardly stop me from investigating.” John pulled his own mobile out from his pocket and while Sherlock held their ID card to his face while making a rude gesture John snapped off a shot which Sherlock emailed to Lestrade. Both of them smiled when they heard his astonished gasp, “My sincere apologies Prime Holmes. You and your Sentinel are of course welcome to investigate at will.” Lestrade’s voice was tight, he was upset. “I didn’t know you’d bonded Sherlock. Was it John?”

“Well done Lestrade, I see why my brother finds you acceptable. Yes, John Watson is my Sentinel and as Primes you can expect to see a lot of us. Don’t tell Donovan or Anderson, or anyone in fact. I want to enjoy this in person.”

“As you wish Sir.” said Lestrade miserably before disconnecting.
Sherlock sighed, “Mycroft will be in a temper now. I hope he doesn’t take his anger out on his husband.”

“Has he ever done that?” John would find Mycroft right now and kick his gelatious arse all over London if he was a spouse-abuser.

“Not to my knowledge but he can be quite difficult when out of sorts. I suppose Lestrade is the only one who is immune to his repellant qualities. Don’t worry John, if my brother steps out of line you and I now have the power to have words with him. Won’t that be amusing?”

“Don’t go all power-mad on me already, this isn’t for fun Sherlock.” admonished John. “Just because no one local has authority over us doesn’t give us the right to become despotic.”

Sherlock stopped short and came over to John and looked at him gravely, “Indeed John. Leading by example might be the better choice but we have mysteries to solve and cases to finish. The things we can do John!”

“We’re still doing things legally!” insisted John, “What’s the point of using our status to solve crimes if we go around committing them?”

“What about breaking and entering, sometimes I need to look at a crime scene.” Sherlock sounded suspiciously disingenuous.

“You already do that don’t you?” Sherlock flushed but didn’t say no. John shook his head, “We’ll discuss it on a case-to-case basis but I’m serious Sherlock. If we’re going to do this then I think we really need to focus on fixing what’s gone wrong. There’s so much corruption around us, people have it so hard and I can’t see a reason for it. This place is a mess and if you’re really the detective I think you are, and if we really do have the authority you say we do, then I think it’s up to you and I to get to the bottom of this mess. What do you think?”

“How altruistic of you John, I can see your armour shining from here.” Sherlock was smiling and John for once was the one rolling his eyes which only earned him a kiss. “You are a surprising man John Watson, and you most certainly do see far. There is most certainly something wrong, something big, something in the background. It’s been coming for so long and so slowly no one has noticed but you did, was it because you were away for so long? Was London so very different when you returned?”

John thought about it. London had been depressing and bleak, damp and miserable. John had been weak and still healing, fighting the changes as he Emerged, and he had barely paid attention to his surroundings but he had to agree. In the long years he had been away it was like a cloud had settled over the city, one that did not lift, not even on the brightest of days. “There’s something there. I can feel it.”

“Then we shall seek it out my Sentinel, you and I together but not today. Today has been almost more than I can manage, and you are the only being in the world I would ever admit that to.” Sherlock buried his face in John’s neck. “You comfort me John Watson, you are just enough.”

John felt good. He didn’t overwhelm his mate, he made him feel safe and that felt right to John, that’s what he wanted. “Well, then I say its pyjamas and take-away then, how’s that for a plan? We’ll celebrate our new beginnings with Chinese and telly, you know, because we’re wild that way.” Sherlock was trying not to laugh but failing and with a smile and a nod he pushed away to go change while John called in an order. This day had really been a lot, and tomorrow would only be the beginning of a lot of trouble. They’d need wontons.

Chapter End Notes
I am slammed for time in the next few days but like always I will use every opportunity to sneak in writing so bear with me. For those of you not already subscribed to either the story or my account apparently you get emails to tell you I've gotten another chapter posted and I think that's cool.

Comments - OH MY GOD I LOVE THE COMMENTS *so distracting* but I'm deciding to avoid answering comments until the newest chapter is posted because you guys are so fantastic and you come up with so many gorgeous ideas and I love it. It's inspirational, seriously it is. I'm just saying I'm not ignoring anyone I'm just blocking my time as efficiently as I can and trying not to get sidelined which honestly happens way more than it should *author zone*.

loving all of you

me
Paths

Chapter Summary

There has been a shift in power, John and Sherlock have attained a level of power and impunity desired by many.

If even seven days ago you had told John Watson that he would spend an entire evening spoiling another man rotten he would have laughed in your face however, John was a natural nurturer and Sherlock was starved for attention, they were perfectly matched. Once both of them had changed into their oldest and shabbiest sets of pyjamas and settled in onto the sofa with steaming hot containers of take-away John proceeded to coax Sherlock into one new taste after another by plating little samples and giving Sherlock a pair of chopsticks which he had to teach the Guide to use. Sherlock was a little wobbly but also incapable of admitting he couldn’t master something so one bite at a time he was coaxed into consuming an entire meal, all accompanied with endless cups of tea all supplied by the ever attentive John.

It was still early in the evening but neither of them wanted to dress so shamelessly Sherlock shouted up Mrs. Hudson, but it took nothing at all to convince their landlady to run to the bakery before it closed to pick up a decadent chocolate cake for them even though John protested, “Oh I’ll keep something on hand from now on John, if only I’d known. Sherlock does love my rum cake, this will do for tonight.” Mrs. Hudson was completely on board with the idea of feeding Sherlock up, and even picked up a container of whipped cream to garnish their servings. She didn’t bat an eye about their sudden bond, simply patting them both on the arms and nearly hugging herself with joy, “I’m so pleased John, so very pleased. I wouldn’t speak a word against Guides as a rule but our Sherlock is a whole different cut of cloth, I’m sorry his brother can’t see that but siblings often misunderstand one another. I can’t even imagine the trouble I would have been in if I’d Emerged and my sister had not. Why even now she’s still angry with me because my lemon tarts keep winning first prize! Imagine how awful it would be if you were angry for things that affected so many more people?”

Sherlock trailed into the kitchen, his robe carelessly open, the tie dragging on the floor on one side, “Mycroft can’t trouble us any longer Mrs. Hudson, in fact, no one can. You can have your herbal soothers whenever you please, we don’t care and no one will ever dare trouble you. I have a contact you can go to actually, that should save you a few pounds.”

“Whatsoever do you mean Sherlock? My herbal soothers are medicinal not recreational. I’ve got a hip!” their landlady was flustered and John hid a smile. He was very aware of her healing regime and she barely paused before adding, “Well I am on a pension, saving money is always important.”

“Just so Mrs. Hudson.” Sherlock flopped onto a kitchen chair and John refilled his teacup again and kissed the top of his head before poking his mate in the shoulder, she deserved to know what had happened, “John and I registered our bond today. According to the Tower system John and I have been rated as Primes, it’s official.”

Mrs. Hudson clasped her hands to her cheeks in shock, “Oh. Sirs!” she blanched and Sherlock looked horrified.

“Not ever Mrs. Hudson! That is completely unnecessary!” John rushed to assure her and Sherlock nodded vigorously, “Mycroft yes, Mrs. Hudson no. You are perfectly welcome to keep treating us as your tenants because we still are, I’d really rather not move out if it’s alright with you. I know we might bring trouble to your door.”

Mrs. Hudson’s eyes were bright, “It is terribly exciting isn’t it? I never know what’s going to happen when I open the front door, it’s such a thrill. Congratulations boys, this must be quite the
“Well we’re taking tonight off but tomorrow I think we’re going to go out and spend the day stepping on toes, or at least I think that’s what Sherlock wants to do.” teased John just to see Sherlock roll his eyes and he giggled when his lover did exactly that.

“We have cases we’re supposed to be working on! Lestrade needs all the help he can get, Anderson is the best they can manage! It’s practically charity.” John giggled again and enjoyed the happiness that was returning to Sherlock’s lovely face. It would still take a long time but at least for a little while Sherlock was content and safe, John was eager to keep him so he turned his back and pretended he didn’t see Sherlock arranging for a rather illegal delivery to be made or Mrs. Hudson’s grateful hand-pat before she took herself away for an evening of intensive and now free therapy.

Sherlock waited until she was gone before he said quietly, “She deserves spoiling, she’s had it very rough for a very long time.” and John knew he would hear no more of it so he didn’t press. Mrs. Hudson’s stories were gifts she gave, if she wanted John to know, she would tell him. John was proud of his mate for keeping his silence and rewarded him with another kiss.

Somehow or other their night-in turned into a fort-building extravaganza in the front-room that included pizza which they were too full to eat, action movies, more cake which Sherlock managed to fit into his tight belly, and beer. Sherlock explained that he’d had never once enjoyed an experience like it and John had been quick to remedy that lack. “Everyone should build a fort at least once in their life Sherlock. That’s what we’re doing.” John and Sherlock were tipsy under their blanket as they giggled their way through a show that strained even their inebriated sensibilities but since they were sitting side by side and snuggling against one another they didn’t care.

John felt young and carefree, and Sherlock smelled and looked so happy that John wished the evening would never end. It was innocent and fun, full of giggles and little jokes, and John realized that even without their bond he and Sherlock really could have been friends. He liked the man, and Sherlock seemed to like him back. It felt good. “Why did we stand the cushions on end again?” asked Sherlock. “How exactly will this improve the viewing experience?”

“When I was a kid this was how we made a bit of privacy from the grownups. Lots of kids do it but I know you probably didn’t have much chance to play with others. I don’t know, I guess it’s just one of those bonding experiences, but you know, not bond-bond, just making human connections. I think you were a very lonely child Sherlock and it makes me sad to think that something as simple as building a cushion fort is something you didn’t get to do until you were nearly forty!”

They played cards. Sherlock cheated outrageously but he was laughing so hard that John could barely protest and allowed himself to lose game after game just to see the innocent joy on his mate’s face. Cards evolved into drinking games, an area in which John was very familiar with thanks to the army, but Sherlock seemed to be able to drink without consequence. The games might have gone on forever except that Sherlock couldn’t stop reaching out to touch John, just a bit, and that would make John reach out and touch him in return. Pats on arms turned to pats on knees, and soon pats turned into hand holding or letting their palms rest on thighs. A mad scramble to rescue a drink caused the fort to collapse and two very drunk Primes pawed their way to freedom, falling over one other on the mess to lay pressed together.

It felt natural to kiss Sherlock. John enjoyed doing it. He liked the blush on Sherlock’s cheek and the way it felt to be scooped into the larger man’s arms to be resettled onto his lap, John’s knees planted on either side of Sherlock’s narrow hips so they could continue kissing. He liked the way Sherlock’s breath grew ragged, and he liked the way Sherlock’s skin tasted so John began to venture here and there to sample more of it. Sherlock was sighing and beginning to moan softly and John liked that too. He allowed his fingers to begin creeping under Sherlock’s shirt and enjoyed the way Sherlock’s body arched up, pressing harder against John as his sighs and moans grew needier.

Suddenly John found himself being kissed hard, Sherlock’s finger’s spread over the back of John’s head to hold him in place. His mate pulled back just enough to whisper, “Take me to bed.” John felt rapturous as he kissed his way over Sherlock’s pale skin, his keen senses picking up the racing of his lover’s heart, the powerful scent of arousal and desire. All John wanted to do was give Sherlock some of the happiness and delight that he should have already had so many times in his life and had not. Eagerly John caressed and stroked his mate. Each broken gasp and shuddering cry was bliss to John, he couldn’t get enough. He was hungry for more, his appetite merely whetted as he teased and toyed his way over Sherlock’s entire body, unhesitating as he licked and bit every lean spare inch of him.

Sherlock’s cock was hard and John didn’t spare a single instant struggling with any residual doubt about his sexual identity. Like so many other things a simple distinction like gay or straight had become so irrelevant as to be laughable. John was a Sentinel. Sherlock was his Guide. The pleasure they shared was nothing like lovemaking for anyone else. John was entirely awash in sensory cues he picked up from Sherlock who in turn was completely aware of each thing John was feeling. Sherlock was being overwhelmed with John’s growing passion for him, and it was making Sherlock’s Guide tail to pieces. Never once in all of Sherlock’s life had he ever been adored, never once in all his years had Sherlock had someone who found him to be so desirable, so irresistible, and not ever once had someone ever had the chance to decide that Sherlock was simply delicious.

“John! Your mouth…John!” Both of them experienced it together for the first time and neither of...
them found it objectionable. John knelt over Sherlock, his mouth busy, his tongue lapping and exploring in turn, his lips wrapping eagerly around hardened flesh, and he knew he would never want another person for the rest of his life. He had never been so satisfied when pleasuring another, John had never felt the degree of connection and understanding that he and Sherlock shared now, and he knew their bond would eclipse absolutely any possible relationship he ever attempted with another being. It made John feel strong, powerful, and completed.

John didn’t care any longer if his feelings were driven by their bond. He didn’t care if his body had once favored women, or that he had never for an instant sought what he had. John knew he felt something for Sherlock, this strange odd being who now was the central focus of John’s entire existence. He was certain that even without the cocktail of hormones and who knew what else that still raged through him that Sherlock was absolutely the right person for him. Sherlock effortlessly gave John everything he needed, everything he didn’t realize he had missed. His Guide was thrilling and dangerous, complicated and unexpected, beautiful and wild. Sherlock understood John effortlessly. No matter how brief their acquaintance Sherlock Holmes already knew the how’s and why’s of John’s conflicting urges and found them worthy.

John was falling in love.

The night became about Sherlock and all the tenderness John could show him. Sherlock soaked in the adulations hungrily, needing each and every gentle caress, each and every jolt of pleasure that John willingly gave him. John forgot about his own needs, he didn’t care to seek his own completion. All he wanted was for Sherlock to know that John was there for him and he didn’t need to give a single thing back in order to get what he needed from his lover. John was going to be there to support and protect Sherlock for the rest of his life, Sherlock would never have to worry about being alone or afraid ever again. He had John. John silently vowed to protect Sherlock every way he could, to heal him any way he needed. The doctor didn’t need to be wired into Sherlock’s emotions to understand that he was hurt, raw and torn inside from being denied the love his family should have wrapped him in. John would make all of that up to his mate. Together they would be better people.

Sherlock felt it all. He felt each and every decision that John made, and he felt John’s devotion sinking deeper and deeper as he committed himself to his Guide in every way he could think of. Despite his intentions John found himself pinned to the bed, his arms gently held above his head as Sherlock repeated everything John had just done to him until both of them were gasping and clutching at the other. Anxiously John tugged his lover and instinctively Sherlock straddled him. The lube was still on the nightstand and Sherlock wasted no time dumping an excessive amount onto his palm before he slicked them both, letting John grip their cocks together before wrapping his hand around whatever he could.

They moved together, each man understanding when to thrust, when to grind, when to grip harder or loosen off. Sherlock kept kissing John even though he couldn’t stop moaning, and John loved the vibration of it against his lips. He loved the way Sherlock smelled when he was hot and sweaty, he loved the softness of his skin, the silky brush of his body hair, the strange heavy weight of him. He loved the way his name fell from Sherlock’s lips, how his Guide filled that single syllable with such want, such need, such warmth.

No artwork was a beautiful as Sherlock during orgasm. The dark blush on his cheek, the sheen of perspiration, the matting of his shining curls, all of it enhanced the near-pained rictus of his face, the spasmodic arch of his body, and the painful clutch of the hand bracing him on John’s good shoulder. John heard his name cried out over and over again, and the feeling it gave him was enough to let him enjoy his own voluptuous crises, his cries wordless but sincere.

John woke extremely late the next morning to the smell of fresh bread. Sherlock was drooling on his chest, both of them rank with dried sweat, lube, and semen. He had a bit of a hangover but it was entirely worth it in his estimation because Sherlock’s hand was planted right over John’s heart. Despite how it hurt his sore head John smiled. He whispered, “Mrs. Hudson is cooking out front.”

“Tea.”

“You can ask for your own tea.”

“Tea.”

“I’m taking a shower, when I get out I’ll get you some tea.”

“Tea.”

“Shower first.”

“Kiss.”

John kissed his mate who was feigning sleep now even though he’d clearly been speaking mere seconds before. John’s heart filled even more at his lover’s antics, “Join me if you want, or sleep more if you need to.”

Sherlock waited only long enough for John to warm the shower before he appear, rumpled and still sleepy looking. He paused to brush his teeth before he used the loo, warning John about the flush before stepping into the stall, “Kiss.” he demanded again so John kissed him.

Sherlock was clearly in a good mood and he was almost cheerful as he scrubbed both of them from head to toe, not allowing John the soup or flannel until it was time to wash Sherlock’s back. They got out and dressed quickly before going to the kitchen where Mrs. Hudson was happily
“I can do it.”

“You didn’t need to!” protested John who wasted no time seating himself and loading two plates with a bit of everything. With a resigned sigh Sherlock sat down and picked up his fork. John smiled to himself and felt Sherlock’s metal caress once again. It filled him with warmth from head to toe and both men ate their breakfast in appreciative silence. Mrs. Hudson pattered around happily, humming under her breath as she cleaned up. John could smell traces of her evening on her and he stifled an unmanly giggle before asking Sherlock what their first move was going to be.

“Lestrade knows about our advancement and I think it beneficial if we went downtown to inform the rest of his team. We need to begin somewhere and starting somewhere familiar is at least a beginning.” John nodded at Sherlock’s decision. Their suspicion about London was a nebulous one at best, they needed to find a thread and follow it. Their current case was indeed as good a place as any to begin.

John turned to tell Mrs. Hudson they were leaving and she barely noticed, “Try not to overindulge Mrs. Watson,” the Sentinel had to smile. She waved them off. “She’s going to clean the flat from top to bottom isn’t she?”

“She might, she does get into these little moods when her therapy is going well.” once again Sherlock’s voice was a little too bland and the Guide instantly caught John’s suspicion, flush ing bright red, “She’s not our housekeeper, I know that John. She does love to clean though and she doesn’t have anyone apart from her sister and Mrs. Turner to look after. It makes her happy, we get a clean flat, and I did take care of her supply…”

John cut him off, “The less I know about the better Sherlock! I’m already feeling a bit odd about it but…well, picking our battles as it were. I’m more interested in catching the kinds of criminals who deliberately make it so millions of people are practically guaranteed to have to struggle every day of their lives. As long as she keeps her soothers in her flat and not ours I’m not going to have a problem with this but one of these days you and I are going to have a little chat about being manipulative!”

They managed to get themselves under control before arriving at the Yard. Lestrade looked as heartened to see that lovely soft brightness in his smile, that sweet and snug and safe. John cherished their connection and he almost shivered with delighted pleasure and he loved that too. He loved having Sherlock there, stowed perfectly away inside his head, anywhere allowed their Sentinel to dictate their behavior. Ignoring it Sherlock made his demands, they needed to find a thread and follow it. Their current case was indeed as good a place as any to begin.

That cheered Sherlock right up and he took John’s hand almost gratefully, “Indeed John.” he looked down at John with a pensive expression, “I wasn’t raised as you were John Watson, I grew up in a world so different from yours it’s almost hard to believe we’re countrymen. What you might see as manipulation is mere survival instinct for one such as I, I must play every advantage I come across or risk losing to others who play the game even harder than I do.”

“Glad I’m not boring. I know how you feel about boring people.” teased the Sentinel and loved the almost boyish half-smile that made John feel warm all over, “You are always a surprise John.”

They managed to get themselves under control before arriving at the Yard. Lestrade looked as happy to see them as he’d sounded on the call the night before. He stood instantly though, “How may I help you Prime Holmes?” the DI gave a quick glance toward John before cutting his eyes to toe and both men ate their breakfast in appreciative silence. Mrs. Hudson pattered around happily, humming under her breath as she cleaned up. John could smell traces of her evening on her and he stifled an unmanly giggle before asking Sherlock what their first move was going to be.

“I want all the cold-case files made available to me, and I want an independent laboratory to re-run any cases when necessary but your husband is not allowed within four miles of our home, do you understand? If I find that there is a suspicious increase of police suddenly roaming my neighborhood I will personally dig out every distasteful secret hidden by every superior official within this organization and expose them online. You know I can do it and Mycroft knows I can do it.”
John interceded before Sherlock started with more threats and ultimatums and made one of his own, “We’re working on something particular Greg, you’ll have to take my word that it has nothing to do with you. I don’t know what Mycroft has told you about what happened yesterday but let me also make myself clear, just in case you misunderstood Sherlock. If your husband, Mycroft Holmes, gets anywhere within arm’s reach of me you are going to have the opportunity to learn if you find body casts sexy or not because I will break him in several places. This I promise.”

Lestrade sat up and he smelled upset, “What did he do?” John and Sherlock remained silent. Lestrade swallowed hard and asked again, his voice going rough but quiet, “What did he do? Tell me, for gods sakes, tell me!” their silence continued and John almost reacted badly when Lestrade lunged to the door just as Donovan was arriving, shutting it in her face. He turned to face them, “Sherlock, it’s with Myc. It’s been ages now. At first I thought it was just normal work stress, you know, we both put in hellish hours all the time. That’s why we fit so well together, we’re busy men. Something is wrong, I know it. John, you don’t know him at all and Sherlock, you’ve hated your brother for so long I can’t even tell if you ever liked him but listen, Mycroft is not a bad man, or at least he wasn’t. Something has changed, something I can’t put my finger on.”

Sherlock was examining the DI intently. He leaned back, “He seems to believe what he’s saying.”

“He doesn’t smell like he’s lying,” confirmed John. Lestrade looked confused, “Come by the flat, deliver the cold cases personally. We’ll talk there.” Lestrade looked relieved and nodded, “If there’s something happening, we want to find out what it is. You can trust us Greg.” John meant it. He didn’t care a jot for Mycroft but Lestrade seemed like a regular hard working person, just someone out to try and make a life with someone, even if that someone was Mycroft. He wouldn’t be given to fits of fancy either. If he’d noticed something amiss then John was inclined to believe him.

Lestrade stood there and John realized the DI really had been upset, he became concerned. “What else is wrong Greg?” the silver-haired man shook his head, “Tell me, I want to help.” he did. That was John’s nature, he wanted to help make the world a better place for everyone.

Sherlock was now watching the man intensely and with unusual consideration he spoke, “Brother-in-law, I would never harm you nor would I act against you. You have always done your best with me and it has not gone unnoticed. I can never pretend to understand what it is you see in my brother but I have never doubted the strength of your union, the truth of it is the only reason I have not discarded my brother entirely. If something is amiss I would know of it. Speak, we will not chastise you.” John was proud of Sherlock, being nice wasn’t natural to him, but here he was being gentle with a man he normally only spoke to indifferently.

John smelled the shame and humiliation that had been locked down. “He’s with someone else. I know he is.” John felt the air leave his lungs. Betrayed! Lestrade thought his husband was seeing someone else, he was convinced of it, “He stays out all night, he almost never sleeps at home. We haven’t been together for months now, I don’t know where he is most of the time. When he is home he’s distant, like he barely knows me. There’s something wrong. There’s someone else, I know there is. Whoever it is is doing something to Myc, he’s changing him.” Lestrade looked shattered, “I’m losing him.”

Sherlock stood tall, “Calm yourself brother-in-law, tell me what you suspect.” Lestrade sat down and blew his nose before speaking. He told them how it had all started gradually, that phone calls in the night happened with greater frequency, that Mycroft’s work seemed to eat up more and more of his personal time until Lestrade was left living by himself in their great house, wondering where his husband was.

“He started wearing this new aftershave. He’d always used the one I bought him but he said it had been custom-made for him by some influential somebody and he was expected to use it. I didn’t mind, it smelled nice. He began to exercise which was nice but he used to only do it to stay fit, now it’s like he’s determined to be a hard body. His assistant Anthea used to talk to me. She doesn’t anymore, in fact, now when she looks at me I swear there’s pity in her eyes. She knows something too, talk to her. Then there were other things. New tie pins, or cuff-links, things like that, things Myc could have easily gotten for himself except…I don’t know, maybe I’m just blowing things out of proportion but then there’s the overnight bags. Myc keeps one packed in case he gets called out of the country, you know it happens a lot, but the bags are new too, and they have locks on them I can’t open. I don’t know what’s in them. His suits! There was a suit in a case he gets called out of the country, you know it happens a lot, but the bags are new too, and they have locks on them I can’t open. I don’t know what’s in them. His suits! There was a suit in the case he gets called out of the country, you know it happens a lot, but the bags are new too, and they have locks on them I can’t open. I don’t know what’s in them. He was packed in a suit incorrectly for delivery and that it was being sent to its actual owner. I didn’t see it at all but it smelled just like his new aftershave. Everything he has is being replaced one thing at a time, and nothing is wrong but everything feels out of place and just…I can’t put my finger on it, I can’t but I can feel it. I know I’m not a Guide or anything like that but Sherlock, tell me I’m wrong. Tell me I have nothing to worry about.”

“I will check into it, leave it with me brother-in-law.” Sherlock was firm and John saw Lestrade visibly relax, “If it brings you any comfort I have serious doubts of my brother straying from his marital bed. Of the few things I admit to being not loathsome about him I have to say that fidelity is a quality he cherishes. However, if I discover that is not so I will tell you Lestrade. I would not hide such a crime from you.”

Oddly enough that made Lestrade relax even more but John understood. The man was reassured that his husband might still be faithful to him but if he wasn’t at least he wasn’t going to continue living a lie, a condition a man like Greg Lestrade and John Watson alike could not bear. “Thank you Prime Holmes. If you’ll excuse me I will go and organize the files you’ve requested.”

Sherlock nodded and Lestrade pulled open the door. Sargent Donovan strode in, “Oi! We have
real work waiting, I didn’t realize the freak and his boyfriend were priorities over actual crime.” She glared at Sherlock who gave her a slow and very unpleasant smile.

John stilled. She was an officer of the law and he would not hurt her. “Don’t call him that. Mind your tongue.” John wasn’t angry. He hadn’t. He didn’t want to lash out, he didn’t. He was bigger than that. Sherlock was a grown man, he could deal with name-calling except he wasn’t. The Guide was merely standing there watching the detective like she was a sample on a slide, “Lestrade? I think you’d better have a word with your colleague. Now.”

“What are you going on about Watson? Don’t tell me the freak has managed to get you involved in the sideshow that is his life?” Donovan was sneering openly, not bothering to disguise her dislike and John clenched his fists and breathed through his nose.

“Sargent Donovan, you will conduct yourself as a professional and a representative of this division!” Lestrade stepped up quickly and looked at his subordinate, a warning written all over his face, “Especially when addressing Prime Holmes or his Sentinel, Prime Watson.”

John had never witnessed a person look more shocked than Sally Donovan did right then. Her mouth flapped open foolishly as her head swiveled back and forth to look at Sherlock and John and over and again. She blinked, and shook her head in disbelief, clearly unable to muster even a single coherent word. Sherlock smelled of pure contentment and his smile was wicked as he nearly purred, “Lestrade is going to need some help with boxes, why don’t you go get Anderson and pitch in? The two of you like to sweat together, and my brother-in-law shouldn’t have to wear himself out when you are so energetic.”

She was outraged, John could smell it. She wanted to refuse, to storm away angrily but absolutely no one refused a direct order from a Prime. If the Commissioner were here and Sherlock had told him to go pack boxes he would have gone and begun looking for a trolley to assist. If Sherlock wanted to inspect every particle of her life and put it on display for everyone to see, he could, not one word would be spoken against him. John heard her heart thumping in her chest and knew she was considering different ways of acting out to demonstrate her ire and disapproval, “Don’t test me Sally Donovan. I don’t know what it is that got your knickers in a twist about my Guide but I will not tolerate disrespect, not ever. If I deem it necessary I will turn your world inside out and shake out every single despicable thing you’ve ever done and see you judged for it. The little I already know about you doesn’t add up to the kind of person with any sort of moral high-ground to be casting dispersions against a man who has only helped you and has asked for nothing in return. Get going, and don’t make a mess. Sherlock will want to begin reviewing at his earliest convenience.”

Clearly dismissed the much chastened Sargent left to go locate Anderson and join Lestrade in collecting together cold-cases. The second they were alone in the office Sherlock pinned John up against the door for a very heated kiss, “Well hello Captain Watson.” John giggled against his Guide’s mouth as Sherlock growled appreciatively, “I had no idea that I would find such an attitude to be so stimulating.”

“I knew it, you do have an authority kink.” Sherlock blushed beet red but didn’t deny it and John’s heart was filled with such love, “Silly git.” and he kissed Sherlock until the embarrassment faded away, “I like that too, maybe just a bit.” It had definitely turned him on during their first time.

“You are always a surprise John Watson.” said Sherlock softly, his hand cupping John’s jaw the way he seemed to enjoy doing. John smiled up at his lover and received another much gentler kiss. He felt that same rush of warmth coming from Sherlock and it made him feel almost hereby. “Care to participate in a small invasion?”

“Lead the way my Guide.” said John cheekily and enjoyed the pleased flush that colored Sherlock’s cheeks once again, “Where would you like to go next?”

The Diogenes club reeked of affluence and corruption. It stank from top to bottom of twisted plans and convolutions, back room deals, and avarice. John hated it. The doorman had attempted to stop them but Sherlock extracted their blue card, swiped it through their high-tech lock and walked in, pushing his way past the stunned man and into the otherwise off-limits private club. The staff offered no further resistance to Sherlock’s demands and brought them directly to a private den.

Mycroft was inside and his hands were buried in his hair, his head hanging low. He sat up in surprise when they burst through his door. Anger flashed across his face and with a great deal of bitterness he said, “How may I help you Prime Holmes?”

“Who is blackmailing you and why?” Sherlock went right for the throat. “Lestrade is half a step away and you will conduct yourself as a professional and a representative of this division!” Lestrade stepped up quickly and looked at his subordinate, a warning written all over his face, “Especially when addressing Prime Holmes or his Sentinel, Prime Watson.”

Mycroft seemed to collapse into himself, sinking into his chair and hiding his face, “I have made a great many errors, errors that were put in place for me to make and now I am caught. No I am not having an affair of the heart, but I am embroiled in an entanglement with someone who has been steadily making their advances less optional. The entire family is tied up in it, you would have been caught in this mess too if you had not managed to almost accidentally avoid every single trap that was set for you.”

“Victor Trevor.” Mycroft nodded, “Is he the one you are involved with?” Mycroft shook his head, “Who then?”
“He calls himself Richard, it’s not his real name and I suspect he doesn’t have one. He has connections everywhere, I am tied to him a thousand and one different ways and when he pulls my strings I must dance. Until recently it has always been about business concerns but lately his demands have begun to become personal.”

“What have you done Mycroft!” demanded Sherlock.

“Nothing I could not tell my husband!” insisted his brother. “I am asked to wear his scent, and his tailor has made me clothes. His jeweler gives me tokens, and that is all. I know it won’t remain so forever, soon, very soon, he will begin to take his payments for the gifts I did not ask for, for gifts I do not want, and all because if I refuse then he has the power to destroy everyone I know, and he’d do it just for spite.”

“Tell me of the deal with the Trevor family.” John had his own questions and that particular name kept cropping up. “Who the fuck are they and why do they want Sherlock and you so badly?”

Sherlock rolled his eyes, “Bloodlines and old fortunes. Their machinations are nothing new.”

Mycroft spoke, “Victor is very close with Richard. He liked the looks of Sherlock and developed a desire to have my brother as his Guide. Victor hasn’t found a match yet, no Guide has shown an interest in working with him unless it’s necessary. Richard isn’t one of the Emergent, he seems to hate them but he almost dotes on Victor. I can’t say why. There are others that Richard is close to but I don’t know who. There’s at least one man, and possibly a woman. I know nothing more.”

“Why were you going to force Sherlock to submit?” asked John. He hadn’t forgotten that little detail.

Mycroft stiffened, “It made sense at the time. I have spent years dealing with Sherlock, his problems and the problems he has caused have grieved me. I was at my limit with his excesses. The drugs! He is incapable of self-control, he needed a firm hand and Victor seemed to suit. Sherlock has never desired physical intimacy but to accommodate the bond I decided…” he stopped talking.

“You decided a little rape was alright, as long as Sherlock stabilized with a Sentinel to ground him.” John was white-hot with fury. Mycroft was right there in front of him. He could snap his neck and leave his body to rot, no one would say a word except possibly Sherlock and Mrs. Hudson. “That’s not what Sherlock needed. Sherlock doesn’t need to be grounded, I do. He needed to be set free, that’s what I did. You almost took that from me Mycroft Holmes, don’t think I’m going to forget that. I should let you service this Richard character just so you can feel dirty the way you deserve to but Greg doesn’t deserve that. I don’t know how you love your husband and treat your brother this way at the same time. What if I decided that Greg could do with a bit of rape, you know for his own good how would that make you feel?”

Mycroft turned green and he swayed in his seat, “No, please Prime Watson, don’t punish Gregory for my misdeeds. I beg you.”

“Oh settle down you arse, unlike you I’m not the kind of person who goes around fucking people over on a daily basis, Your husband asked for our help with you, I don’t give a fuck about your existential crisis. You’d better be telling the truth Mycroft, you know Sherlock is going to find out. Look how much he figured out when he wasn’t allowed to look at anything, just imagine what he can dig up now that no one can stop him? You go find your husband right this minute and I don’t care how it hurts you tell him one hundred percent of what’s going on. Your marriage is on the line and I’m in Greg’s corner on this one. Whatever he decides happens after you confess will happen. Go Mycroft, right now.” the command in John’s voice would have been irresistible even before he’d Emerged. Mycroft nearly scrambled out of his plush chair, grabbing up his coat and leaving at a quick pace.

John didn’t need to look at Sherlock to know his mate was very satisfied. The scents rolling off his Guide made John follow the quickly fleeing government official to the door and lock it firmly behind him. Sherlock had him pushed up against the door all over again, and he was grinding against John hungrily, “That was amazing.”

“You liked that did you?” John bit at Sherlock’s neck and felt him grind even harder against him. John grinned. “How’d you like to desecrate your brother’s office?” John found himself nearly thrown onto a very expensive leather sofa, and instantly covered with a six foot octopus that seemed intent on tearing off every scrap of clothing he was wearing. All they had was saliva and their hands but they made do, rubbing and rocking together as they kissed and thrust together. John loved the way his name sounded when Sherlock moaned it out, or when he panted it into John’s ear, or when he shouted it into the cushion as he came all over John’s cock. He loved the way it sounded as Sherlock softly crooned it as his lover took over for him, moving his large hand perfectly, stroking John into a brilliantly fast and sharp orgasm that left him trembling and gasping for air.

They lay there together for a long time before they began to giggle. “I can’t believe we just jerked off in your brother’s office!”

“It was your idea John.” Sherlock didn’t sound even the least bit abashed. He peeled himself off of John and went to the en suite bathroom to wash up. John followed after a minute and they did their best to clean their clothes, “What a mess.”

“I’m about to make things worse as well.” Sherlock helped John tidy himself a bit more before they left. Sherlock accosted the first employee he located, “I am sealing the club down. All members in residence may leave with their personal possessions only. All wireless communication ceases this instant, this building is blacked out. No calls in or out, and all staff is asked to return
here to answer questions and to provide assistance. I will need someone to go to 221 B Baker Street to retrieve several boxes of information that should be arriving soon. I am commandeering this entire facility so that I may review all your records. All of them.” John nearly laughed out loud. All the dirtiest secrets in the country were hidden here and Sherlock Holmes was here to look it all over. This was going to be fun.
Diogenes

Chapter Summary

Now confirmed Primes Sherlock and John have wasted no time taking their enemy by surprise. They’ve taken over the Diogenes club, the sanctuary for the rich and powerful.

The exodus of the Diogenes club was done without a word spoken. The members were not allowed to communicate to one another by their own rules, and John and Sherlock watched them leave in matching silence. Both men received one nervous look after the other, John’s face impassive even as he was filled with disgust at the blatant shows of wealth every last one of them displayed. All of them looked soft, spoiled, petulant, demanding, and selfish. Like the Guides and Sentinels John made sure to take a hard look at each face, committing them to memory. It paid to know who your enemies were and until proven otherwise everyone was suspect.

The great door shut and the second it did the place came to life. Staff poured in from all areas and assembled in the Visitor’s room for inspection. Sherlock stepped up, “I am not interested in you. I want to know everything there is to know about the people who spend their time here, who they see, what you’ve overheard, and I want to examine every sort of record you might possess regarding the activities within these walls. There is no option about answering my questions, you will. I will take none of you to task for things you might have been required to do over the course of your employment here. I am very interested in inconveniencing those who have used you and this place to do their work. You will be interviewed one at a time, none of you have permission to leave. Any employees not currently on the premises must be located and asked to return without a word to anyone. You will remain at the club until I see fit to release you. We’ll just have to make do with the supplies on hand.”

John smiled when not one protest registered. The staff would now be residing in optimum luxury, eating and drinking the very finest available, and awaiting the leisure of two Primes who wanted the dirt on the elite for whom they had cleaned up after for so long and they were guaranteed no reprisals. A queue practically began to form on its own. “We’ll set up the interviews elsewhere, I assume there’s conference rooms or something?”

There most certainly were. A well-suited and graceful man by the name of Mr. Herbert became the intermediary for the staff, he was in essence the head Steward of the club, in charge of the butlers of which there were many, as well as the valets, and to a large extent, the kitchen where the Head Cook ruled like a king. Every last man, for there were no women allowed in the Diogenes club, not for any reason, was highly trained, experts in a multitude of fields as relating to their jobs. Mr. Herbert and his vast complement of assistants ensured that the many rules of the club were observed at all times, and were entitled to approach any of the board members with reports of rule breaking in shared spaces. However, once inside their offices and dens the Diogenes members could do anything they liked, and the staff were there to provide anything a member might need to attain those various pleasures.

John and Sherlock were taken on a tour of the facility while they waited for their deliveries to be made from 221 B and John was disgusted all over again. These people wallowed in luxury, pampered themselves endlessly while hypocritically imposing severe restrictions on others regarding frivolous amusements and how they conducted their personal lives. For every extreme attitude in public it seemed to John that its opposite was indulged in excess behind closed doors. His initial discomfort at the idea of prying so deeply into their private lives melted away as he viewed the endless ways the elite spoiled themselves at the expense of the common person. Only
humans produced creatures as vile as these, no other part of the web of life had beings capable of such despicable behaviors, John grew resolute.

Mr. Herbert was extremely organized. Once the overall tour was completed he brought them directly to their monitor room, “We guarantee privacy to our members however we also guarantee safety. If something happens inside their offices we need to be able to provide help on the instant. We monitor each and every room twenty-four hours a day. We keep the logs in a vault, there are only a handful of staff who can enter the vault, and in the entire history of this club never once has a single secret slipped these walls.” John blushed hot for a second. He and Sherlock had just…

“Well that record is about to be spectacularly shattered.” said Sherlock calmly, “It needs to be done and no one will fault you Mr. Herbert. I am well known among your clientele,” Mr. Herbert nodded graciously. Sherlock had been an annoyance for a very long time, many a Diogenes member had complained about the consulting detective, “That I am now Prime gives me immunity and with that immunity I will protect all that need protecting. Prime Watson and I are interested in the purveyors of misery, not the people they used along the way.”

John knew there were no truly innocent people inside this club, even the staff would have well soiled hands but they had decisions to make and targets to acquire. They could either bog themselves down with pursuing every single lead they found or they could focus on causing the most damage to their enemies. There was no choice at all, not about this. “Let’s begin with those who are directly in positions of authority. We’ll work our way down.”

Sherlock smiled at John’s request and Mr. Herbert merely began to key in names into his computer system. Various monitors came to life and showed their personal rooms. Sherlock smirked, “Once again we’re using their own systems against them.” John had to laugh softly and took Sherlock’s hand. His Guide really was incredible. John had never met someone as brilliant as Sherlock, it was breath-taking. “Without access from the outside there is no chance for anyone to delete information before we’ve gotten a chance to review it. All the hard-copies are stored here, no one was allowed to remove anything as they left. Whatever evidence they were hiding will all still be here. Lestrade has organized a laboratory for us, we’ll inspect that too and hire some forensic specialists to work for us.”

“How do we pay these people?” John’s savings were nearly gone, he had no idea how Sherlock got money, he said he got paid for consulting but so far John hadn’t been there long enough to see a single paycheque come their way.

Sherlock looked surprised and then he looked embarrassed, clearly he’d overlooked explaining something so he drew John to the side, “I forget that not everyone thinks money is irrelevant, my apologies my Sentinel,” Sherlock seemed genuinely remorseful about his own attitudes, “Primes are automatically granted a rather large amount of cash and equity the second their registration is approved. The second your rating was gauged you became an incredibly wealthy man, you have access to any commodity in the country, we pay for nothing. Your rating could not be adjusted until I found a mate. Whoever my Sentinel was would be wealthy by default but you didn’t know that, you decided to bond with me for reasons that had nothing to do with money. They had no idea that you would rate as a Prime on your own, so we have twice what others were seeking.”

John blinked, “Oh. I didn’t realize just one of us could be a Prime.” he felt foolish at his misperception and lack of knowledge. Somehow he’d gotten the impression that it took both of them together to become Primes, not that they managed to rate as Primes individually.

Sherlock rushed to smooth his ruffled pride, “I don’t want you to learn what you need to know from others John! That information is mostly incorrect but we simply have not had the time to conduct lessons. We will John, I swear. We have enormous discretionary powers, we will charge the human hours we consume to their appropriate divisions. If the taxpayers must bear a burden at least it will be one that will render them some actual benefit.” Once more Sherlock’s hand cupped John’s jaw and he looked almost anxious to his Sentinel. Sherlock was worried for him.

“Alright then, when we have time.” John assured his mate by covering his hand with his, and he knew Sherlock could see the warm and happy feelings that took dominance once more.

Sherlock was looking down at him and the expression on his face was one John hoped to see every day for the rest of his life, “You have no idea how beautiful a person you are John Watson, how pure of heart, how good. You truly are the greatest gift I could ever have received.” Sherlock kissed him with something akin to reverence and John felt that marvelous warmth fill him once more. “What we are about to review will revolt you, and I am sorry my dearest, the filth we must wade through is necessary.

John’s heart absolutely thrilled when Sherlock used an endearment, he would never have expected it but it made him feel like he was glowing again, “I’ve been to war Sherlock, I can handle filth.” Sherlock wore a crooked little smile and he took John’s hand to lead him away. They made themselves comfortable at the head of a large conference table, several laptops arrayed in front of them as they began to organize the material they were going to review.

Mr. Herbert introduced them to Mr. White. Mr. White was in charge of the vault, he was as neat and tidy a man as you would expect to find and fussy he keyed in codes and made polite suggestions regarding how to navigate his files. A different conference room now held the cold-cases and Mr. Herbert had assigned several valets to help sort the mess out. By the time they’d put a dent in everything it was very late in the day and John was starving and becoming testy. Apart from the occasional trip to the loo they’d taken no breaks. Sherlock glanced up from a stack of
John was grateful once more that he got to show Sherlock this, how precious Sherlock was, how unbelievably special he was. His cheeks still stained with red and his fingers trembled a bit. There was no misunderstanding between them, not about this, “I’d like to make love to you.” Sherlock nodded, shining because he could see how John felt and John was glad of it. There would never be a better feeling, too absolutely perfect not to fall for, “It just cuts into the time I’d like to be spoiling you.” Not at all.” John couldn’t help how he felt and he didn’t want to. Sherlock was too lovely, too much better than an old soldier but I’m so glad it’s me?” Sherlock looked pleased and shy looking, pleased but obviously discomfited. He didn’t know how to accept so many praises in a row so John kissed him softly at first, and then not so softly, “John.” Sherlock seemed to say so much with that one word and John’s heart was full.

Dinner was simple and delicious, the steak the best John had ever tasted, the wine delicate and perfectly matched with their meal. Dessert was a fruit filled confection and after they were done Sherlock announced that interviews would begin in the morning. For the rest of the night everyone worked at the tasks at hand, and slowly a huge review plan was created. It was late before the staff retired to the various suites and bedrooms that were normally only used by the members, made themselves at home in the expensive spare nightclothes that were always on hand, and generally pampered themselves to sleep. John listened as one door after another closed and the ever-working kitchens were busy. “Time for bed Sherlock.”

John had no idea whose room they’d been given. The wardrobes had been emptied and everything restocked with clothes that John found appealing. The staff had considerately cleaned it from top to bottom while they worked, neutralizing all old scents, and changing the bedding until all the rooms smelled only of gentle soaps. Sherlock stripped himself naked and went to the shower, John wasn’t far behind him. John laughed at himself at how easy it had been to simply slip into Sherlock’s life, both of them co-existing side-by-side without conflict. He had spent years in the army living and fighting next to men and women of all sorts, he had never thought to have a long-term relationship with anyone, especially a man, but now look at him. John couldn’t imagine being anywhere but next to Sherlock who was even now quite happily shampooing John’s hair, “You’re just the right height.” commented his lover idly, “Perfect really.”

John smiled and felt good about himself. He enjoyed pleasing Sherlock and maybe it was the bond, or maybe it was something else but it didn’t matter now, all that mattered was that for once in his life John was entirely happy. He turned in his lover’s arms, tilting his head back to rinse the soap away. Sherlock kissed him both men standing under the water, eyes squeezed shut as they giggled and sputtered, “Not exactly romantic the way it looks in the movies.” laughed John and Sherlock shook his head, “Let’s get out.”

The towels were plush and thick, and their new robes heavy and decadent feeling. Sherlock seemed to enjoy looking after John, making the soldier stand still while he dried him off, and even helped him into his slippers, “You’re spoiling me.” teased John.

“Problem?” asked Sherlock, a small blush on his cheek. John was growing very fond of those.

“Not at all.” John couldn’t help how he felt and he didn’t want to. Sherlock was too lovely, too sweet, too absolutely perfect not to fall for, “It just cuts into the time I’d like to be spoiling you.” The delicate pink of Sherlock’s cheeks turned scarlet and John smiled.

John helped him back to his feet and led him to the turned-down bed that waited. A small discrete basket containing a small bottle of lube and condoms was set to the side along with a container of wet-wipes and John just grinned as Sherlock blushed once again, “They read my mind.” he said cheekily and Sherlock blushed even more.

“I don’t know why I’m behaving like this,” protested Sherlock, “It’s not like we’ve not done things already.”

“Well I think it’s beautiful and I don’t mind a bit.” John didn’t. He kissed Sherlock’s blushes before he kissed his lover’s mouth, “I think you’re beautiful.” Sherlock’s eyes were big and shining because he could see how John felt and John was glad of it. There would never be a misunderstanding between them, not about this, “I’d like to make love to you.” Sherlock nodded, his cheeks still stained with red and his fingers trembled a bit.

John was charmed all over again. How precious Sherlock was, how unbelievably special he was. John was grateful once more that the was the one who got to show Sherlock this, that he got to be
the one who gave Sherlock as much pleasure as he could handle. That was John’s goal, to pleasure Sherlock until there was nothing but delight in his mind. John set to his task without delay.

Both men enjoyed kissing so John eased Sherlock back onto the pillows, their mouths moving slowly together as they relaxed. John was in no hurry, he had all the time in the world to savour his lover and that’s what he did. John indulged himself in a long slow leisurely exploration of Sherlock’s entire body, mapping all the little places that made his lover quiver or sigh, showing Sherlock the beginnings of what he was capable of experiencing with John.

He had never enjoyed his enhancements so much. John could see every tiny mar in Sherlock’s flawless satin skin, he could taste the difference, feel the various textures and densities that made his lover a wonderful sensory experience. The way Sherlock smelled had quickly become John’s very favorite scent and he roamed everywhere, simply dying of ecstasy as he breathed him in. With ease he moved Sherlock around the bed to access his back, or his legs, and after a slow tortuous journey down Sherlock’s spine John began to kiss his was over Sherlock’s behind, “Oh. John!”

Sherlock sounded nervous but at the same time his thighs parted almost reflexively and his back arched. Unlike his first time John made every effort to tease and arouse Sherlock. He kissed everywhere first, allowing his tongue to come into play before finally stroking his fingers between Sherlock’s cheeks. Sherlock trembled but pushed back, clearly eager if uncertain. John went slowly, for both of them. He knew the mechanics of what he was about to do, had experienced them thanks to Sherlock, but he didn’t want that same experience for his lover. John went unhurriedly, using his tongue as well as his fingers and worked at it until Sherlock was moaning continuously and riding back and forth gently. John enjoyed every single thing he did, loving the feel of his lover, the textures, and even the taste. All of it was Sherlock and there wasn’t a single part of him that John didn’t adore.

John knelt back to sit on his heels. Taking some lube he used a generous amount on his fingers before returning to his task. He was quite taken with how it felt to be inside Sherlock like this, he loved how hungry his lover seemed to be for him, how willingly Sherlock reared and bucked against his hand. One finger had become two, and two had become three, and Sherlock was whimpering needily. John realized he was almost panting with want, his cock was dark and nearly dripping. With a groan he managed to coat it with more lube, hissing at the coolness of it but almost incapable of restraining himself as he shuffled closer to Sherlock.

Sherlock was impatient, John wasn’t expecting him to just bear down the second he was in place and nearly sit on him, both men shouting at the shock of their rather rapid union, “That hurt.” grated Sherlock who was shaking now.

“It didn’t have to!” cried John, “If you’d just... just don’t move for a minute, give your body a chance here.”

“Oh!” protested Sherlock needlessly. John felt horrible but at the same time his erection was going nowhere. He was harder than ever. Worry over Sherlock or not this was simply the most amazing sensation John had ever experienced. Nothing could compare to the tightness, the heat, the internal pulse of Sherlock’s body. “I think you’ve gone too far with this whole above average business John! How is it that you fall within the mid-range everywhere but here?”

“Just lucky I guess.” groaned John. Sherlock would not stop wiggling! It felt so good John wanted to thrust it’s back and kissed it. He reached forward with a still slick hand and stroked Sherlock’s cock, wringing a deep moan from his lover. Sherlock clenched a bit, rocking slightly so John continued to move his hand with deliberation. Slowly Sherlock relaxed, beginning to move his hips a bit, rocking and sliding in miniscule increments as John’s hand wandered over his cock, cupped his balls, stroked his thighs.

John was a bit surprised when Sherlock took John’s other hand in his and dragged it over his chest and up to his throat, “I just like being touched here.” he whispered shyly. John was more than happy to accommodate, wrapping his fingers over Sherlock’s throat and feeling his lover grow limp and welcoming. “Yes John.” moaned his Guide as John rocked his hips questioningly. Permission granted John pulled back, thrusting upward slowly until he was buried deep once again. Sherlock shuddered all over but moaned, his hands reaching back to touch John as much as he could. “Again.” he begged. How could John refuse?

How had he never wanted this? How big a fool had he been to deny himself this? John cursed his own lack of imagination as he moaned and sighed with Sherlock. This was the most insanely intense feeling he’d ever experienced during sex. Each thrust made John feel on the verge of orgasm, each moment he managed to put it off was a triumph.

Sherlock continued to surprise him. Pulling away almost rudely Sherlock made John lay back, simply straddling him the second he was on his back. Sherlock didn’t hesitate to sink right back down onto John’s cock, his moans resuming the second their bodies reconnected. John took his hands, lacing their fingers together and watched his lover ride him. It was spectacular. Sherlock had no idea what he wanted or what he was doing, he just moved and tested to see what felt good, following his instincts hesitantly as he learned what delighted them both.

John loved it, he absolutely loved it. He was so happy to be so used, to be the one Sherlock was learning with. When his lover became even more demanding John braced his feet and thrust up, thrilled at the slack-faced pleasure that Sherlock clearly experienced as his Guide gave himself over to John. Eager to please John worked his hips carefully, rocking deeply at first and then shallowly, angling himself until Sherlock’s head fell back and a glorious cry of pure shocked delight escaped him, “That’s it sweetheart, that’s it my beautiful man, there you go.”
John was determined now, and with care he began to fuck Sherlock harder and harder. Sherlock fell forward onto his hands, his knees spread as wide as they could go as he met each thrust with force. “More John, more.” Oh god yes! Caution now forgotten John fucked Sherlock as hard as he was able to and Sherlock was nearly gasping for air. Sherlock managed to balance on one hand so he could stroke himself, “John! I’m coming. Oh!”

Raptly John watched as Sherlock reached orgasm, his hand stroking firmly, thick spills of semen running over his fingers. Sherlock’s hips were jerking, his whole body pressing down on John’s hips as hard as he could manage, keeping John as deeply inside him as he could. John felt every thrrob, each jet of come that was now making a mess of John’s belly. Unable to stop John pulled Sherlock flat against his body and fucked his cock shallowly but rapidly in and out, almost bruising Sherlock’s hips as he held him in exactly the right place. He loved the feel of Sherlock’s still hard cock pressed against his belly and the strange softness of his bollocks. John felt a surge of that special warmth from Sherlock caressed his mind and he shouted as he came, showing himself as deep into his Guide’s body as he could get and holding himself there, pressing and pushing, trying to get deeper and deeper as he released.

They drowsed for a long time, slipping in and out of haze of pure satiation until John became aware that Sherlock was gently wiping him down. John made himself move and cleaned Sherlock up in turn, neither man interested in showering. They slumped right back into bed and Sherlock nested in, his head on John’s chest. Their fingers laced together and John kissed Sherlock’s curls. He thought for a second, fairly certain that his Guide already knew but he wanted to say it so he did. “I love you.”

Sherlock stilled for an instant before curling even more tightly against John’s body. “I love you too.” John closed his eyes and felt that delicious warmth once more. Sherlock did love him, he’d loved him practically from the moment they’d met! John knew this feeling, Sherlock had shared his heart already, and John was riding high on a blissful cloud. “Sleep my soldier, we have a war to fight.”

“I just want you to know that I’m very affectionate so…” John kissed Sherlock’s curls again, “Don’t let me become creepy okay? I don’t want to make you uncomfortable.”

“As if you could ever demonstrate it enough! I don’t know if you’ve noticed or not John but I am a particularly selfish person, it’s why I recognize greed in others.” John giggled and Sherlock poked him, “You have introduced me to aspects of myself I never thought to enjoy. Don’t hide any part of it from me. I want it all John Watson, I want everything you’re willing to give me, and I will never stop wanting it.” Sherlock spoke with quiet assurance.

“Just remember you said that.” warned John but Sherlock just shrugged and let out a long satisfied sigh. John fell asleep with a smile on his face because the warmth that had filled him did not wane, if anything it grew. His dreams were sweet and filled with Sherlock, and when John eventually woke he felt rested and hale.

Sherlock was drooling on him again but John didn’t care. He reached over carefully and stroked Sherlock’s throat, and enjoyed the almost feline stretch that it provoked. Sherlock contracted back and wound his arms and legs around John, keeping his eyes shut, but rumbling softly, “Good morning John.” John absolutely loved all the different ways Sherlock said his name. Right now it was tender and bashful, filled with that special sweetness that John knew was just for him.

“So this is what it’s like to wake up with an angel in your arms.” John would never get enough of Sherlock’s blushes, even the one’s accompanied with a scolding smack on the arm.

“Stop it John.”

“I warned you.”

The silence that followed didn’t fool John who could smell contentment rolling off of Sherlock in huge waves, “You did indeed.”

“Well come on my angel, let’s get up. We have lives to ruin.” that made Sherlock chuckle and John liked the sound of it. Sherlock didn’t laugh enough in his view. Life had been very serious for him for far too long. The next time they had a chance John would organise something fun for them to do.

The shower was the perfect way to begin the day followed by one of the most decadent breakfasts John had ever eaten. Their suits had been spirited away in the night and returned clean and fresh. Sherlock got one of the valets to measure John and sent them off to organize a wardrobe for him while they got down to business. Mr. Herbert was first, and his interview took most of the morning. By the time he was done reciting the basic outline of his various duties and responsibilities John was glowing. “So basically every sort of chicanery and low deed happens here.”

“Indeed Prime Watson, even within the rules that we maintain there is leeway for a great deal of as you say, chicanery.” Mr. Herbert produced a massive guest list, all approved by members to have access to the club under specific circumstances. “As you can see many members use this merely as a way to conduct business privately, and keep their entertainments restricted to their spouses, might I mention that your brother is very much one of those.”

In a weird way John was relieved that Mycroft was somewhat exonerated but the fact remained that he did business with these sorts of people all the time, and just because he’d almost gotten stung from sticking his hand in the hornet’s nest didn’t free him of his culpability elsewhere. “Do you know who his business partner is?”
“Mr. Holmes took calls and emails here, occasionally he conferenced online but of his partner we have seen not a sign. The signals are scrambled so his image is never transmitted, his voice is similarly scrambled but you can assume Mr. Holmes has seen him in person.” Mr. Herbert seemed certain.

“I shall assume nothing. I require facts, not airy decisions.” John was reading his way through some of the conversation transcripts and he was making angry noises beneath his breath, “John, are you growingl?”

“No!” he was. John stopped himself, “Look at these tax exemptions! All these supplies are being given the heaviest taxes to carry but all these ridiculous luxury items are tax free? What, are golf clubs part of some new outie therapy I haven’t read up on yet? You can go antiquing tax free but goodness forbid that the elderly become mobile without taxing them of their last few dollars for their equipment! You can buy a helicopter tax free but don’t forget to gouge parents with taxes on their child-safety restraints! These decisions are lunacy!”

John was spitting mad now and Sherlock was smiling fondly at him, “We will add that to the list of decisions we are questioning, calm my Sentinel, calm.” It was rich being calmed by Sherlock but like always it worked, “There are many wrongs to right, and you and I are merely beginning.”

Sherlock began by creating a massive database. He took over their computer system and began to dump file after file into a large website he put together. As soon as the other techs saw what he was working on they all pitched in and when Sherlock was satisfied that they were doing exactly as he wished he stepped back and let them continue. “The people we have locked out will lash out at the friends and families of their employees in a bid to keep them silent. I am sending them all a message. I can either expose some of them or I can expose all of them, the safety of those very same people they threaten protects them from my wrath…for now. I make no promises John, not to anyone but you. If I decide something needs to be done I will do it.”

“You’re kind of sexy when you’re power-mad.” That earned him another swat on the arm but also a kiss, “I trust you love, I’ll be here with you to make these decisions though, right? We’re partners, not…something else.”

“Equals John, of course we are. You have every right to stop me if you think I’ve gone too far but I hope you continue to trust me John, even when things look strange. I have my reasons and sometimes how I proceed is baffling to others.” Sherlock took John’s hands in his, “I would not wish to disappoint you John. The mere thought you being disappointed with me makes me feel ill. I should be angry at how important you are to me but I cannot be. You are a marvel, a wondrously bright light, and I don’t want anything to dim that shine.”

“Can your bright light call his sister? Shit I forgot my therapist, I was supposed to check in yesterday.” John had entirely forgotten about Harry, and he’d forgotten about Ella too. Two missed calls was going to earn him a talking to.

Sherlock kissed him and turned the wireless back on, “Your therapist was relieved of your files, she’s probably discovering that today. I couldn’t have someone keeping notes on you John. I had one of the homeless network break into her office. Don’t worry, he does this sort of thing all the time, though normally it’s jewelry he steals.” While John huffed pointlessly Sherlock continued, “As for your sister I suppose she ought to know about how things have changed for you.”

John’s heart sank. Once Harry knew he was a Sentinel she’d begin badgering him for free passes for her mayhem and nonsense. When she learned he was a Prime her personal behaviour would be guaranteed to go from bad to worse, and if Harry learned that John had money…lots of money…then John could pretty much bet his sister would suddenly become very, very attached to her only sibling. “I suppose, yeah.”

Sherlock looked sharply at John, his eyes flickering over his Sentinel’s face, “You do not trust your sister. You believe nothing good will come from sharing this information with her. She will trouble you and that will aggravate me. I already have an annoying sibling, I don’t need to deal with yours too.”

Sherlock’s mobile almost magically appeared in one hand and John’s in the other. He looked up Harry’s number and simply called her, his voice forbidding, “Harriet Watson. My name is Prime Holmes. I have taken your brother John Watson as my Sentinel so let me tell you now that your behaviour is being closely monitored. If you do anything at all to shame John or annoy me you will be incredibly unhappy with what I do with you afterward. Do you know what I am allowed to do with you Harriet Watson?”

John didn’t need enhanced hearing to pick up the sound of Harry’s hung-over and terrified sniffling, “Anything you want Sir.”

“That’s right Harriet Watson, anything I want. Do not irritate me. If I find you have been involved in any deed whatsoever that grieves my Sentinel things will go hard for you. Behave yourself and I will forget you exist and you want that don’t you Harriet Watson? You want the Prime of London to forget you exist?”

“Yes sir.” Harry’s terror was increasing but John felt nothing. She had lived a self-indulgent and destructive life for so long, maybe now she’d have a chance to try and do more than try to die in a gutter right after night.

“John would like to speak to you now. Be nice.” Sherlock handed the mobile over but only after kissing John gently and winking at him.

“Harry.”
“Johnny! Is it true? You’re one of those…things?” John covered his eyes with his hand, “I’m sorry Sentinel Watson.” Her voice had a trace of mocking bitterness and John was tired of it. For his whole life he’d had to listen to her constant muttering about others and what they had that she did not.

“Prime Watson.”

“What?” Harry sounded sick.

“It’s Prime Watson, don’t call me Johnny. I’ve always hated that. Prime Holmnes was very serious. He has eyes everywhere, he will know what you’re up to. Don’t mess up Harry, think of it as a second chance. Who knows, maybe Clara will notice what a good girl you’re being.”

“That’s not fair Johnn…John…Prime Watson.” John heard his sister swallow hard, “Clara left me for…”

“Clara left you for no one. She wrote me Harry, for the last two years she’s been writing me. She loved you but you loved the bottle more. She couldn’t be second forever. Maybe if she were first in your life she’d want to come back. Think about it. Sort your life out Harry, you’re being watched.”

John ended the call and handed Sherlock’s mobile back. He felt gray and washed out now, talking to Harry always made him feel that way. Now however he had a tall pale beauty with raven dark hair wrapping his arms around him and whispering in his ear, “You will always be first with me John Watson, no one and nothing will ever be more important to me than you.”

John felt marvelous again, he could feel that glorious wave of love from Sherlock and it filled him to bursting. Whatever had happened during their bond was growing stronger by the minute, the feelings he had for Sherlock were indescribable, the word love itself seemed pale, overused, too common to refer to the vastness of emotion that Sherlock stirred in John. “That’s because you are an angel, my angel, with just enough wicked to keep you perfect.”

Sherlock blushed and swatted John again but not very hard and he got a kiss out of the deal. “We have work to do.” Sherlock returned to it but he was smiling softly so John picked up the stack of transcripts he had been reviewing and got back to work. A brief lunch ended when their next interview started, even restricting the initial conversations to just an hour each would make the conversations last for days. John got Sherlock to show him how to navigate his database and took over entering the various answers to Sherlock’s queries. Some of the deals made at the Diogenes made John furious, others made him ill, and all of them made him determined to keep digging deeper and deeper to root out every last trace of the infection that sickened the city.

“Your boyfriend’s family has their fingers in everything.” said John wryly. The name Trevor keep cropping up. They were attached to all manner of businesses in any sector where there was a dollar to be made.

“Never refer to that offal as my boyfriend, the five or so minutes I spent in his company were some of the worst of my life.” Sherlock sounded sharp.

John leaned in and gave him an apologetic kiss, “Sorry love, I get catty when I get hungry. I probably need a snack. I can’t live on one meal a day like some super-models I know.”

The blushes would never get old, “Go eat John. I am more than fine. I’ve eaten more food since I met you than I’ve ever managed before this. I’m probably fine for the next few days in fact.”

“You are not going days without food.” John wasn’t even going to argue it. Sherlock’s breakfast had been substantial and though John wouldn’t like it he wouldn’t force Sherlock to eat again until the next day, “I’m going to have something spicy I think. What do you recommend Mr. Herbert?”

Mr. Herbert called the kitchen and in short order there was a savory curry on a bed of rice waiting for John along with all the sides. With good appetite he dug in and when he asked Sherlock if he wanted a taste his Guide came right over and had a bit of everything before going back to work. John was pleased, it hadn’t been much but anything at all was good because Sherlock was only even trying because it made John happy. John ate quickly and returned to work but quickly became disgruntled again, “Who the fuck are these people? Where do they find the time to be so fucking shitty?”

“Are you angry with someone in particular already John? How did you choose? There are so many targets.” Sherlock sounded snappish too, and he was keying in information angrily, “We are dealing with parasites. All of them together are a great disease our city has caught. Where do we begin to fix the damage they’ve caused? Who do we start with first?”

“Mycroft.”

“My brother?”

“Yes. You know him better than anyone else on this list, maybe it’s nepotism but he’s your family. He’s got to have a lot of personal information we’d find useful. Get Lestrade here as well, let him watch his husband. We’ll see what we find out then.”

“Call them.”

John sighed and called Lestrade. The DI’s voice was tight, “How may I help you Prime Watson?”

“We need to meet with you and Mycroft at the Diogenes club as soon as you can get here.” said
“I threw Mycroft out. I don’t know where he is.” Lestrade sounded furious, “He was getting ready to cheat on me John! All this time, right in front of me!”

“Whatever your personal problems are I’m sorry Lestrade. Sherlock wants both of you so no matter how awkward it is you are going to come here. I’ll find Mycroft.” John hung up and used Sherlock’s mobile to call the government official. Mycroft’s voice was dead and empty sounding when he finally answered, “How may I help you Prime Holmes?”

“It’s John. Stop feeling sorry for yourself, wash up, and get down to the Diogenes club. You’re being interviewed. Don’t make Sherlock wait.” John just ended the call, not giving Mycroft any chance to argue. He looked at Sherlock who was still glaring at the monitor, “They’re on the way. Do you want to take a break for five minutes?”

Before Sherlock could answer Mr. Herbert appeared, “Mr. Victor Trevor to see Prime Holmes.”

John froze. The man who’d been in line to bond Sherlock was here. Sherlock smelled of disgust, “Why in the world would he want to speak to me?”

“He will not say.”

John punched the button to show him the Visitor’s room. A tall man was standing there, his posture indolent. John could see he was well groomed, well dressed, and even with the awkward view, it was clear Victor Trevor was very handsome. “He looks like a model.”

“He’s about as bright as a mannequin too.” Sherlock was irritated, “John just go deal with him please? I cannot abide his grotesque insinuations and innuendos.”

“He flirts with you?” John was a little surprised at how angry he was. Victor Trevor at no point in the space-time continuum was ever allowed to flirt with Sherlock! “Don’t worry love, I’ll go deal with him.”

“Don’t break him if you don’t have to.” called Sherlock over his shoulder, “Love you!” John marched away to meet Victor Trevor, the man who planned to rape his mate, and John was smiling in a most unpleasant way.
Rather unexpectedly an unwelcome visitor has come to the Diogenes to see Sherlock but the Guide isn't interested. Good thing he has a bonded Sentinel to go instead.

Victor Trevor was standing in the center of the room. He fit right in to the Diogenes club, his suit was expensive but understatedly so, rich but not showy. The man was perfectly groomed and he was graceful as he raised his head, sniffed the air the second John walked through the door, and tensed before making a disgusted face. “You’re him, the poacher.”

John’s nose filled with an expensive cologne, one he’d previously associated with Mycroft but that he now knew was Richard’s. “You’re him… the rapist.” John walked softly, his steps sure and his eyes fixed on the man in front of him. Victor smelled arrogant, prideful, and angry. “What brings you here Sentinel Trevor? I’m afraid my Guide isn’t interested in speaking to you.”

Victor Trevor had yellow blonde hair, and sharp blue eyes. John realized that no matter how Sherlock viewed him, this man was anything but stupid but he was also exactly the brute his Guide claimed him to be. John could see it in his every inch, a bully. John smiled again when Victor said, “I’m here to retrieve Sherlock. He wasn’t yours to take.”

“He wasn’t yours either. He chose.” What did Victor think he could do here?

“Trial by combat.” said the man who began to calmly remove his jacket.

John snorted in disbelief, “This isn’t the dark ages and even if trial by combat were still a thing, Sherlock and I are bonded. You can’t do anything about that.”

“I can kill you and bond with him anyway.” Victor Trevor sounded matter-of-fact, “Bonds are for life, that’s true. If one of you dies, the bond dies with it. If I kill you then Sherlock is available again.”

“I’m a Prime.”

“Like I give a fuck. You’re a hundred years old and your leg is fucked. You were using a cane three days ago. Your arm is screwed, we’ve got your medical records. I’m in perfect condition. I’ve trained continuously since I was a child and am a master in so many martial arts I can hardly keep track.”

“That’s nice.”

“I’m not joking.”

“I didn’t think you were, I genuinely think that’s nice. I mean whatever hours you put into training are hours society didn’t have to put up with you, that’s pretty okay.”

“I don’t think you’re taking me seriously old man!” Victor’s eyes were hard, narrowed as he stared at John who just stood there.

“Oh I feel very serious about this moment, grave even.” said John in a calm voice and just remained standing where he was. Victor was several centimeters taller than him and he looked whip strong. John did nothing. “Trial by combat right? So, how do you want to begin? Do we just start hitting each other or do we need judges or something?”

Victor began with some rather extravagant looking moves, wind-milling his arms and positioning himself. John watched curiously, and wondered if Victor was aligning his chi or calling up some kind of spinal fire dragon, whatever it was took coordination. With a shrill cry Victor launched himself in the air in a tight spin, landed solidly on his feet and spun again, clearly aiming toward John.
John blinked, cocked his head as he watched and just as Victor unfurled to land a second time John stepped forward and swept Victor’s feet out from under him before he even had a chance to touch ground again. The man slammed face first onto the carpet, the burn from the fabric making a bright rose of color mar one cheek, “Oops! That’s actually not what I wanted to do.” John stumbled forward, his foot crunching over one of Victor’s hands, “Whoops! Oh, that didn’t sound good.”

Victor was sputtering and clearly trying not to reveal the fact that John had just bloodied him and broken two of his fingers and the soldier hadn’t raised a hand yet. Deftly the man sprang to his feet and launched himself at John, his arms outspread, his unbroken hand was spread wide, fingers like claws. John sighed and stepped to the side a tiny bit before he slammed the palm of his right hand hard against Victor’s solar plexus. The man dropped gasping to the floor. “See the thing is ducky, that you’ve spent all these years training to hurt people whereas I’ve spent all these years actually killing people.” John kicked him in the short-ribs and heard a satisfying wheeze. “Also, and you probably didn’t think about this, I’m a doctor.” Taking careful aim John stomped on the man’s inner knee. Victor was gagging now, choking on his own stifled cries, “That was your gastrocnemius muscle, no you can’t rotate your foot.” John took careful aim a second time, this time aiming higher up the man’s thigh on his other leg. There was a wet popping sound and Victor’s gag turned into a choking gargle, “Biceps femoris muscle, I bet that hurts doesn’t it? It also means you can’t flex your knee on that leg. Oh dear, you’re out of legs already! Does the trial by combat end now or can you crawl? Try crawling for me. Go on, you look so fit, surely you can crawl a few feet? Give it a go…oh come on Victor, you’re not even making an effort!”

Victor was laying there, his face red and his expression one of pure hatred and pain, “I will fucking kill you!” he swore.

“Well that’s what you came here to do! Why aren’t you doing it? Did you bring a gun?” Victor stared at him helpfully. “No gun? Okay, what about a knife? Did you bring a knife? No?” John stepped back, “You seriously came here to challenge me to a fight to the death so you could take another run at raping Sherlock and you didn’t bring anything to kill me with? That’s pretty poor planning if you ask me.” John patted his pockets down and extracted what he had in there, “Let’s see, receipts from the store, no good. My bank card. No, I need that. Oh look, my flat keys. Those will do.”

John dangled the keys in front of Victor, just out of reach. “I’m going to go get you a knife and when you have a weapon in your hands I’m going to kill you with my flat keys, look, I’ll use the post box one, it’s the smallest. Will that satisfy your trial by combat needs or shall we just drop this?”

“Fuck you!” spat Victor.

“You’re not my type, I’ve never been partial to blondes though from your roots I can see you’ve been keeping secrets. What’s the matter Victor, can’t hide the gray forever? Look at me, I don’t even try, and look at Sherlock, he can’t get enough.”

“Well that’s true enough.” Sherlock was standing in the doorway and he was staring down at Victor. “Hello John, I said not to break him unless you had to.”

“Oh, sorry love, it’s trial by combat though, I think I’m supposed to kill him, that’s the goal at least. He was supposed to kill me to free you from your bond, I think he likes you, my angel. You should know, I’m a jealous man.”

“Why is he still alive then? Is this going to take all night?”

“I was just popping off to get him a knife. He’s unarmored and now he’s a bit under the weather.”

“Well, off you go.” Sherlock sat himself on a chair near the door and caught John’s hand on his way by, kissing his knuckles quickly before releasing him with a heated smile, “You do look rather dashing right now John, you have quite the look in your eye.”

John winked saucily at his mate, “Be right back love, don’t go near him.”

“Alright my dearest, I’m just here for the show.”

There was a small valet area behind the wall and John snatched up a steak knife and returned to the Visitor’s room. Sherlock was still seated and he was smirking at Victor, “I don’t think you’ve made the best first impression my dearest, he’s called you the most dreadful names.”

“Well I’m glad I wasn’t here to hear them!” exclaimed John, “I’m quite delicate you know. Hold my cards love, I don’t want them getting bloody.”

“Mr. Herbert, make sure you capture all of this.” called Sherlock over his shoulder.

John asked Mr. Herbert in the background as he tossed the knife to Victor. The man snatched it up with his good hand, struggling to sit on his hip, neither leg bending correctly, “Already have Prime Holmes, we record every room at all times.”

Sherlock nodded sagely, “Ah yes Victor, this is being recorded for posterity. Perhaps we can show it to your friends if we let them have your body…wait…a whole body. An entire human body! Oh John! Can I keep him? I have so many experiments I could run and since we have a lab lined up anyway…”

“No! I hate to say this but any body but his. I’m not having him laying around going manky! This
is off-putting enough. Tell you what, forget keeping his body and I’ll see if I can track down the toxic sample case that the Center for Disease Control assembled, what do you think of that?"

“Oh John, would you? You beautiful thing you! Fine, just kill him quickly and let’s get on with things. We have a lot of work to do.” Mycroft showed up and Lestrade was right behind him, “Oh hello brother. John was just about to kill Victor. Have a seat, it shouldn’t be long.”

“You can’t kill him!” protested Mycroft, “His family is powerful, this will cause endless problems.”

“It’s trial by combat.” reported John in a very serious voice. “Victor has been practicing for ages for this moment, go on, tell them Victor.” Victor remained silent. “Anyway he’s a martial arts expert and he came here to kill me so he could bond with Sherlock despite everything. What do you think of that Mycroft?”

John was staring hard at Mycroft who shrank back. John had death in his eyes still but Lestrade stepped forward, “John. Don’t. Please, don’t.”

“What’s stopping me Lestrade? That man set this man on my Guide. Both of them planned to have Sherlock raped. If I kill Victor why shouldn’t I kill Mycroft too?”

Lestrade was staring at Mycroft like he’d never seen him before. “Why Myc? Sherlock is your baby brother. We’ve spent years looking after him. When did you decide to do this or did you decide? This smells like your lover to me.”

Lestrade turned his back on Mycroft before he could answer but Mycroft spoke anyway, “Richard and I are not lovers, we have never been even slightly romantic. Please Gregory, please don’t turn away?”

“Why should I turn back Mycroft?” the use of his full name stung the ginger man, he flinched as his husband used it, “I don’t want to see who you are. I don’t want to remember that my own husband was willing to do this to his only brother. I don’t want to see that man wearing my husband’s face.”

“It was for you, alright? It was to save you!” Mycroft fell to his knees. “They gave me a choice, either I gave them my brother to bond or they took you! I was selfish and I chose you because I can’t help Sherlock anymore, nothing I have tried has worked, and it had to be one of you so I said they could have him and I helped.”

John was on Victor in a flash. He had the tall man on his stomach, his head twisted back at an ugly angle, his knee digging sharply into Victor’s spine, “Is this true? Did they force Mycroft to choose?”

Victor was gurgling a bit so John eased off. The blond man gagged for a moment. “Richard said I could have Sherlock if he got Mycroft. He has a thing for powerful people and he hates the cops. The DI wasn’t supposed to live any longer than you.”

John didn’t need his flat keys. In a move so fast that none could have stopped him even if they’d been interested in trying John rendered Victor unconscious and let his body fall to the floor. Mycroft was weeping, his hands covering his face as he bent himself low. John could smell shame and remorse in equal measure with pain and anguish, “I had to save you Gregory. You are the only good thing in my life. You are the only good thing I have ever known. How could I let anyone harm you? I would have done anything, endured anything, even if it meant losing your love and respect if it meant you were safe.”

“Mycroft Holmes you will assist us in rooting out the problems of this city. You are going to share every scrap of information you have and you will use every bit of energy you’ve got to help us as well as repair your marriage. Gregory Lestrade, you asked us to discover if your husband was faithful. He has been. His deeds were motivated by the need to protect you but it is you alone who decides if your marriage continues or not. You and Mycroft will remain here until you decide. He’s not leaving until we’re done with him.” John was implacable. As much as he wanted to punish Mycroft Greg deserved the first go, “Go. Talk now. We have a lot to do and we can’t do it if you two aren’t sorted. Mr. Herbert!”

Mr. Herbert appeared. He merely glanced at Victor, “He’s going to be in a lot of pain, we’ll have someone see to him.” John nodded. Victor would likely need surgery to repair the deep tissue damage but he was alive to get it, a man should count his blessings. “A suite for Masters Lestrade and Holmes will be made ready,” before Greg could protest Mr. Herbert took himself away.

“Work it out Greg. You’re rightfully angry but we don’t have time. Go. Talk with Mycroft now. When you have a minute arrange for a security team to watch over Victor Trevor, he doesn’t get to speak to anyone but our people, all attending staff must be aware that silence is mandatory. I don’t want anyone spiriting him away.” Lestrade didn’t argue even if he didn’t look at Mycroft. He just followed the valet that appeared to lead them away, Mycroft’s face reddened and blotchy but also determined.

John could smell the things they felt but faintly, not like Sherlock who needed to remain seated while everyone was in the room. The second it was empty though the Guide nearly sprang on his Sentinel. “John!” Sherlock was well and truly aroused. He kissed John hard and nearly dragged him off to their suite, “You incredible man!” John was chuckling because Sherlock was nearly shaking with desire, his fingers fumbling as he tried to undo John’s few buttons, “That was so…” Sherlock clearly couldn’t articulate himself but he didn’t need to. John could smell the desire on him, the arousal, the almost desperate need Sherlock was experiencing.
Never let it be said that John Watson left his lover wanting. John felt a wave of possessive desire wash over him, “No one can have you but me.” John kissed Sherlock as he pushed him back onto the bed, tugging down their zips to release their erections. Sherlock pushed their trousers down as they both kicked off their shoes, breaking their kiss only long enough to wrench shirts off their backs and toss them to the floor with everything else before falling back into each other’s arms. When John bit lightly at Sherlock’s neck he thought Sherlock was having a seizure from the aggressive amount of rutting it induced. “My beautiful man.” Hands on each other stroking firmly it took no time at all for both men to come gasping against each other, hips bucking and mouths panting as they tried to keep kissing through it. Collapsing in a sweaty heap John tried to wipe the perspiration from his brow but couldn’t raise his arm, “I can’t remember the last time I came so fast! It’s like being a teenager again. Pretty soon we’ll be coming in our pants like kids! I don’t know when I’ve had this much sex ever.”

“This isn’t a normal amount?”

“Well for someone who saw forty a while ago.”

“Well I rather like it.”

“I’m fine with it too. See? It’s great how compatible we are.”

Sherlock was chuckling again and John loved it. Victor was far less of a challenge than he’d expected but bullies often appeared more frightening than they actually were. If Victor had been a seasoned warrior with those same skills John might have been slightly more concerned but only slightly. “You could have killed him.”

“Killing is easy and hard to undo. He’s valuable, he’s got information we want. This Richard character is a venomous spider, he’s got a web and everyone is caught in it, his poison is on all of them. Victor is his favorite for some reason and how he’s in our hands. I want to know everything Victor knows about Richard and I know you’ll find it out for me.”

“Yes John, I will learn absolutely everything Victor knows and possibly several things he’s not even aware he knows.” Sherlock sounded entirely pleased with the idea and John was content once more. “They’ve underestimated you. I’ve underestimated you.”

“Well you hardly know me love, it’s odd isn’t it? We’ve got years and years of things to tell each other. We know so little.” John didn’t mind, they had their whole lives in front of them, trials by combat notwithstanding.

“You must have been devastating on the battlefield.” Sherlock sounded admiring.

“Actually it was more like the backroom brawls we used to have to blow off steam. There isn’t a lot of hand-to-hand combat for medics.” Just friendly scraps with mates, showing off moves, demonstrating skills, teaching one another how to survive in any possible circumstance. Whatever time Victor had dedicated to his disciplines could not compare to the decades of training John had undertaken.

“You killed people though.” pressed Sherlock.

“Well I shot them but only because they were shooting me first! You’ve seen the scars.” John could hardly hide them, his body bore reminders of the many chances he’d given his enemies to survive. Victor hadn’t laid a finger on John.

“You’ve never killed anyone by hand?!” Sherlock wasn’t giving up!

“A few Sherlock but again, war, they tried to kill me first so yes, I’ve killed people with my hands, or hand-weapons at least.” John didn’t really like those memories. His hands were capable of both rending flesh and sewing it back together. His shoulder had healed, the gifts of Emerging just as he was wounded had granted him a nearly perfect recovery. If he wanted he could take up surgery again except that he wanted to help Sherlock. They’d heal far more people doing this work than any amount of operations John could perform.

“Did Victor stand any kind of a chance?”

“If he’d gone about it logically and not bothered with a challenge, yes of course. If I wanted to kill someone I wouldn’t prance around issuing challenges, I’d just kill them.”

“How practical you are John, I would have expected more of a struggle to reconcile with the doctor in you.”

“I was a soldier first Sherlock. I’m not an assassin but I’m also not a fool. All that posing and grandstanding is for show, real battle is nothing like that.”

“I’m buying you hand weapons. Maybe someone will attack us and I’ll get to watch you kill them with your bare hands.”

“You are bloodthirsty!” stated John.

“Possibly but I know the chances of it ever happening are remote but I can hope, can’t I?” Sherlock kissed him soundly. “Get up. Now that I’ve gratified my apparently uncontrollable need for sexual congress whenever you display dominant behavior we can get back to work.” Sherlock smacked John’s behind and climbed out of bed.

John giggled but obediently got up for a quick wash. Their clothes were too rumpled so they pulled on pyjamas and what Sherlock insisted were called smoking jackets, “You are not
smoking.” Sherlock pretended not to hear John who sighed as he watched Sherlock tuck a packet into his pocket as well as a lighter. One step at a time and the occasional cigarette wasn’t the worst thing in the world.

Mr. Herbert met them in the conference room. “Mr. Trevor has been taken to hospital. We have several surgeons on retainer, they are all trustworthy and with their staff will remain silent. No one will know where he is.”

“Once he’s able to leave the hospital he can convalesce here, it will be convenient for everyone.” decided Sherlock, “John can monitor his progress or we can bring in someone to look after him, I don’t care. I just want to begin interviewing him.”

“Shall I call for a light snack Sir?” John nodded, he was definitely hungry now. “Very good.”

Mr. Herbert disappeared and left John and Sherlock to continue working over their review. Sherlock decided to postpone personnel interviews until his brother was available, “I’m not repeating things for him. What are they doing now? Are they still arguing?”

John listened. He heard the unmistakeably rhythmic sound of flesh on flesh and recoiled when he clearly heard Mycroft beg for more, “They’re making up. Thanks for that! You couldn’t have waited until after I ate?”

“My poor darling!” Sherlock was trying not to laugh but he did even as he kissed John which only made John giggle, “I’m sure that was traumatic.”

“After everything I’ve done for you, this is how I’m repaid?” John’s false aggrieved tone only made Sherlock laugh harder because his Guide could see how happy John was that Sherlock was joking with him.

“I’m sorry my dearest but you did say you’d gone to war, if this has unmanned you…”

“Shut it.” growled John and kissed Sherlock again, “Come on my angel, let’s go have a bite, I’m not a young man and if you keep molesting me like this I need to keep my strength up.”

“Excellent point John. If you are at all commanding in the next hour or so I will have to satisfy myself with a good snog, I’m not a young man either.” John laughed outright and Sherlock smiled.

It was late and even with a snack and a cup of tea they only managed a couple more hours of reading before John called it a night. Sherlock was clearly able to continue but he got up without protest and followed John to bed. Someone had remade it for them so gratefully they slid into clean sheets and snuggled close. “Even if we just used the little we know now we could take down nearly a third of the authority figures in the city.” John wasn’t very happy with what he’d been learning.

“I know John, it’s difficult to decide where to begin. Corruption is wide-spread and there are so many secrets it’s a wonder anything gets done at all.” Sherlock was quiet. Like John he’d had many beliefs about the world around them, a great many hopes for the virtue of those who theoretically represented the common man. So far all they had found was disappointment. “Once Sentinels and Guides were here to ensure that these very decisions we’re examining now did not happen. Once upon a time they were impartial advisors, merely present to provide direction and to mediate. Now Pairs are no better than junkyard dogs, roaming wild and unfettered and to what purpose? We can’t be the only two involved in fixing this mess, it’s too widespread, it covers every sector in the city, every demographic. The problem is systemic, even if we manage to catch and punish the few instigators how do we unravel what appears to be generations of abuse of the people?”

“I don’t know what to say love, this is far more complicated than I ever could have imagined.” John felt frustrated that he didn’t have answers to give.

Sherlock stroked his chest, “This is a wonderful puzzle my love, one with a very large prize at the end. We will unravel it together, I know we will.” Tucking himself as close to his body as he could, “We are about to reveal ugly things about powerful people, things they have worked hard to hide for a very long time. I don’t mind hurting these people but there is bound to be collateral damage.”

John thought for a long time before he spoke, “People are already being hurt, right now hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people are suffering each and every day. The game is set against them but they are forced to play while a handful sit back and watch them squirm from inside places like the Diogenes. Yes, people will get hurt, good people, but are they better than everyone who hurts already? Do their few lives add up to everyone else’s? No Sherlock, I don’t think they do and I realise that you and I are the nearly only pair of position of correcting a lot of things all at once so like it or not we’re going to check our facts until we’re positive and then we’re not going to hesitate to remove whatever infection is necessary to make everything heal as well as it can.”

Sherlock was silent for a long time and John wondered if his lover had fallen asleep but Sherlock finally spoke and his voice was filled with humility, “You have a very great heart John Watson, you are a good man. The things you value should be valued by all, I am very proud to take on this task with you. I know I will go off course from time to time, I get caught up in the pursuit but you will keep me right, I know you will.”

“I thought you were supposed to be the Guide.” teased John but he was so moved with Sherlock’s faith in him.
“You will protect me from myself as well as from everything else John Watson.” Sherlock spoke simply. He believed in John, that was clear, and John’s heart felt too small to hold all the love he felt for the man in his arms. "I am safe with you.”

“You are, I’m always going to be here for you.” He would, John planned to be with Sherlock for as long as possible. “Goodnight love.”

“Goodnight my dearest.” Sherlock’s hand caressed John’s chest one more time before settling over his heart. Closing his eyes John drifted off, completely content.

Breakfast the next morning was awkward. Greg had obviously entirely gotten over his anger toward his husband via some very rough sex, said spouse now sat uncomfortably at the table, his neck ringed with barely hidden love-bites, testament of Greg’s more primitive instincts. John could tell they’d had sex again that morning and for a moment considered asking Greg to take it easy on Mycroft. The last thing he wanted to do was have to intervene medically and become any way be involved with Sherlock’s brother’s arse. Clearly submissive Mycroft simply sat and allowed his now happy husband dote on him. John mentally shrugged, at least Mycroft was getting the best in after-care, Greg seemed bent on making up all the lost affection they had not shared for so long and Mycroft was appropriately humbled by it. “The pair of you absolutely radiate domestic bliss, it is nauseating.” said Sherlock finally.

Mycroft kept his eyes down and spoke respectfully, “I owe you a very great apology Sherlock. I blinded myself to the realities of the decisions I made, desperately seeking only to protect one when I should have protected all. I’m very ashamed of my actions and have no idea how to earn even a modicum of your trust back except to say I will place myself fully in your service.”

Sherlock looked at his brother for a long time before he spoke and his voice wasn’t exactly gentle but it wasn’t harsh either, “Before my bond I would have found your actions unbearable, even with my bond it was difficult to accept. Since I am however bonded to John Watson I understand you my brother. If I had to choose between saving my family and saving John there would be no question. I might feel regret for the rest of my days but I would choose John each and every time and I cannot fault you for choosing your husband over me. Your feelings for Lestrade have been the one of the few things about you I believed so believe me in return, if you betray me again I will kill you myself and I won’t care how that hurts Greg. If I cannot trust you then John is at risk and putting John at risk is something I will not tolerate. Do we have an understanding brother?”

“You are being more than fair Prime Holmes.” Mycroft did not lift his eyes, not for a moment, “I apologize to you as well Prime Watson. My actions directly caused an attempt on your bond, I accept any punishment you decree.”

“Oh my god you sound pompous even when you apologize! How did you ever sweet-talk Lestrade into marrying you?”

“He didn’t use words…Prime Watson.” Lestrade’s tart reply dwindled to an abashed apology.

“I bet he didn’t, you know I can hear everything in this place.” Mycroft’s eyes slammed shut and his entire head turned almost purple with embarrassment and even Lestrade looked a bit red. John mentally shrugged, “Give him a day at least Lestrade, I know you missed it and everything but seriously, you’re going to wear him out.”

“John never discuss my brother’s sex life in front of me again! This is a new law! Lestrade, restrain yourself. If I ever learn another thing about your personal lives there will be dire consequences!”

“At least I have a sex life!” shouted Mycroft, riled at last, “I can’t even imagine how John manages being bonded to a Vestal Virgin!”

“I’ll have you know that we have an extraordinarily healthy sex life not that you need to know a thing about it.” John could smell Sherlock becoming upset and he didn’t like it.

“Mycroft Holmes you will mind how you address my Guide. In no way have I given you permission to speak to him disrespectfully. He may have been your younger brother but he is now your Prime and you will treat him accordingly. You have zero need to know anything about our personal lives and you will refrain from comment.” John was glaring at Mycroft, angry all over again. How dare he ruin Sherlock’s happy mood? His Guide was blank-faced but John could smell the mix of emotions on him that told him Sherlock regretted even responding to Mycroft’s jibes but that a lifetime of taunting had instilled certain reflexes in his reactions, “I have already been lenient with you Mycroft, I have no reason to like you. Sherlock respects your husband therefore I am willing to make more of an effort to deal with you. Each time you provoke me you are losing the tolerance I have already shown. Speak with care.” John had never tolerated disrespect. Under his command soldiers were polite, efficient, and mindful of their duties, and John kept himself strictly to task even though he was very displeased that his Guide was now struggling to maintain a façade of calm. His empathy was fully unleashed, the stings and arrows that might have passed him by unnoticed at one time now easily caused tears and wounds on the delicate fabric of Sherlock’s self-esteem. John could not allow that to happen.

John could tell that Lestrade was terrified and angry, and that Mycroft was embarrassed and ashamed of himself once again, “My apologies Prime Watson. You are entirely correct. I will seek to modify my behavior toward Prime Holmes.”

The man seemed entirely abashed and John relented a tiny bit, “We’ll speak no more of it. After our meal we will have a great many questions for you. You will answer every single query no matter what you might think of the question, and you will speak the truth as fully as you can. I can
tell when you’re lying Mycroft, truly, don’t test me.”

Mycroft was much chastened and nodded his head shallowly like a scolded child. John looked at Lestrade who was still defensive toward his spouse, “You don’t know me very well Lestrade, I don’t punish people for slip-ups but I do for deliberate actions. The fact is we need Mycroft’s knowledge, I’m not going to hurt him. I thank you for all the care you have shown my Guide, I respect the effort it must of took but I will not allow him to be hurt, not in any way. You know what I am, what I’m made for. Put your anger away, it’s well within my rights to simply kill your husband right here and now but I will not because I’m not that kind of person. You are upset because I’ve caught him out when you should be upset because your husband displays no sense of self-preservation whatsoever. You are attached to my mate, I am not attached to you. Once you and your husband cease to be of interest or concern to Sherlock you will cease to be of interest to me and I will treat you no different than any other villains we may be called to judge.

“I’m not a villain!” protested the DI, “I’m the bloody law!”

“Yet you are married to a man who seems to epitomize the corruption we are bringing to light! What does that say about you Gregory Lestrade? Your husband seems to be directly involved in a rather stunning assortment of acts against the common people. Do you see my view now? I don’t know you or him. All I know is what’s happened since I’ve met the pair of you so let me remind you, alright? You used to make Sherlock work for free, and on demand. You spied on him constantly, used your authorities to harass him, monitored his activities, and quite regularly ignored him for huge periods of time until you needed him again. Right in front of me you threatened him with a Sentinel, you would have done it too Lestrade, don’t deny it. Does that reflect a good man to you? Let’s not forget Mycroft’s part in all of this. If you met someone today and they did all of that, would you see a good person standing in front of you or would you see someone you might just possibly classify as…low.”

Now Lestrade smelled as chastened as his husband, “We were trying to protect him.”

“Sure you were. You knew he was a Guide, that he was a Prime even before he bonded and look at how you treated him. No wonder he needs me, look at who was protecting him before I got here! Mark me gentlemen, I will not in any way tolerate disrespect toward Sherlock. This is a whole new day, your old lives are over.” John was firm and he dismissed them, “Take your meals away and meet us in the conference room.”

They picked up their plates and scurried away. The second they were out of sight Sherlock was all over John, “That was incredible! I can’t believe I just witnessed you walking all over my brother and Lestrade!” Sherlock kissed John’s face all over, “You didn’t need to.”

“Oh I think I did. They’ve got some pretty shitty habits my love, I’m nipping that in the bud. From what I understand Mycroft has been motivated by envy and weakness nearly his whole life. Lestrade might be a good person too, you seem to think so, but Sherlock, it’s not right how they’ve handled you and I’m not letting them continue. I’m here to protect you and that means from every type of harm, and I know they hurt your feelings. I can’t bear that, I just can’t. I need to keep you safe.”

“Told you I was an addict, I was reckless.” confessed Sherlock.

John shook his head, “You were desperate, you needed looking after. If I’d been there…” except John hadn’t been a Sentinel then, he would have just been a regular man, ineligible to bond with Sherlock, “I would have helped anyway. I would have done something, kept you from being so overwhelmed, something, I don’t know!” John pressed his forehead to Sherlock’s, “I would have been your friend.”

“My best friend.” said Sherlock who pulled back to smile up at John, his heart in his eyes.

“You’re my very best friend.” promised John, “We could hardly help it, right?”

“You giggle at crime scenes, I would have been head over heels.” John laughed and kissed Sherlock’s smile, “I do love you John Watson.”

“I love you too Sherlock Holmes. Come on, we’ve let them cool their naughty heels long enough. Let’s get to work.”

Sherlock stood but only to kiss John tenderly, his hand cupping John’s jaw gently, “You really are so very special.” he whispered softly, “My John.”

John would never get tired of hearing his name fall from Sherlock’s lips. He took his Guide’s hand and followed Sherlock to the conference room, ready and willing to do whatever they needed to in order to fix all that needed fixing, even if it was just ending a lifetime of squabbling between two brothers. With John to protect him, Sherlock could do anything, and John aimed to allow Sherlock to do just that.
Chapter Summary

Things are about to change in London but before that John and Sherlock have to get a few things sorted.

Chapter Notes

I am writing in all my spare moments but I'm afraid I'm quite busy these days so I apologize in advance for not being able to post every single day which is what I want and can't have. ALAS.

I wrote this chapter in choppy blocks and surges because I had no time to sit down and do more than peck out a word here or there so I don't know about the result. Let me know if I've failed tremendously.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

John wasn’t looking forward to the amount of work they had to get through before they did anything even remotely like taking anyone down. There was a mountain of data to get through and it had taken all this time merely to assemble it to go over. He sighed. Mycroft was standing next to his husband and he looked nervous, “Prime Watson.” he said by way of greeting. “Prime Holmes.”

“Mr. Holmes.” John looked at Mycroft sternly and then Lestrade, “Check with your people. I want to know what’s going on with Victor Trevor.”

Lestrade pulled out his mobile and made a call, “He’s out of surgery and in post-op. As soon as his doctor clears him he can be relocated here.”

John nodded and Sherlock called Mr. Herbert to arrange an appropriate space for their guest to recuperate in. “We’ll need a nurse as well, preferably someone not so gentle.” Neither of them doubted that Victor would try to cause problems, they’d need to have someone who would be capable of dealing with a potentially dangerous patient. “If you don’t mind I have an old friend I can call. He finished his last tour just before I…well, he’s out and he was one of the finest nurses I ever worked with. We can trust him.”

Sherlock nodded thoughtfully, “Arrange it John, if this is someone you trust then we can certainly use his help.”

John got his mobile out and made a few calls. He hadn’t had a phone when he’d been shot but it wasn’t impossible to track down a friend in the army, you just had to know how to reach out to the right people. One chat with the boys at the VA landed John a number for a friend who had the number John was looking for. “Bill? It’s John Watson! Good to hear your voice! I’m in London, where are you?” John pretended not to see Sherlock craning his neck to eavesdrop, instead he angled closer so his lover could hear, “Bill I have a job for you, but it’s immediate, no questions. Are you available?” John listened to the excited reply, “Right, give me your address, a very posh looking car will collect you in about an hour. Pack a bag, I can’t say how long this might take, can you manage?”

“His name is Bill Murray. Mycroft, send a car to this address.” John passed it along and Mycroft was soon making calls of his own. “We’ll
need supplies too, get Anthea over here, she may as well be under our eye too.” John looked sternly at Mycroft who shuffled back again, “Have you given any thought of how to assist?”

Lestrade smelled angry again. He didn’t like Mycroft being ordered around but John had no sympathy. They’d both had their chances to do right and they hadn’t. The treatment they received was a direct result of what John judged to be appropriate. Sherlock stepped forward, “Tell us about Richard.” Lestrade’s fury turned into a sickly stink, jealousy, and for a moment John did feel sorry for him. He didn’t know how he would have handled it if Sherlock had been even faintly interested in Victor Trevor. “How did you initially become involved?”

Mycroft was clearly uncomfortable speaking about his almost-paramour in front of his husband but the Primes gave him no choice. “I was introduced to him at a charity event attended by several business associates and colleagues. I had no idea at that point that he already knew a great deal about me and that our meeting had been orchestrated. Think what you will of me, he played me with finesse. The deals I made during those events were successful, but all of them came with a price. I found them simple to pay at first but then…then the first mistake happened and Richard helped fix it. A second mistake when there should have been none and once again Richard smoothed everything over. I was blind at first and when I finally realized what was going on it was far too late. I was forced to a large variety of scandalous deals and I could not back out without jeopardizing the work that needed to be kept. Richard has people everywhere. Gregory’s life was already on the line. With each veiled threat I was cajoled into agreeing to more and more things I might have argued against, if only for the practical aspects of it. It takes a great deal of effort to keep people in the condition they’ve become accustomed to. Diversions are necessary, and much like ancient Rome I feel the city must burn before it will ever be right again.”

“Well Sherlock does play the violin a treat but let’s hold off burning the place to the ground and possibly focus on a less incendiary solution.” John shook his head, “You must know who the key players are apart from Richard. What does he look like anyhow? We’ve not seen a single picture.”

“He is very careful not to allow that to happen. As far as I know not a single image of him is available anywhere however,” Mycroft took a pad of paper and a pen, “That does not mean his image is impossible to share.”

Mycroft had a fair and steady hand. John watched Lestrade out of the corner of his eye and saw the man looked conflicted, proud of his husband’s clear skill, but a fresh surge of the sickly stench of jealousy as Mycroft produced an almost lifelike sketch of a dark haired man told John another story. The elder Holmes had impressive skills, with a few elegant lines he showed them the face of a man who looked both petulant and furious at the same time. There was a mercurial element to his dark eyes, and the set of his mouth made John think of snakes for some reason. Richard was youthful and handsome and the stink of jealousy grew stronger. Lestrade turned away and would not look. Mycroft noticed and visibly flinched again, and began to smell of distress and worry as he took in the view of his husband’s firmly turned back.

“What else can you tell us?” Sherlock could clearly tell how Lestrade was feeling but was determined to continue no matter how he experienced things, even second hand. John reached out and tangled their fingers together and felt Sherlock relax. The Guide sighed with relief and sat back in his chair to begin questioning his brother closely. John was amazed at the amount of details Mycroft was able to recall but Sherlock was not. With each miniscule detail the brothers constructed a profile. “He’s insane.”

“And he’s also a genius. John was very right to name him a spider, this web is bigger than we originally imagined and we are nearly at the centre already. How do we extricate ourselves?” Sherlock tapped his mouth thoughtfully with a fingertip while he pondered.

Lestrade was furious all over again. “Not romantic in the least you said. You know everything about this man, everything?”

The DI got up from the table and tried to storm away but Sherlock’s firm call made him stop, “My brother and I have practiced since childhood to do this very thing Lestrade. Unlike the detectives you are accustomed to working with we must see and observe deeply and quickly. Present me with anyone you care to and I will do the same again and so would Mycroft. He didn’t need to be long acquainted with Richard to learn these things, a single meeting would have sufficed. You have been wed to my brother for many years now, this is not something new to you. Your feelings, while understandable, are baseless. My brother has no feelings other than contempt for Richard, I can assure you of this. John?”

“He doesn’t exactly hate Richard because hate is the opposite of love and Mycroft has no feelings of that description about this person. You really have nothing to be jealous about. He was forced into company and that was it, he had no attraction to this man. I would have smelled it on him, a smell like that is obvious.” John knew what desire smelled like, knew the difference between lust and passion. He’d spent months wandering London and he’d experienced every layer of human existence via his enhanced senses. He knew the difference between a heart racing in fear or excitement, he knew the sound of panicked gasps for air and the anxious draws before orgasm and all the grades in-between. Now that he was with Sherlock John could differentiate easily, he knew what he was sensing now, Mycroft didn’t like Richard and he never had, Greg was the only person he wanted. It wasn’t like Sherlock’s empathy but it was close.

Lestrade looked mistrustful still but Mycroft turned to his husband, “Gregory, not even for a moment have I desired to spend time with Richard. Our few meetings have always been conducted as business professionals, always in the company of others. His approaches have always been made through third parties and I have returned not a single advance. For me there can be only one person in my life and I married him. I married you and even if you ended our marriage I would still wish only to be with you. The proprietary behavior Richard displays with me is no
different than he shows to anyone he works with. You will see when you meet Victor Trevor, he also wears Richard’s scent and his clothes. This is a distinction we can use to our advantage, we know what close associates of Richard’s will smell like."

“You still have a bottle of that crap at the house.” scowled Lestrade.

“You told me you threw out all my personal possessions.” Mycroft was in pain, John could smell it and Sherlock could feel it, “You told me you had gotten rid of everything that had been ruined.” If Sherlock told John he’d done that it would have broken the soldier.

“I might have been speaking in anger. I haven’t actually touched anything. I was too angry. All of your things are still there…and his things.” Lestrade was clearly conflicted. John understood that his trust in his spouse was seriously strained and he was having a difficult time letting the negativity go. Any normal person would be able to feel the tension in the room.

“Cease!” demanded Sherlock, “Cease this instantly! Lestrade we have given you all the evidence that is possible to have, Mycroft did not cheat on you nor has he ever entertained the idea of cheating on you. If you need more time to recover from this please take yourself to your suite and remain there, I cannot bear this!”

Sherlock was having difficulty filtering out the emotions being experienced by his family, John could smell his distress growing, “We’re taking a break to collect ourselves.” John marched Sherlock away to their suite and closed the door firmly before taking Sherlock into his arms.

“Perhaps it’s because he’s my brother, or because Lestrade has always been as good to me as he knows how, but for a minute there I knew everything they were feeling. I should be able to handle dozens of people at once but for some reason these two overwhelmed me. That is very disturbing John, very disturbing.” Sherlock’s hands were trembling as he rubbed them up and down John’s back.

John nestled himself close to his Guide and let Sherlock lean on him, “I think you’re kind of worried that maybe I might cheat on you one day. Our relationship is new and it’s the first one you’ve ever had. You barely know me, you don’t know anything about my romantic history or anything. I could be a right bastard, you don’t know. I’m not or I hope I’m not.” John gave Sherlock a squeeze, “I don’t want to make you unhappy, not ever, not even for a minute. I’m yours Sherlock, one hundred percent.”

“I know we’re bonded. I know I’m being irrational.” said Sherlock sounding frustrated, “But even the idea that you might one day meet…”

“Meet who? Another Prime? A woman? A man? It doesn’t matter who I meet Sherlock, not anymore. I can’t be with anyone else, I don’t want to be with anyone else. I can’t imagine living a life that isn’t all about you. You’re the center of my whole universe now, you know that don’t you?” John knew he had changed significantly, that the chemicals that had flooded him during their bond had altered him until he wasn’t the same John Watson from a few days ago. He was indubious with Sherlock, his very cells wrapped in tendrils of emotions that tied him to his Guide as completely as two people could get.

Sherlock was holding John so tightly now that he was having a difficult time breathing but he didn’t protest. Sherlock had no experience being emotionally dependant on someone, it would be frightening for him, his Guide would naturally feel uncertain due to his lack of personal understanding, “You promise?”

“I absolutely promise Sherlock. I won’t ever want someone but you, and if you ever think even for a second that something is up you just butt right in and set whoever it is straight, that’s how serious I am about you.” John hated the idea of being with someone else, how could he? It was impossible, and almost revolting to consider. John thought for a fleeting second about his plans to seek out companionship away from Sherlock and almost shuddered. That idea would never come to fruition, no person stood a chance to gain John’s attention that way.

Sherlock looked dubious, “That doesn’t sound very healthy.”

“Well probably not but what can I say? I’m not perfect. I’ve never been in a long-term relationship that lasted for more than a few tepid weeks. I’ve never been with anyone anything like you, I can’t compare my exes to you! That’s apples and diamonds there, it just can’t be done.” John loved the happy blush on Sherlock’s face, and the delightfully possessive smell that came from him. Maybe it was wrong, and likely not the best standard to set but John was serious. Whatever happened due to their bond, the feelings he had for Sherlock were powerful. John would rather hurt himself than cause Sherlock a single moment of distress, there couldn’t possibly anyone else who could outshine his detective but that didn’t mean Sherlock still wouldn’t occasionally feel threatened! Before that happened John wanted to make his intentions clear, “Keeping you safe is my only purpose now, and I mean to, in any way that needs protecting. If you feel threatened then I am failing at my job and I don’t like that idea one bit. I don’t care if it’s someone trying to kill you or someone making you feel bad about something, I won’t have it, I’ll stop it. You are the most precious person in the world to me Sherlock, I love you.”

“I think our bond might be having some kind of extreme effect on you.” Sherlock leaned down to kiss John softly, “I’m glad it’s not just me then.” John laughed softly and Sherlock kissed him again, “I love you too John, much more than I ever thought myself capable of. It’s terrifying. There’s so much and it feels like there’s more every single day. I can feel it getting stronger every moment we’re together, and it is so much better than I could ever have dreamed. I never once thought a bond would be good for me. I saw Sentinels as anchors, dead-weights. Being bonded meant having a human manacle that would link me forever to an institution I cannot respect. Then
I met you and it was like coming out of the darkness, you were the perfect solution to everything. I still can’t believe you said yes.”

“Well I’m glad I did. It’s the best decision I ever made and I’ll never stop being glad it was me that you picked. You could have had anyone, anyone at all.”

“I wouldn’t have wanted them, not the way I want you.” Sherlock kissed the top of John’s head and cupped his jaw again, “Right from the minute we met you stirred something in me John Watson. I had no intention of looking for a flatmate, no desire at all to have some stranger move in with me but there you were and you were just brilliant. The day we met was the best day I’d ever had, you made me feel…good. I liked the way you smiled, and I loved the way you laughed. I think I started falling in love the very first time we laughed together, is that odd?”

John was so moved, “I liked you. It didn’t feel wrong to say yes to you despite all the reasons I might have said no. It didn’t feel wrong, not for a second, not even when we were trying to figure out how to have sex.”

Sherlock laughed, it was warm and filled with a bit of embarrassment, “I think I did alright.”

“Yes you did.” John giggled against Sherlock’s mouth, “It was the way you responded to me, that look in your face when you were getting me ready. I was trying so hard just to get through it but when I saw how I’d affected you…well, that made me feel something.”

“You have no idea how enticing you looked. There you were, a soldier, a hero, and yet you let me touch you like that. You let me inside of you and no one has ever given me their trust like that before. It was so beautiful. I didn’t know what to do with my impulses, I didn’t want to hurt you, and I was beginning to panic a bit when you completely failed to respond to anything. Admittedly my technique needs yards of work but…well…I wanted you so very much. I just wished I knew how to show you that at the time.”

“I know it now.” John felt that delicious warmth flood him. Sherlock was happy and that made John feel wonderful. “I’m glad I’m the only one you’ve ever been with.”

Sherlock blushed, “You don’t mind that I know absolutely nothing about sex?”

“You’re catching on pretty fast.” said John pointedly.

“I don’t want you to become bored with me.”

“That’s probably never going to happen. I just…I can’t even…how would that even come about?” John couldn’t even fathom it. Bored of Sherlock? Never! Even if Sherlock never learned another new thing about how to make love John was pretty sure he was still going to be having the best sex in the universe, always. As it was he couldn’t even begin to imagine all the things they could do together, anything! The sky was the limit for them.

“I’m being foolish, aren’t I?” said Sherlock, a blush high on his cheek.

“A little bit but I think its darling.” John really was over the moon for Sherlock.

Mr. Herbert knocked politely at the door and announced himself, “Mr. Murray has arrived. Mr. Trevor is en route, he should be here in about twenty minutes.”

“Bring Bill to the conference room. I’ll talk with him before we bring in the others.” Mr. Herbert nodded and departed. John looked up at his lover, “I’d like you to come meet someone I’ve known for a long time. You can ask Bill anything you’d like about me, that man would be more than happy to fill the room with the sound of his own voice.”

“You are certain this is alright?” Sherlock didn’t seem convinced, “It seems odd to me.”

“Possibly, but again Sherlock, we don’t know each other very well. I don’t have many friends because well, I only really know the people I served with and I didn’t serve with anyone for long. If Bill hadn’t been a part of my unit and a nurse I might not have worked with him as often as I did. He’d be one of the very few people that would have any sort of legitimate opinion about me, you know, apart from Harry.”

Sherlock wrinkled his nose, “As if I’d talk to your sister! You may as well go ask Mycroft about how he thinks I am!” Sherlock sighed, “I see your point John. I will make use of the opportunity though really it makes no ultimate difference if what I learn upsets me or makes me happy. Our bond is made, we are together for the rest of our lives.”

“True but I know what a bundle of curiosity you are, go on love, you have permission to be as nosy as you want.” That made Sherlock laugh but he also nodded and John was content. He had nothing to hide from Sherlock and it was better to just go ahead and tell him it was alright rather than watch him struggle to contain his inevitable questions.

Bill had his back to them when they arrived but quickly turned, a huge bright smile on his face bringing out the dimples in his cheeks as he spotted John. His hair was grown out a bit but was as black and spiky as ever. Like always, dark blue eyes nearly snapped with the endless mirth that bubbled beneath the surface. Bill’s smile was as toothy as it ever was, and John had to smile back. You couldn’t help smiling at Bill, he was just a good bloke and a happy one, “Look at you! I heard you were all shot up, I wasn’t there to patch you back up so why are you in one piece?”

John laughed along with his old friend, easily accepting Bill’s back thumping hug, “It’s good to see you Bill.” John turned and smiled up at Sherlock who was scowling almost blackly. John bit back another smile and reached for his lover’s hand. With a great deal of love John stood beside...
Sherlock, “Bill, this is Sherlock Holmes, he’s a Guide, and my…”

“A Guide? Really? Hello mate, wow, I’ve never met a Guide. We used to talk about it back in the day right John? What’s it like?” Bill hadn’t changed a bit. He pushed forward and shook Sherlock’s hand vigorously, examining him closely with almost childlike excitement. “Are you the job? What’s this all about Captain? This is weird, you know we were just talking about you the other day?”

“It’s just John now Bill, Sherlock is my…”

“Well Just John, excuse me!” Bill was looking around, “You work here now Just John? This is a fair bit better than a field hospital, what’s this then, a private clinic?” Bill hadn’t let Sherlock go.

“No exactly, Bill, listen Sherlock is my…”

Bill turned away partially, still shaking Sherlock’s hand absently as he stared around, “How long have you been here John? You should have called me up, it’s the devil itself getting a job. No one wants a male nurse you know? I should have been a doctor like you, maybe I’d land a cushy job like this. So, you ever going to tell me anything or what?”

Sherlock pulled his hand away sharply and continued to stare down at the nurse which was quite the accomplishment since they were the same height, even if Bill was as broad as Sherlock was narrow, every pound of him hard muscle. “Bill Murray, what John is trying to tell you is that he has Emerged, we’ve bonded, and he is my Sentinel. Furthermore, we are Primes so will you kindly stop chattering and listen?”

Bill looked down at John’s face for only a second before he stood smartly at attention and snapped off a perfect salute; “Prime Watson, how may I be of service?”

“Well for one you can keep calling me John, for two I have a political guest that’s recovering from surgery, and for three, if you’re seriously looking for work I think we can use someone like you.”

John tangled his fingers with Sherlock’s again. His mate was jealous of Bill and while John thought it was almost unbearably adorable he also wanted to assure Sherlock that no matter how good a friend Bill was, he was never going to be a rival to Sherlock.

Bill noticed but said nothing, “Political guest? Well can’t say I’ve dealt with one of those in a while. So, sit-rep if you please Cap…John.”

John seated Sherlock first, and nodded Bill toward another seat at the table before taking the chair right next to his Guide. He took up Sherlock’s hand before beginning, “I Emerged when I got shot. I met Sherlock…god, it hasn’t even been a week, we bonded the day we met. According to the Tower we’ve been given Prime status however Sherlock had a suitor of sorts who didn’t like the fact that I beat him to the punch as it were. It got a bit…well he’s out of surgery and we need someone to look after him but he’s a fighter, his family is powerful and likely a pain in the arse, and we have very few people we can trust.”

Bill was nodding slowly, “It’s like that then is it? Well, you know how I love the scrappy ones John. I guess this means the guest a Sentinel too?”

“That’s right. He’ll be healing very quickly, he’s going to be considerably stronger than anyone you would have handled before this. Those stories are true. I don’t know how strong he is compared to me but you can pretty much bet that he can hear extremely well, his sense of smell is extraordinarily keen, and well, all his senses are going to be substantially more effective than you can possibly understand.”

John felt apologetic. Victor was dangerous, he was putting Bill directly in the line of fire. The feeling faded away when Bill punched the air happily and wiggled around before controlling himself and snapping off another salute, “A challenge Sir. Accepted.”

“Well let’s get you set up. You brought a bag? Good, a room will likely be waiting for you somewhere. That’s Mr. Herbert, he does the magic around here.” Mr. Herbert nodded graciously and faded into the background once again, waiting to be of service. “This is the situation. My Guide and I have taken over this facility via our authority as Primes. We have a mission that involves a lot of high level targets. Your patient is closely connected with several parties both by blood and by affiliation. One of the key players is extremely dangerous, he’s into the long game so we can’t trust anyone anywhere, he’s got people and eyes all over. My Guide was targeted as was his brother, you’ll meet him later. His brother is married to a Detective Inspector, he’s here too.”

Bill hadn’t let Sherlock go. “I Emerged when I got shot. I met Sherlock…god, it hasn’t even been a week, we bonded the day we met. According to the Tower we’ve been given Prime status however Sherlock had a suitor of sorts who didn’t like the fact that I beat him to the punch as it were. It got a bit…well he’s out of surgery and we need someone to look after him but he’s a fighter, his family is powerful and likely a pain in the arse, and we have very few people we can trust.”

Bill noticed but said nothing, “Political guest? Well can’t say I’ve dealt with one of those in a while. So, sit-rep if you please Cap…John.”

John nodded thoughtfully, it wouldn’t hurt to begin building a support base. Sherlock said they had a lot of money as well as access to resources. He’d have to see what that entailed exactly. John wasn’t interested in causing other people hardship in order to take care of his needs but if resources were available he would use them without a qualm. Sherlock finally spoke, “Bill Murray, the job offer is real. If John wishes to work with you then there is no other argument required. My mate has a fine sensibility but be warned, I am not John. I am completely intolerant of casual conduct. You and anyone you bring here will comport themselves in as professional a manner as they can manage. John is not military, not any longer, but as partners we have almost accidentally become the de facto authority in the city. We have taken severe issue with several economic and social themes that have made themselves known and are committed to fixing those. Our attentions cannot be split. Once you take charge of your patient I must have every assurance of your reliability. Break your trust with John and you will be very unhappy with the amazingly
Bill just grinned fondly down at his ex-Captain, “John’s a little spitfire isn’t he? I liked him the day we met too.” Bill grew serious, “John is a soldier. He’ll always be a soldier, you can’t take that out of him. It was always there. He’s earned my respect a thousand times over, there are a lot of good people that owe their lives to your Sentinel, and that was before he Emerged. I can’t even imagine what John is like now but let me tell you Sherlock Holmes, never once question the honor or integrity of the people I think John can trust. During war you have to rely on the people around you and they have to rely on you or you die. Just because we’re not in the army any more doesn’t make that any less true. If this is the mission then silence will reign, no one will get a word out of us.”

Sherlock did not like being chastised but his voice was not angry when he spoke, “Your people will still be reviewed, we can risk nothing but we have an understanding then. You will work for us and you will retain the assistance of whomever you feel will most benefit us after we check them out. We’re not hiring every person you know.” Bill rolled his eyes, “Nor are we a vacation destination. I expect actual work from everyone and my standards are almost cruelly high.”

“Well you’re a treat!” exclaimed Bill, “The people I know are the best. You won’t be disappointed.” Bill grinned down at John again, “I think he’s sweet on you.”

Sherlock blushed and his hands tightened around John’s who couldn’t stop laughing, “He is but I’m sweet on him too, so that’s alright. He’s my sweet angel.”

“Stop it.” protested Sherlock weakly.

“Shan’t.” said John cheekily and Bill laughed heartily.

“Really John.” huffed Sherlock who looked put out and pulled away a bit.

John just tugged him back, “Don’t mind us Bill, we’re still in the honeymoon phase. He has to put up with me endlessly.”

“He’s a poet Sherlock, did he tell you that? Writes a damn fine story too.” Bill smiled tolerantly at both of them and Sherlock relaxed against John, hesitantly draping his arm over John’s shoulder, clearly feeling possessive but unsure. John just put his arm around Sherlock’s waist and leaned against him.

“I should have guessed. John has quite the way with words, he’s thrilled me several times already with things he’s said to other people.” Sherlock dropped a kiss on John’s head like he always did, caught himself and blushed once again, “Our bond has taken some unexpected turns for both of us. Increased demonstrations of affection should be expected.”

“You said that all sciency. How’d you do that?” Bill blinked, “Wait, none of my business. If you don’t mind you should bring me to the patient’s room. I’d like to look it over before he gets here.”

John nodded. Bill was a firm believer in preventative measures, his advanced plans had saved them a lot of grief time and again. Bill checked it over and spoke with John briefly about the fight. He high-fived the doctor afterward and gave Sherlock a thumbs up. He checked their supplies got Mr. Herbert to remove the soft bed that was there. “He’ll need a proper hospital bed, one we can cuff him to. I’ll want to review meds and get a handle on dosages required for Emergent.

Victor was brought in by a small team of orderlies but he was clearly still under sedation. Bill examined him quickly while they waited for Mr. Herbert to produce the required bed. John didn’t want to ask why they had one on hand because in no time at all the valets were setting it up. The orderlies transferred the still sloping Victor to the bed and departed while John and Bill reviewed the charts. “One Mr. Victor Trevor, Sentinel, check. Two lovely bits of cutting, check. Look at the size of the bruise on his face. Carpet? Good work John. It says here they estimate his recovery to be about three weeks. I’m going to say this tough bastard does it in half that time and then tries to make a break for it. What do you bet this time Watson?”

“We’re not gambling on patient outcomes Murray. As fun as it might be I don’t have time to play games. This is as serious it gets. Who are you calling up?” Bill rattled off a list of names, John recognized most of them and was smiling hard, “Damn fine choices Bill.” John looked up at Sherlock who still smelled faintly jealous, “Do you mind being surrounded by a lot of old soldiers?”

“Old soldiers get old for only one reason, they’re hard to kill. Of course I don’t mind John. I wish I had the resources you do, all I can do is offer to fund them.” Sherlock was cupping John’s jaw again and he sounded chagrined.

“We’ll take it. Regular paycheques earn a lot of love and respect.” Bill made John laugh because he was telling pure truth. All anyone wanted on the outside was a little stability and a chance to have a life of some kind. John wasn’t so far away from being almost desperately broke that he had forgotten the strain it put on a person, “We can afford to be a bit generous but make a list first, note reasons for why we should retain your recommendations and we’ll talk it over later, alright?”

“Prime Watson.” Bill snapped off another salute by way of answer and got to work.

John called Mycroft and Greg back. Clearly they’d talked and Greg looked abashed but John wasn’t interested in their apologies. “Both of you get to work on a personnel plan. I want a support system designed where we utilize various ex-military colleagues of mine. Introduce yourself to Bill, get some information from him. Get on it. Mycroft I want Bill’s list of recommendations checked out every way you know how. You know who’s dirty, you’re on the inside. Try not to let a mole in. Lestrade, Mycroft can’t leave but there’s no reason for you not to
Sherlock nearly drugged John away, pulling him out of Victor’s room and back to their suite. Sherlock pinned John to the bed without hesitation, “You are mine John Watson!” Sherlock was so possessive, “I don’t know why I’m being like this! It’s all I can think about! You’re mine! Mine and only mine.” He couldn’t seem to stop himself and John didn’t want him to. John absolutely loved how Sherlock was practically manhandling him. No one had ever wanted John this badly.

“Take what you want,” John kissed Sherlock, completely willing to be stripped bare and to rid his lover of all his clothing as well, “It’s all yours Sherlock, only ever you.”

That seemed to be exactly what his Guide needed to hear but Sherlock was riding high on the need to reaffirm his claim on his Sentinel, “I have to have you. I want to take you.” Sherlock was kissing John almost savagely, “The way you are John. You just take control whenever you need to, you never hesitate. I…” Sherlock was grinding his hips against John’s leg, “It obvious arouses me greatly. I feel out of control!”

“The bonding chemicals,” panted John. Sherlock’s almost rough treatment was a turn-on like he’d never expected, “It’s like hormones at puberty, we’re triggering ruts in each other.”

“Likely. It’s possibly why I feel the urge to fuck you as hard as humanly possible.” A jolt of desire made John almost groan as he returned Sherlock’s heated kisses and bites with one’s of his own. “Would you like that John?”

“Is that what you want love?” John sucked on Sherlock’s tongue for a moment, “You want your cock inside me again?” John dragged kisses along Sherlock’s jaw until he got to his earlobe. A sharp nip followed by a teasing lick had Sherlock spreading John’s legs wide to kneel between them. He recalled how quickly he’d adjusted to Sherlock during their bond, even before it had taken effect the sex had been amazing. How good would it be now? John absolutely had to find out, “I want that too Sherlock. I want you to fuck me and I want it hard.”

Sherlock almost forced John to roll to his stomach, greedily spreading John wide and for a moment John feared his Guide was just going to begin. Instead he was treated to the feel of Sherlock’s tongue swirling eagerly over him, waiting only a few moments before he began to try and work it in. John was gasping. That was the most amazing sensation in the world! Sherlock’s mouth was so warm and his tongue was so strange feeling that John almost pulled away. John giggled and Sherlock pulled back, “What?” he asked testily.

“We’re supposed to be working. Everyone is working except for us.” Sherlock now had a spittack finger swirling busily over John, “Instead we’re about to spend the afternoon having amazing sex.”

“We make our own hours,” said Sherlock, sounding distracted, “Your arse is gorgeous. You’re so small seeming but I know for a fact I can fit my entire cock inside you. I’ve never felt anything like it.”

“Do you want me to ride you again?” John forgot about everything outside their bed.

“Yes. That was beautiful. You really are very attractive John, at least I think so.” Sherlock disingenuous compliments were delightful, “I want to use my mouth on you first, and my fingers. I liked touching you, and I liked the way it felt when you did it.”

No matter how inexperienced Sherlock was he was still a genius and he used all his skills both learned and natural to read John’s responses. This was a very different sort of beginning than their first time, now Sherlock worked with intent, generous with the lube, understanding more of what would make John yield to him, how to move his fingers just there, how to slowly work until he managed to fit one long finger after another inside the Sentinel until John was rocking back onto three of them. Sherlock was kissing his way over John’s back, enamoured of the lines and dips on it even as his hand worked. He returned frequently to John’s behind, lavishing kisses everywhere, carefully preparing him until John felt like he was burning up. “Please love, Sherlock, please.”

John was clutching the blanket beneath him, desperate to anchor himself. The scent of arousal was heavy in the room, every draught of air he breathed in was laden with Sherlock’s desire for him, John was clutching the blanket beneath him, desperate to anchor himself. The scent of arousal was heavy in the room, every draught of air he breathed in was laden with Sherlock’s desire for him, “Stay like this John, I want to take you like this.”

Sherlock’s voice was deep, rumbling. John shivered because Sherlock sounded like he was on the edge already. He didn’t care if it hurt, he just needed Sherlock inside him, now, “Yes.”

Sherlock kept sweeping his hands up and down John’s back and bottom, up over his sides and back again. “Such a fine man,” he muttered and John felt his cheeks flush, “I’ve wanted this again.” John held his breath as Sherlock pressed against him. Closing his eyes he bore down just enough to allow his lover to push him a bit open. It felt astounding! Sherlock was breathing carefully, holding himself with one hand and gripping John’s hip with the other. “You’re taking me. Just look at that!” Sherlock sounded amazed even though this wasn’t the first time they’d done this, “I’ll never get enough of this John, this feels incredible.”

Sherlock took hold of John’s hips with both hands and held him still while he began to rock himself deeper and deeper. John relished each and every moment that it took for Sherlock to fully seat himself. The stretch hadn’t been a bit painful. Instead it made John extra-sensitive, able to feel everything about Sherlock’s cock. Sherlock carefully draped himself over John’s back and kissed his ear and neck tenderly, “I love you so much.”
John’s fingers curled reflexively, gripping the comforter beneath him tightly. Sherlock hips drew back as he pushed himself up onto his hands and then Sherlock began to fuck John. He went deep and slow for a minute but soon enough he was increasing his pace and ferocity. John was going insane, this was the most unbelievably good feeling he’d ever had. Sherlock smelled incredible, the mix of his scent, arousal, possessiveness, all made John almost dizzy as his entire being responded. He pushed back and began to quicken the pace.

Sherlock caught on and adjusted how they were positioned so he could move a bit easier. The sound of their bodies connecting over and over again filled the room along with their panted breaths and broken moans. Sherlock was kneeling behind John now, his hips swinging freely as he pounded downward. It was savage and glorious. Unexpectedly though Sherlock cried out and John felt a hot surge deep inside him, Sherlock was coming! John held himself still as his lover bucked against him, riding in and out, slowing down until Sherlock pulled away completely, “John.”

John found himself being pushed to his back and nearly shouted when Sherlock took him into his mouth. His lover had only done this twice before but like everything else Sherlock had caught on quickly. John loved watching Sherlock’s lips stretch over his shaft. He loved the way Sherlock’s eyes fluttered shut, and he loved the way Sherlock moaned as he took more of John in. John went wild for the way Sherlock rubbed right behind his testicles, and the way his fingers wrapped around and tugged exactly right. John couldn’t stop it. With a choked off cry of warning his back arched and John came.

Sherlock didn’t pull away. If anything he seemed to be swallowing almost hungrily, sucking down every jet of come, his tongue searching and tasting everywhere. Sherlock stayed where he was for only a few moments before he kissed his way up John’s sweat soaked body, kissing his mouth ardently before pulling back, “I’ll never get enough of you John Watson.” and John felt unspoken words caress his mind my beautiful soldier, my John. That glorious rush of warmth filled him from head to toe, “I love you.” John didn’t need to say a word. Sherlock could see more of how John felt just by looking at him than anything John could utter. Sherlock was practically glowing now, reassured and satisfied that his Sentinel was his, and his alone. John was content.

Chapter End Notes

As always I love the commentary. PLEASE KEEP COMMENTING! I will answer all comments after the next chapter is posted, promise.

You can send me stuff or other comments at:
Twitter- @distantstarlite.com
Tumblr - distantstarlight.tumblr.com
Facebook - requires wooing - some of you have already succeeded
John let Sherlock curl up against him for as long as he wanted so for nearly an hour they lay side by side in near silence. Sherlock was idly running his hands over John’s body, just gentle loving little touches of appreciation, and John reveled in it. “You’ll be hungry soon, we’ve missed lunch.” remarked the detective, “We should get up.”

John was feeling the beginning twinges of an appetite so he just gave his lover a kiss and helped him out of bed. A quick shower and a change of clothes was needed before they left their suite. Sherlock was still aglow with contentment and that made John feel wonderful. It’s what Sherlock deserved for once in his life, John was more than willing to be the one who supplied his detective with as much praise and love as he needed to help him deal with the increase of his perceptive powers. Without it Sherlock would fly to pieces, he needed John to be his armor, to be part of the shield that kept him from being overwhelmed like he had been earlier. If all it took was John allowing Sherlock to know how much he loved him then that was the easiest job in the world. John would make sure each and every moment of their time together was filled with love, Sherlock would never want for it again.

Lestrade had left but Mycroft had remained as ordered, a laptop already filled with a large assortment of plans sitting on the table in front of him, “Prime Watson.” he acknowledged as they entered. “Prime Holmes.” Mycroft addressed them with the exact same amount of polite respect and John approved. “Mr. Murray has provided an extensive list of names. Anthea is running them through our checks and measures. So far everyone has scored very high. I imagine that all of his recommendations will be approved.”

“How many names?” John wasn't sure how many people Bill kept in touch with. John knew about a dozen people down at the VA but apart from that he didn't really contact anyone.

“One hundred.” Mycroft’s voice remained neutral.

“One hundred?” John was astounded.

“One hundred.” confirmed Mycroft.

“What are we going to do with one hundred old soldiers?” How in the world could they keep one hundred people on a livable wage?
“We’re Primes John. We can do anything we want.” Sherlock sounded delighted.

“We had a talk already about being despotic Sherlock!” scolded John, “Can you at least wait until we’ve been together for a fortnight before you become Doctor Evil? Sharks can’t actually have lasers beams on their heads you know.”

“Whatever popular culture nonsense you are quoting completely escapes me John Watson. With one hundred people we have a much greater chance of rectifying our problems in a smaller amount of time with less collateral damage. With one hundred experienced people at our command we have an opportunity to completely turn the tables on the power dynamic of the city.” Sherlock looked viciously delighted.

“Explain further love, and don’t assume I can make these huge leaps with you. Clearly I can’t.” John was already feeling frustrated and left behind.

“Oh but you can my darling, you absolutely can.” Sherlock kissed John between his eyebrows gently, “We are going to take control of all the Pairs in London. They do what the Tower tells them to do. Mycroft is the Tower, and he has put himself under our jurisdiction, not that he needed to.” Sherlock gestured to take in the room and doorways, “In this place alone we have proof of wrongdoing. Pulling people down one at a time would be impossible but with one hundred soldiers and I don’t know how many Pairs we can make any changes we like practically overnight.”

John was shaken. He couldn’t comprehend the possible backlash of such a dramatic shift in everything. “How would we go about it?”

Sherlock explained and Mycroft listened intently. When the detective was done his brother leaned back and looked impressed, “You paid attention to your lessons.”

“There was nothing else to do Mycroft, I could hardly help learning what little information was given me, even if I wasn’t interested. Do you think Mummy will be proud now that I’ve taken over London?” Sherlock sounded bitter, “I bet she’s celebrating already.”

Mycroft looked uncomfortable, “She threw an announcement party the day after you bonded, I’m sure she would have called you if you had been anything but a Prime. She knows that she can no longer compel you.”

“She never could. I haven’t bothered with the family since I left the manor, besides John has done nothing. Why would I punish him by introducing him to any of the family?” Sherlock was furious again and John was alert and tense. “Mummy does not get to know a single thing about me or about John. Absolutely nothing about our lives, our plans, our anything is anyone’s business, especially our family. For Lestrade’s sake am I giving you your second chance, and for my sake John is not killing you on the instant. In the words of Bill Murray, silence will reign.”

Mycroft looked ashen, “As you wish Prime Holmes.” he looked hesitant, “I’ve already told her about John. She’s been looking into his military records.”

“Why would you do that Mycroft?” Sherlock was on his feet and shouting at his brother, “Why are you so malicious?”

“It was the day you bonded, right after you left us on the street. Mummy called and asked after you and I just…told her.” Mycroft smelled terrified and John appreciated that his survival instincts were sharpening.

“You just told her.” Sherlock was white-hot with anger now, “She sent Victor, didn’t she? She probably thought up the whole trial by combat ridiculosity, you know how she loves those period novels.”

“Explain yourself Mycroft Holmes.” John was not happy. Mycroft was on thin ice already. The only thing that had kept John from instantly reacting to Sherlock’s anger was the fact that Mycroft had done this before he had sworn himself to them. This was just going to be one of the million things that Mycroft was going to pay dearly for.

“I don’t know if she sent Victor or not, you’ll have to ask him. I have not spoken to her since then.” Mycroft still looked pale and he smelled worried. John was very unhappy with his mate’s brother right then, how many problems had Mycroft caused them?

John recalled something, “Bill said he’d been talking about me recently, remember? While I was trying to introduce the pair of you. I didn't even think…who would be asking after me?”

“Mummy?” Sherlock looked down. “She wouldn’t do it directly, nor would your friends divulge information to someone they didn’t know. She will have an intermediary of some kind, another person in uniform. They may or may not be aware of the antipathy between us, regardless, we have to discover who has been asking after you.”

John’s jaw tensed. “Let’s go speak to Bill. I’ll want to have a look at Victor at any rate.”

“Very well John.” Mycroft followed behind them meekly as John took Sherlock’s hand and allowed himself to be led away. As they approached Mycroft’s meekness faded away until he was the impassive and almost monolithic leader that he was. He had no title, he didn’t need one. Every Sentinel and Guide in London knew who Mycroft was.

Bill was sorting out supplies into drawers when they arrived, “He’s pretending he’s asleep.” he whispered dramatically, winking at John.
John gave Mycroft a sharp look and without further prompting he stepped forward. “Sentinel Trevor. You have attacked a Prime for which there is no justification. Explain your actions.”

“Stuff it Mycroft. I don’t have to listen to you.” Victor opened his eyes and glared right at John who just raised an eyebrow. “I’m suing you.”

Everyone laughed and Mycroft’s voice was almost pitying as he explained, “There is no legal way to sue the Tower. There is certainly no way to sue a Prime. If you had somehow succeeded in executing John Watson you would not have been given a chance to bond with Sherlock. Every Pair in Europe would have hunted you down and killed you in the streets for harming a Prime.”

Victor looked mulish. He didn’t want to believe so he didn't. John didn't care, “Sedate him if you must. Victor Trevor, listen to me. I’m giving you a chance to heal and rehabilitate. You’ve clearly been fed a lot of information to make you think you could succeed when you cannot. You now have a choice. You can remain as a guest in this place and receive the best of care while you heal or I can commandeer another surgery, render you temporarily quadriplegic, and leave you in a ward somewhere trapped inside your own body. What do you pick?”

John was dead serious. He would never have considered such an action before this but Victor Trevor was a Sentinel. He could easily overpower Bill and any of the valets here. Even when their new employees arrived they would still be at considerable risk of injury and death. John wasn't going to allow some elitist twat to intimidate and threaten people who had never done him wrong. “You wouldn’t.”

“Who is going to stop me Victor Trevor? Your family? Richard? I don’t see any of them near you right now, how do you suppose they are going to lash out at me? Ruin my political career? Keep me from advancing in the army? Take away my pension?” John stared Victor straight in the eye.

“You have no idea how to handle the mess that’s coming your way. You have …” Victor smelled vindictive.

John cut him off, “All the time in the world. I have all the time in the world to take you to pieces and decide if you get to keep the protruding bits or not. Once again, you have a choice Victor Trevor, you will remain here, healthy and in once piece. You will answer all the questions put to you fully and without omission. For each serious transgression I will surgically remove some small part of you, nothing you can’t live without but still…the average human being can live without a substantial amount of things and I am a very, very good surgeon.”

“He is, once we had a kidney and this sand dune…well…story for another time.” Bill snapped his mouth shut and brought himself to attention, staring blankly off into the distance while John continued to watch the interesting play of reactions flow over Victor’s face.

Sherlock stepped forward, “This is the power you were seeking, is it not Victor Trevor? To be able to do as you will without fear of retaliation? Unlike you John Watson is a good and fair man but luckily for me that doesn't mean that he’s a nice one. I rather like that. You however are boring and predictable, even if I had never met John I would not have tolerated a bond with you, forced or otherwise. You have some very limited value to us by way of whatever small amounts of information you might possess about various people. That is your equity. For each fact that you present us we will allow you to keep one of your parts. Whatever John carves out of you will be kept in a jar on my specimen shelf like trophies. I’m not fond of the idea of using violence as a solution but this way it’s actually more about science. I have many questions about the differentials in human versus Emergent physiology. Ultimately you will be very informative, it’s just up to you to decide how to make us happy. Go ahead Victor Trevor, choose.”

“His rating is too low.” remarked Mycroft.

John looked at him, “Explain.”

“Even if Sherlock had bonded with Victor the way it had been planned he wouldn't have had Prime status. It would have just been Sherlock.

“You were going to force-bond me to a substandard Sentinel?” Sherlock was outraged.

“He’s not substandard Sherlock, he’s just not as highly rated as John. It was the only reason I agreed to him. If you were going to be part of a force-bond you would be the strongest part of the Pair. You could have controlled Victor easily.”

“Oh well thank you for that incredible consideration brother mine!” snarled Sherlock. “John, remind me again, why we are keeping Mycroft alive?”

“You didn't want him dead yet but I can change that any time you want.” said John and watched as Victor’s face finally grew worried. Sherlock was willing to let John kill his own brother and John would most certainly do it that was clear. “He has information we need, just like Victor does. So Victor? Have you decided?”

“You can’t do this to me.” the Sentinel sounded disbeliefing but he was looking at Mycroft who wasn't standing so firmly at the moment. The tall man could not hide the fear in his scent and both Sentinels could make it out clearly.

“Well as a matter of fact we can do this to you. We are doing this to you. I’m giving you a choice which is more than you offered Sherlock and I’m running out of patience. I have a lovely set of scalpels right over there, and I know for a fact I have a brilliant nurse who knows how to make do in a pinch, and I think Sherlock might think it romantic if I gave him a pound of human flesh, especially if I put a ribbon on the jar.”
“John, you really are a poet.” Sherlock sounded shyly pleased, “The ribbon is unnecessary.”

“He’s referencing the Bard.” interjected Bill before becoming motionless again.

“I know that but that doesn’t stop the gesture from being pleasing! Thank you for ruining the moment. Stop interrupting and fetch John a medium sized jar and that tray.” Sherlock nodded toward a tray filled with sharp and shiny looking tools.

“I haven’t made a decision yet!” yelped Victor. He tried to pull away but remembered that he was being held in place by a wide heavy belt that kept his waist chained to the bedrails. His right arm was similarly restrained with a wide cuff and heavy chain, his left hand heavily bandaged to support his broken fingers. He couldn’t even kick, his legs freshly operated on legs were immobilized in braces for healing, he couldn’t move.

“Well I want my pound of flesh! I have a whole lab at my disposal and I haven’t even done a single experiment yet.” Sherlock looked down at his Sentinel, “John?”

John looked at Victor who was quaking on the bed, “Choose Victor Trevor. Speak the truth to us about what we need to know from you and remain whole. Decide to be difficult in any way and lie to us, well, like my Guide said, he has an entire laboratory at his disposal. A single pound of flesh might not do the trick.”

“You’re both crazy.” Victor sounded shocked and John mentally shook his head, “Fine, like there’s really a choice here. I’ll talk.”

“Good boy, we’ll get you pudding if you’re allowed to eat. I don’t really know what post-operative protocols entail. I’ll read up on it though, I ought to brush up on some things anyway.” Sherlock sounded and smelled happy once more and John was pleased.

“Oh, I’ve got him lined up for a very healthy diet to maximize his recovery. Pudding won’t be a problem, especially if he needs to bulk up a bit, you know, for science.” Bill came to life again and began bustling around busily.

“Well done nurse. You are less annoying than you seem.” Sherlock looked at his brother, “Well?”

Mycroft told Bill to open an orange box located on a bottom shelf. Inside were ear pieces, smoky lensed goggles, a small container of salve, a larger container of lotion, “These will mute some of his senses down to a more human level. We can’t impact his natural strength but the rest of it we can manipulate to a degree. We use these products on freshly Emerged Sentinels to help them learn control.” Bill quickly put everything on Victor, smearing the pungent salve beneath his nostrils before taking the lotion and beginning to coat his skin.

They left Bill to his work, “I sure could have used some of those.” muttered John under his breath. Sherlock’s arm came up instantly, circling John’s shoulder comfortingly, “So, what do you think?”

“Your threats are glorious and if we hadn’t just had our amazing afternoon we would be having it right now.” Well that was good, Sentinel endurance or not John’s behind was a bit tender. Sherlock kissed the top of John’s head and both of them ignored the horrified look on Mycroft’s face, “Hopefully this will keep him tractable, we have a lot to do and very little spare time to go around torturing someone.”

John turned to Mycroft, “How long before you’ve completed your review of Bill’s recommendations?”

“I will ensure all of them are done today.”

“You can carefully review one hundred people in a single day?” John was skeptical.

“If you allow me to use the Tower and its resources, yes.”

“Can you guarantee discretion?”

“More so than I can guarantee it from this location. We are wide open here, that’s also something I can deal with when I’m in my office.

“Get on it then, I expect you back here as soon as you are done. Tell your husband you’ve gone back to the Tower and if there’s even the slightest problem you contact us instantly.”

“Yes Sir.” Mycroft caught himself before he bowed his head and John saw Sherlock smirking as his brother left with speed.

“You’re just letting him leave?” smiled the Guide.

“Let him try something anything and see what Greg has to say about it.” Mycroft might risk aggravating John and Sherlock, it was a slim chance but it was still substantially larger than the likelihood that Mycroft would do anything more to upset or even possibly entirely estrange his husband. “If Mycroft knows what’s good for him he will be mindful of his promises to us. If he doesn't then I will do what I promised to do and just kill him. He’s too valuable to be allowed to work for others and if he can’t be trusted I would just put him down.” John wasn’t joking.

“You would wouldn’t you?” Sherlock didn’t seem disturbed that his Sentinel was entirely prepared to kill his only sibling. Instead he linked arms with John and strolled down the hallways as if they were on a relaxing walk. “What would you do about Greg?”
“Offer my condolences,” John’s voice was almost flat, “We’re up against tremendous odds and we’ve not done anything yet. We haven’t even started. I’m not wrong thinking that we are surrounded on all sides by enemies with substantial resources of their own, and not one of them are bound by the conventions of war. This is a flat-out melee in the making and I’m not going to be caught unaware. Right now in the world there is exactly one person I trust utterly and it’s you Sherlock. I won’t risk you, not for any amount of tears another might shed. If Greg and Mycroft are still incapable of seeing what the right thing to do is then I don’t want them around. People in their positions need to be held accountable for their inaction as well as their action. Mycroft may have been recently caught up in Richard’s game but his participation in the entire debacle goes back years.”

Sherlock let go of John’s arm and put it around his shoulder instead, “I’ve mentioned more than once that I find very few things about my brother to be worthy. Lestrade tries very hard but he is one man, even if he’s married to Mycroft. They must often work at cross-purposes, how has Mycroft reconciled that within himself I wonder? Perhaps that’s why he withdrew his intimacies from Greg, I doubt it would be easy to express physical love to someone when you’ve spent the entire day making their job impossible and causing them to bear the burden of blame for apparent incompetence.”

They were in the conference room alone now and John sighed heavily, “This is all so complicated already.”

“But I know my dearest, it will only get more so.” Sherlock drew John into his arms and they took comfort in one another for a long minute. Much refreshed by their embraced both of them began to examine the work Mycroft had already done, his reports laid out neatly for them to review. John was impressed with Sherlock’s ability to simply absorb information. The Sentinel watched as his Guide glanced over screens of data carelessly, sorting and sifting facts with a speed their laptop could barely keep up with. John laboured to keep up with the gist of what Sherlock was reviewing and eventually simply made notes as best he could. After two hours of nearly hopelessly scratching down names and facts he finally gave up, “John?” Sherlock paused his monologue the second John’s pen hit the desk, “Do you need a break?”

“Definitely. I need to….” Mr. Herbert appeared with a trolley and John could smell the delicious aroma of beautifully steeped tea, “He deserves a raise.”

“If you wish John, we’re not staying here forever though. I want to go home sometime. My violin is still there.” John was sipping happily but the second Sherlock spoke he stopped, “I can run and get it love, it wouldn’t be a problem, or we can send someone, or we can go together.”

Sherlock was smiling down at John now and it was lovely. “Thank you but no John, I don’t want to stay here but if I bring my violin it will be easy to remain. It’s better if I miss it so we’re not tempted to set up house here.”

“I agree love, it’s a treat no doubt but not for the long term.” It was very nice not having to keep house or cook but at the same time they were surrounded at all times by people. The place was shielded of course, every room of it, but that barely helped John. Only his Guide’s constant presence allowed him to mute the background information he was constantly taking in, even when he slept. Baker Street was sparsely populated, most of the buildings around them were commercial and therefore very empty at night. Sherlock was right, as soon as they could they needed to get back to 221 B Baker Street where they belonged. He’d barely stayed there but Sherlock was entirely correct, it was home.

“John you should eat something more substantial than a biscuit. We’ve missed lunch and it’s almost dinner time.” Sherlock stroked his hand down John’s back, “You have a very well regulated system and it should be maintained for peak efficiency. It’s quite admirable actually.”

“I just like to eat.” if John wasn’t careful he’d have a turn in no time. He was already softening in the middle, not that Sherlock seemed to mind.

“Well I like watching you eat, even if I’m not hungry, and I’ve noticed that you become quite testy when you’ve been too long between meals. As much as I rather enjoy the less kind aspects of you I know you would regret making a decision in anger, a problem which can be easily avoided by taking a meal now. We have a great deal of work to get through, a lot of people to talk to, and I will require you to be at your best. My transport operates on a reduced amount of caloric intake. I do not require meals with the frequency that you do which stands to reason as you are a very physical person in charge of large portion of very active duties, and all I need to do is make sure my brain gets where it needs to go.” Sherlock turned away, “Mr. Herbert.”

“While I think your transport is entirely perfect you do not in fact subsist on less calories than I do, you steal food constantly and don’t realize it. Your transport is feeding itself on the sly to power that big brain of yours, well it did when we were at the flat, you don’t ask for snacks here. Hello Mr. Herbert, dinner for two please, whatever’s hot will be fine, we’re not fussy.”

“You may not be fussy John Watson…” began Sherlock.

“Make sure none of the vegetables are touching each other when you put together Sherlock’s plate.” said John solemnly.

“That’s not what I meant John, Mr. Herbert ignore that last order! I don’t care if the produce touches!” Sherlock sounded annoyed, “I’ve already eaten.”

“When did you eat a full meal last?”

“We had breakfast.”
“Which was hours ago and you didn't even finish it, you left three-quarters of it on your plate and you didn't even have a biscuit with me earlier. No Sherlock, it is dinner time for both of us.” John wasn't backing down on this.

Sherlock was frowning fearlessly but John could smell more than a hint of contentment coming from his mate who really did love to be looked after, even if it did interrupt what he was focused on, “I’m bringing the laptop, I can eat and work at the same time.”

“Whatever you want love,” and John was happy because Sherlock was happy, and carried the laptop Sherlock unceremoniously dumped into his arms off to the dining room. They continued to review documents together, sorting out notes and making sure nothing had been missed in translation. By the time they got themselves settled Mr. Herbert and his staff descended on their end of the table to set their places before returning with a large platter that made John’s mouth water. “Chicken tikka masala.” he said appreciatively, “Ihaven’t had any in ages.”

Even Sherlock looked grudgingly pleased with the selection, even spooning a bit more cucumber salad onto his portion and breaking off a piece of naan to enjoy plain. John ate with good appetite, the laptop between their plates as Sherlock keyed in information and scrolled around effortlessly, occasionally spooning in a generous bite until his plate was empty and he was absentely searching for more. John simply served more without a word and put another piece of naan to the side and kept nuzzling to himself when Sherlock broke it into pieces and used it to scoop up his bite of dinner. The staff whisked away the remains and replaced it with dessert. John was delighted once again to see keer, he hadn’t had this type of rice pudding in years and with enjoyment he spooned in one creamy mouthful after another. Sherlock didn't even seem to notice his food had changed in flavor as well as texture, he was too focused on the information in front of him. John had to take his spoon away from him eventually and only then did Sherlock realize that he’d made it all the way through the meal without pause, “My stomach hurts.”

“Well you ate enough, your transport was clearly running on empty. I might not ask you to eat until dinner tomorrow, that’s how well you did.” John was content again. His Guide was cared for and safe.

Sherlock was clearly looking for a way to complain but John was so proud of him and he obviously felt better for having a bite so he settled for kissing John a bit grumpily, “We still have work to do. I think I’m seeing a pattern.”

“I knew you’d be able to put it all together.” said John stoutly, “They can’t hide from you.”

He caught the delighted scent coming from his mate as he was praised even if Sherlock’s voice was offhand, “It’s all elementary if somewhat difficult to see without all the pieces. I don’t imagine they ever expected to have someone take over the Diogenes. I wonder that no one has tried this before.”

“Neutral territory I expect. This place might be the only haven some of these people have. I can’t imagine they’d be welcome many places where they’d be able to relax in safety.” The club rules were stringent outside private rooms, each member enjoyed perfect isolation from every other member, their secrets entirely safe.

“Luckily for us I don’t care a wit for their sanctuary requirements.” Sherlock gave John a gentle kiss on the cheek, “It’s all about pressure points. Richard clearly has his hand in everywhere, how is it possible for a single person to control so many without being seen? Easily. He controls the controllers. By whatever means he possesses Richard now obviously holds sway over a variety of individuals inside London itself, you’d be surprised who makes things go in this town, they’re not all above board. If he controls civic leader, or any major social organization he has a huge population instantly under his control via a single individual. Over time, and he’s obviously been at this for a while, he can control the entire city like a conductor at the symphony.”

“How do we reverse that?” how could they possibly manage?”

“Pairs John. We’re taking control of all the Pairs. We can use them to help remove the threats on each person if necessary, We need to look over more information before we decide what to do. Like I said before, I’m interested in reducing the collateral damage and I believe with a little more thought I might be able to almost zero out that factor.”

“Well think all you need to. Like you said we have years of information to get through, we’re not going to get it sorted this week. Still, we need to decide where we’re going to work. Now that you’ve brought it up I’d really like to get back home.”

“We need to interrogate Victor Trevor, and Mycroft has many questions to answer and reports to give but we can speak to him at our flat. Victor however, I’m not sure if it’s a good idea to leave him here if we aren’t present. The staff are unable to prevent rogue Pairs from coming in and if Richard is as resourceful as he seems he will have a Pair, or likely more than one Pair, available for his pleasure.” Sherlock sounded thoughtful, “We need to bring in your army as soon as possible.”

“I don’t have an army. Don’t call them my army!” John was becoming concerned with Sherlock but he’d promised to at least give his lover the benefit of the doubt before vetoing his plans so he listened, “Well, what are we doing with them again?”

“I’ll need to see the vetted personnel files from Mycroft before I can determine their exact use but I have a nebulous plan. I need to do some more research before I make any real decisions and like it or not I will need to confer with my brother.” Sherlock sounded exasperated, “He knows these people well, I will need some of the inside information we kept him for. My biggest concern is
running out of time before our opponents can protect themselves somehow. Speed is of the
essence but at the same time we must not rush.”

“When is your brother coming back?”

Sherlock sent a text to Mycroft, his mobile chimed only a minute later, “He will be returning later
tonight, he is already half done his reviews. I think it’s better for him to complete that task so we
can move onto the next steps.”

“How are you going to assume control of the other Pairs?”

Sherlock sent another text to his brother, “Already done. Mycroft just confirmed that our authority
went into place when our signatures were registered. Technically we’ve been in control since then,
we just haven’t utilized it.”

“Are there many other Primes out there?”

“There are a few Pairs with one Prime, but only a handful of Prime Pairs such as ourselves. I have
no idea what their ratings would be like, not every country uses as system like Mycroft’s. They all
have their ways but once Prime status is given it is recognized globally. Only a Pair stronger than
we two together can take our status away.”

“What happened?”

“Only twice to my knowledge which admittedly is very sparse in this area.”

“Do you know any of the other Prime Pairs?” John felt odd that their relationship was apparently
so rare.

“Not personally, I’m sure we could find out about them though.”

“Well we sort of have a lot on our plate this week. Let’s fix London before we start taking on
anyone else.”

“It’s not just London John, it’s the entire country.”

“I know it is love but most of the problems stem from here and we have to begin somewhere,
right? It stands to reason that we’d have the most success here in our own backyard, this is where
we should focus our attentions first.”

Sherlock had a soft look of admiration in his eye, “Ever the soldier. Bill was right.”

“Richard isn’t going to wait until we’re ready to retaliate. We’ve got Victor, his pet. He’s going to
want him back.”

“I know John, I’ve been thinking about it.”

“Any suggestions on how to prepare?”

“He’s unpredictable, well connected, and wealthy. I cannot make a determination with accuracy.”

“Let’s check on Victor and Bill.”

“Excellent notion my dearest.” Sherlock led the way but John enjoyed the view of Sherlock’s arse
during the brief walk. “John!” protested Sherlock when John’s thoughts wandered off topic and
began to construct an elaborate sex fantasy, “Stop it.”

“I’m putting that one on pause but in no way am I stopping it.” John reached forward and
squeezed Sherlock’s bum just as they got to the temporary infirmary, “Stop it.”

“I’m putting that one on pause but in no way am I stopping it.” John reached forward and
squeezed Sherlock’s bum just as they got to the temporary infirmary, he enjoyed the surprised
squeak he wrung from his Guide, a squeak which announced their presence to Bill. “How’s the
guest?”

“Oh he needs rest to recuperate.” John glanced over Victor as Bill spoke. The Sentinel was out
cold, a touch of saliva leaking out of his gaping mouth which Bill considerately pushed closed, “I
may have given him a tiny bit too much sedative but he should be alright.”

“Oh he needs rest to recuperate.” John glanced over Victor as Bill spoke. The Sentinel was out
cold, a touch of saliva leaking out of his gaping mouth which Bill considerately pushed closed, “I
may have given him a tiny bit too much sedative but he should be alright.”

“Everything go okay today?” John read over Victor’s chart.

“He began flirting immediately, I think those butt crunches are really paying off.” John laughed,
“Seriously John, look at these glutes.”

“I’m not looking at your arse Bill. What did he promise?”

“Oh the usual, money, power, the hint of love.” Bill’s hand reached out as if to grasp something
before he dropped it dramatically and just went back to work.

John ignored the theatrics, “Did he mention any names?”

“Richard, He called him Mr. B every once in a while.” Bill handed Sherlock a handwritten sheet
of notes, “Just whatever I could jot down when I had a chance, I’m sure Mr. Herbert’s staff can
provide you with an actual transcript.”

Sherlock began paying attention, “Richard B. Well that’s something at least.” He read the notes,
“You have hash marks next to the compliment you smell nice, he remarked on your scent multiple
times?”
Bill was posing a bit and looking over his shoulder expectantly.

“You stink like you always do and I’m still not looking at your arse.” John said firmly. There was a bit of a scent in the air though, something faint that even John might have missed if his attention hadn’t been called to it. He began discretely analyzing the air.

Sherlock looked for a moment before pronouncing, “It looks ridiculous, have you made it that large to offset the overkill on your pectorals?”

“Your assets are bigger than mine…Sir.” Bill’s voice was completely respectful but still full of smiles even though Sherlock was scowling at his back.

“Victor Trevor is still muted?” asked the Guide sharply.

“Yes, I re-checked all the applications and administered more. With this amount he shouldn’t be able to smell much of anything to be honest.” Bill showed them a large document he’d been given to assist in his care of Sentinels. Mycroft had clearly had it sent over and with interest John took it. There would be a good deal of valuable information in there, “He’s fixating though. I’m unfamiliar with Sentinels so what does that mean?”

“It means Victor Trevor would be in a zone if he weren’t already sedated and muted.” said Sherlock tersely. “He needs a Guide to sort him. We need to call the Tower and have Mycroft send someone. I’m not going in there unless I absolutely have to.”

The mere thought of Sherlock’s mind melding with Victor’s, even if only to pull him from a zone, was abhorrent to John and he was on his mobile calling Mycroft as soon as he could pull it from his pocket, “Mycroft. Our guest needs help with a focusing issue.”

“How have you been keeping these days Bill?” he asked casually, allowing his senses to broaden.

Bill seemed perfectly normal, at least to John.

“Well adjusting to civilian life was no treat. For ages I thought I was off my head. Too many people sometimes, I don’t know. I like being around them though so I stayed in the city. I feel energized here.”

John noticed that Sherlock was looking at Bill intently, his head cocked to the side just a bit as he seemed to weigh and measure the nurse, “Summarize Mr. Trevor’s emotional reaction to the last day.” ordered the Prime.

“Well he’s humiliated isn’t he? Angry too I bet. He probably expected some help and he didn't get it, someone left him hanging out to dry. A bit frightened because I think he realizes he’s been used. Odd but he’s also comforted because he’s here. We’re the bad guys but he’s safe here?”

Now Bill sounded confused, “Those are all just guesses though, I mean, I don’t know the guy. When he was awake he was so focused, I didn't really get a read on him but now that he’s asleep I can just…kind…of…what?” Bill trailed off.

Sherlock was smiling in a rather menacing way and John could almost feel Sherlock’s attention focusing on his old friend, “Bill Murray. You and I need to have a rather interesting conversation.” Bill looked and smelled uneasy and John was now wondering what was up. Sherlock had definitely noticed something though, “Follow us Bill. We need to talk. Now.”

**Chapter End Notes**

I will be amazingly busy for the next week but after that my life might tentatively be my own, who knows, I might get another chapter knocked together but in case I don’t, thank you for your patience <3 <3
Event

Chapter Summary

Bill Murray might have a small surprise waiting for him but he also might have one to give in return.

Bill looked nervous because Sherlock’s smile was less than comforting. Much like John the soldier reacted to the situation by habit, snapping into a sharp salute, “How may I be of service Prime Holmes?” There were no jokes or smiles in his question. John realized that he was standing at alert, entirely focussed on his old friend. Bill was uneasy, there was no doubt there, but he was unafraid. The soldier was standing at attention, respectfully waiting for Sherlock to speak.

“How do you read people’s emotional state on a regular basis?” well trust Sherlock not to dilly-dally. John kept watching Bill, gauging his responses a thousand different ways from the small acceleration of his heartbeat to the almost infinitesimal dilation of his pupils.

“Well it’s a bit easier now that I’m not in a warzone but body language isn’t hard to learn, I’m sure I’m not doing anything other people can’t do.” Bill really believed that but Sherlock had his beliefs too.

“Indeed Bill Murray, there are many people who can do what you do.” Sherlock’s head tilted a bit this way and that as he shamelessly examined the nurse, “Do you know how John feels about this?”

“I know how you feel about this, whatever this is. You’re excited, something about this is giving you a happy and you hate my bum so what is it?” Bill sounded snappy and unaffected but John could tell that his old friend was dreading the words about to come from Sherlock’s mouth.

“You are well beyond the initial Emergent process Bill Murray, you are displaying classic signs of being a Guide.” John was right. Bill staggered back and looked ill. “Don’t feel so upset Bill, you are clearly very strong, possibly as strong as some of the more powerful Guides in the city to have made it this far and remained hidden. Is it because you were both military, was that why you were able to deal with Emerging in secret? I will definitely going to be looking at your recruits closely, perhaps there is another pattern to discern here. Bill Murray, with your permission I am going to take a look inside your mind to examine how you’ve constructed your controls. You would have done it without conscious knowledge and you may be unintentionally harming yourself. I noticed John had constructed quite punitive blocks for himself, I would not be surprised to find you’ve done the same.”

“You don’t need my permission.” said Bill bitterly and John understood, of course he did. Bill wouldn’t welcome anyone inside the one place that should rightly be only his, his mind. As a Prime Sherlock could not be denied and Bill knew it. If he wanted to Sherlock could have taken whatever information he wanted already, done anything he chose to Bill, and there was no one apart from John who might have stopped him if John even knew beforehand what his mate was going to do. No one liked to feel helpless and Bill was.

“No I do not but I am asking for it regardless.” John was proud of Sherlock. He knew Sherlock’s consideration was on his behalf and it moved him. John realized he didn’t mind if Sherlock used his talents on Bill, it didn’t bother him the way it had with Victor. This was part of what his mate could do and John realized he wasn’t threatened in any way by Bill, he trusted him with his mate,
and he trusted his mate with his friend.

Bill relaxed a tiny amount, obviously a bit suspicious but also resigned, “At your own speed Sir.” Staunchly Bill stood tall and looked Sherlock directly in the eyes. John smiled, Bill was always the brave one. He enjoyed life fully but when it came to pay the piper he never flinched.

“This will feel strange Bill Murray, you will feel what I am doing. Trust that I mean you no harm.” Bill nodded sharply and stood perfectly still. John watched. Sherlock didn’t move, he just looked at Bill. John could scent the distress in his friend, but Bill didn’t shift an inch. Sherlock’s expression became one of intense concentration and finally Bill gasped, “Interesting. The blocks are very similar in arrangement. John built his to repress the changes he knew were coming. You built yours to hide from yourself. In essence you have been lying to yourself, explaining away your talents. If you had met a Pair and spent time in their company one of them would have found you out in no time. Pairs rarely enter warzones, it’s too intense. The Sentinels could manage easily enough, they would be fantastic warriors but without rigorous training any Guide would be driven to the edge of insanity by the emotional chaos of it but you didn’t begin to Emerge until you were no longer enlisted, interesting again. Consider yourself lucky for having escaped that. You aren’t as fully along as John, he was fully Emerged by the time we bonded. You are nearly there though, you would have been done already if you hadn’t stifled your own progress. That is something that I of course am more than able to remedy.”

Sherlock had clearly been working the entire time he was talking because Bill suddenly gasped and then staggered back clutching his head, “There’s so much!” John could smell Bill becoming distressed, his heart was racing, his temperature was rising, and he was growing pale. Whatever the nurse was experiencing was making him clutch desperately at his hair, covering his eyes with his hands.

Sherlock stepped forward again, “Look at me Bill Murray.”

Bill stayed as he was but he managed a pained, “What?”

“You know how to control this already. Do it!”

“I don’t know how! How many people are in this place anyway?”

“It doesn’t matter and you do.”

“You are an arrogant shit.”

“Yes and I’m also an unparalleled genius as well as a Prime so you can believe me when I tell you that you already know how to control yourself…soldier.” John watched as Bill visibly pulled himself together. “That’s it Bill Murray, you are aware of but not part of what you are feeling. Allow the emotions to slip by you, analyze but do not take them in. There…it’s almost easy now, isn’t it?”

“Muad’Dib? Is that you?” asked Bill shakily and John barked out a laugh.

“Fear is the mind killer.” quoted the Sentinel and received a second shaky laugh from the nurse and a confused look from Sherlock, “It’s a movie we saw, there was this one line…It doesn’t matter, we’ll watch it sometime and you’ll see.” John turned back to his old friend, “Is it still too much?” John didn’t know what to do if it was but Sherlock was entirely unconcerned.

“You have no idea John. Fuck this is the weirdest thing to ever happen to me.” Bill sat himself down on a nearby chair and rubbed his face with his hands, “A Guide, well fuck me.”

“No thank you.” said Sherlock primly. He stationed himself next to John and automatically their fingers tangled together, “It seems that you and John have both managed to harness your new skills without guidance, that is very interesting because according to all the literature a Guide must be Guided through the first steps. I was fortunate that my maternal grand-mother was alive long enough to help me in the beginning. By the time it was essentially mandatory to train at the Tower I had already been a Guide for years but I read their material. The ideas about how to manage Sentinels are rather distasteful and I refused to associate with the Tower unless it was absolutely unavoidable. Now here you two are, both of you successfully Emerged without Guidance of any sort and you both managed, not gracefully I’ll admit, but still. It’s against everything the Tower wants people to believe about becoming one of the Emergent. I wonder why?”

“Is this why Victor has been sniffing after Bill?” asked John.

“Likely.” mused Sherlock and Bill looked startled, “I imagine that the Sentinel in him recognizes an available Guide. Victor Trevor has been unsuccessful in attracting anyone thus far, hence the plan to acquire me by force, he’d be desperate for anyone.”

“Hey now!” protested Bill, “I’m a total catch! Just because you like your Sentinels travel-sized doesn’t mean I’m some kind of pity-bond in the making!”

“You’re also attracted to him,” reported Sherlock. John took in the air around him, sifting and sorting. Sure enough a thread of desire lurked.

“Well he’s kind of cute, and he’s…so what? I’m not going to do anything with him! He’s a patient under my care and that is it.”

“You do like the troublemakers and he’s a right handful.” John almost laughed at the affronted look on Bill’s face.

“I’ve only known I was a Guide for five minutes, can we not match-make me with your
grabbed onto anything that would make you feel alright, even for an hour or so." Sherlock seemed almost smug, "It would an interesting Pairing. You realize that Tower Pairs use Guides to control Sentinels? You could have a living weapon at your disposal, you can learn to make him do whatever you wanted to. Ask John, he knows what it feels like." John forbore a comment, knowing Sherlock was fishing for a reaction.

Bill recoiled, "What? Why would you do that? I’d never…no! No one deserves that!” He looked as horrified as John had felt when he’d found out. "If that’s what it means to bond then no thank you!" Bill wasn’t looking at John and he was doing it with an intensity that anyone without enhanced senses could have picked up on. Bill was upset on John’s behalf, believing his old friend had been taken possession of and owned, and in a way John definitely had been, but not like that.

"Good thing Sherlock wasn’t trained at the Tower and neither was I," John smiled encouragingly up at the nurse who looked wary. "Our bond is nothing like that. We are equals, so far we’ve sorted everything out just by talking about it. We take care of each other because we want to, not because we’re making each other do it."

"We are changing things Bill Murray, congratulations, you get in on the ground floor. You have permission to bond with Victor Trevor whenever he’s healed enough to copulate." Sherlock seemed certain.

Bill was frowning, "I don’t have to bond with him if I don’t want to."

"Very true and we would never make you. You want to though." Sherlock’s certainty was unwavering.

"I don’t even know him!"

"Irrelevant. John and I bonded within twenty-four hours of meeting and I’ve never been happier. You want Victor Trevor for whatever reason, and he wants you in return. Rather elegant wouldn’t you say, convenient too."

"This isn’t happening." Sherlock shrugged and seemed to dismiss the conversation entirely, "You told John you had been talking about him. To whom did you speak and what did you say?"

Bill was having a difficult time changing gears. He looked a bit dazed but he still managed to focus enough to answer, "About John? Just a bunch of us out for drinks, you know, reminiscing. A lot of us miss being in action, we swap stories a lot. One of the regulars is a Colonel but he still likes to buy a round and listen in."

"A Colonel?" John was pretty sure he wasn’t casually acquainted with anyone of that rank.

"You probably don’t even know him John, he knows a bunch of the men you patched up. Moran is his name, Colonel Sebastian Moran. He’s a tough one or so it’s said. I don’t know him personally." Bill was looking back and forth between them, "It’s always about leave, you know, the stupid things we did when we were on a jolly and things like that."

"Bill you didn’t tell those old stories did you?" John was embarrassed and Sherlock picked up on it instantly, "Those days are behind me." It had been so hot, so relentlessly hot. You felt like your life was baking away one sweaty drop at a time, you clothes barely damp because the air was so painfully dry that it almost hurt to breath. When you got a break from it you went a little mad from relief, you were ecstatic you’d survived long enough to sample this pleasure or that so you did. You did foolish reckless things to celebrate your continued existence and reveled in being alive.

"What, you’ve given up being Three Continents Watson? You’ve shagged so many people we’re using higher maths to calculate the numbers. Well, I guess when you’ve got that waiting at home for you keeping a body count doesn’t seem so necessary, right?" John didn’t need any sort of connection with Sherlock to know his Guide was entirely focussed on Bill now, "What?"

There was a tendril of something unpleasant in his nose, "John’s nickname. Repeat and explain." Sherlock’s face was entirely blank but he still managed to ask John, he could smell the same sickly stink of jealousy that Greg had produced combined with anger and distaste. John’s heart sank.

Bill was momentarily slow on the uptake but he could hardly miss the Prime’s emotional response even if Sherlock locked himself down almost instantly. John had never felt such separation between them, not even when they had been strangers. It was as if a great wall had materialized between them, John couldn’t get a read on Sherlock at all. His Guide’s body had become poised, unspeaking, a statue. Sherlock had marveled at John’s self-control but clearly it was admiration born of understanding. The Prime was in complete control of his transport. Bill’s voice was soft and filled with regretful chagrin when he hesitantly answered, "Three Continents Watson. We called him that because John managed to….well he was pretty good at….what I mean is….we were at war right? We thought we were going to die every single day. When you had a chance you grabbed onto anything that would make you feel alright, even for an hour or so."

"Three Continents Watson," repeated Sherlock coldly. "I see." Sherlock said nothing for an
“Sirs.” Bill snapped off a perfect salute and took himself quickly away.

“Sherlock.” John watched as Sherlock strode off in the other direction. His Guide sat at the end of the conference table, opened the laptop and began to work silently, still closed off, and now refusing to even look at John. It was unbearable and miserably John trailed after his mate, “Sherlock.”

“Call Mr. Herbert John, we have staff to interview. We can’t wait for Mycroft forever.” Sherlock’s voice was sharp, still cold but what disturbed John was the hollowness in it.

“No Sherlock, we’re not working now. I’ve upset you and I can’t deal with you shutting yourself off from me.” It was horrid and John was beginning to feel the traces of panic develop. This was not the time to fall prey to his weaknesses! Sherlock had been a virgin, John was the very first and the only person he would ever be with. His Guide would be feeling betrayed, even if John had been with those people in the past, John understood Sherlock. No one had ever managed to get close enough to offer him the intimacy they had shared but John had given himself away freely to all takers whenever he’d had a chance. Each body that had enjoyed John’s was someone who had something that Sherlock felt was rightly his. If John discovered that Sherlock had a bevy of ex-lovers hidden in his past he would be torn apart, irrational as that was. “Sherlock, please, please don’t ignore me.” Being cut off from his Guide was beginning to hurt, John’s leg began to ache and his shoulder as well. Weakly he dropped into a chair, “Sherlock please. I’m sorry for all of it. If I could undo it I would.” John would. He would erase every single thing he’d ever done that hurt his Guide.

“We should interview the valets, they’ll have the most immediate information on the club members.” Sherlock was acting like John hadn’t even spoken and pain lanced through John’s heart at the snub, “Many of the staff are accustomed to night hours, I’m sure a great many interviews can be completed. Mr. Herbert if you please John.” Sherlock was typing something and pointedly not looking at John.

It was devastating. One hint of his past and John was already being discarded. The thread of panic grew more tangible, winding its way through his insides, making it hard for him to breathe, to move. Sherlock was upset with him. He was a failure, a reject. “Alright then.” he said woodedly. He could have called Mr. Herbert easily but clearly Sherlock was asking him to leave and John could not disobey and risk upsetting his mate further. He had to hold the backs of the chairs as he made his way out of the room, biting back the sheen misery he was feeling. Mr. Herbert appeared and tactfully said nothing about John’s condition, “Prime Holmes wishes to begin interviewing the valets. I will be retiring for the evening.”

“Very good Sir.” Mr. Herbert left John to make his way to their suite where he gratefully closed the door and shut off the lights. It was blessedly dark and silent, the air clean, and the carpet soft and smooth, a state John fully appreciated as he fell to his knees. The panic was spiralling rapidly outward in a way it never had before. It was as if all the darkness inside him had multiplied, growing too large to contain. He couldn’t let it escape! Sherlock would know. He would know how real John really was, how useless. John had to hide it somehow, hide himself. Sherlock couldn’t know how wretched John was, how damaged. Why had he chosen to bond with John to begin with? He was repulsive and shattered, a disgusting scarred slug with no real purpose in life. Sherlock was right to cut John out, how was he supposed to live the rest of his life knowing what John was like? John hated himself. He hated himself intensely. The feeling was growing, looping back onto itself as John began to associate everything he considered vile to himself. John stank of it, of other people, of their come and their sweat, of dirt and dark places where empty pleasures were exchanged. How could he have done that? What was wrong with him?

Sherlock had taken away John’s old defenses but John remembered how to make them and one at a time they slammed cruelly into place, the bindings as harsh as he could make them, locking the pieces together to make them strong. John shut himself down one piece at a time, terrified that he would hurt someone because of what was about to happen. Brutally John muted himself, taking away as much of his ability to sense the world as he could. He didn’t feel his fingers digging into the carpet, he didn’t hear the desperate drags of air his lungs were struggling to take in, he couldn’t smell the rankness of the sweat covering him as his fears and shame entirely overwhelmed him. All sound faded away until there was only one thing left and he wished it would stop.

John’s heart beat loudly. The familiar blackness of his panic attack devoured him but this time it was stained with the hue of dried blood. John gagged on the stench of death, the deafening silence of life no longer being lived and he was trapped. There in his own mind John was caught once more in one of the most savage battles he’d ever endured. In the end it had gotten close and bloody, he’d taken several cuts and barely survived but he’d never forget that smell. Death, The ground was slippery with it, the air ripe with it. Its questing hand was on his shoulder. John’s head hung down. He was on his knees, his eyes squeezed shut as the nightmare took him. Another loud thump and John was face down in the sand, the agony of his shoulder too extreme for screaming, his life was leaking out, soaking into the landscape, becoming one with the universe, and John’s mind splintered anew. He could see infinity again but it wasn’t beautiful. It was vast and terrifying and empty and lonely and there was so much of it. A thunderous boom startled him and suddenly John was in the infirmary of an unfamiliar hospital. All the faces were strange. He was befuddled with drugs and pain and so much information. Another booming thud. John was writhing in the darkness of his bedsit, sick and overwhelmed with the anguish of the human condition he could not help but experience with every breath he took.

Pointless.
John’s entire body convulsed as he tried to get sick. Instead he collapsed entirely, unable to support himself even a bit as the worst panic attack he’d ever experienced ravaged his mind. There was only blackness and pain, self-loathing and sorrow. Wildly John scrabbled his hands in a desperate effort to connect to something no matter what. He couldn’t feel anything, he couldn’t hear anything. John couldn’t break the blocks he’d put up, he was too weak, too incapable. Self-loathing began to grow once more. What a fool he was, he’d locked himself inside his own body. John almost howled with mad laughter. His mind was broken, he knew it. He had been broken so long ago and now the delicate moorings that kept his sanity in place had been severed.

John could feel something, something strong, it was calling to him. John. The darkness was lessening and the rank stench was fading away. John. John’s body convulsed again, still fighting to react in some way to the devastating trauma of reliving the deaths of friends and comrades-in-arms. John my love, come back to me. A sweetness filled him, a wonderful warmth tinged with sorrow and regret. I’m sorry John, you didn’t deserve this. I lost control, I’m sorry John. Please come back to me. A voice was whispering inside his mind. It soothing and calmed him, and John felt the controls he’d put on himself being eased away, “You don’t need those my beautiful Sentinel, you don’t ever need those.” John opened his eyes, almost too weak to manage. John found himself cradled in his lover’s arms and Sherlock’s face was filled with fear and shame, “I’m sorry John. I was envious, resentful, and irresponsible. I let slip my irrational anger and I hurt you terribly. I’m so sorry.” Sherlock wasn’t just ashamed, he was mortified. “The things you thought, those aren’t true. You aren’t any of those things, never think that about yourself. John how could you? You are perfect, so incredibly perfect that I cannot believe you settled for being with me. My John! I’m so sorry my love, please, please I’m so sorry.”

Sherlock kissed John’s hands as he held him tightly, “You are perfect. You aren’t any of those things, never think that about yourself. John how could you? You are the perfect, so incredibly perfect that I cannot believe you settled for being with me. My John!”

John blinked muzzily, he still couldn’t focus and there was a metallic taste in his mouth. Blood? When he spoke he sounded drunk, slurred, “S’not your fault. Panic attack. I get them.” He did. For months now John had endured one episode after another.

The smell of shame and mortification only deepened, “I know John. I am so…there is no way for me to adequately…John?” Sherlock’s voice was filled with chagrin and apology, “I lost control of my temper for just a moment. I…I didn’t trigger you on purpose, I wasn’t thinking about what would happen. I was so angry and I just let it all go…John, look what I did to you!” Sherlock’s hands were shaking as much as John’s were, “What is wrong with me? I love you! You are the most precious being in the entire universe and look what I did to you! Oh John, how can I ever make this up to you? I will never be…I can’t…John, oh god you are hurting so much!”

Sweetness filled John like honey as Sherlock’s mind flooded his. My beautiful John, whispered voiceless words. You are my perfect love. Like the first time John felt Sherlock caress his mind John was filled with wonder. Sherlock soothed away all the distress carefully, reassuring John that he was adored, showing John once again how much Sherlock admired and respected him. “I was jealous and vicious for no reason. I lost control of myself for just an instant and you were caught in the backlash because of our bond.” Sherlock’s voice was low and still filled with such shame, “I did not mean to reprove you for what cannot be undone. You have done nothing at all that deserved such punishment as you visited upon yourself and I caused you to do it. I am appalled with myself, I can feel everything you feel about yourself John and it isn’t right that you think these things.”

“I’m not good enough for you.” the words were choked out but John needed to say them, “I’m so sorry Sherlock, you’ve bonded a…”

“Whatever you were going to say John Watson you will not utter!” Sherlock’s shamed scent only grew stronger, “Those feelings were not about your inadequacies John, they were about mine but your mind manifested versions of my feelings based on the things you feel uncomfortable about. I am the flawed one, you were feeling how I feel about myself, or how I did.” John felt himself being gather up even more, tugged and pulled until his unresisting body was nestled in a cage made of Sherlock, both of them still on the carpet. John felt gentle kisses being pressed to the back of his head, “I made you susceptible to all the worst thoughts you could have about yourself. I swear John, it was not intentional! I have not slipped like that since I was very young. It is childish and petty and I cannot apologize enough!”

Sherlock let John recover for a minute before tenderly helping him rise to lay on the bed, “I’ll be fine,” said John weakly. His head hurt and he was wrung out. “Just give me a minute.”

“You are not fine, this is all my fault and you are going to rest.” Sherlock settled John back on the pillows before leaving the room for a minute. When he came back he made sure the door to their bedroom was closed, cuddling John closely in silence. John was so tired now. His muscles felt watery and limp, the discrete tap at the door heralded a valet’s arrival with a tea-cart which he left in the middle of the room. Sherlock left John once again to fix him a cup, helping him sit up and propping pillows behind him to keep him comfortable. When John finished a heavily sweetened cup he sighed and let Sherlock take it away. As soon as the cart was pushed into the hallway once more Sherlock took John’s hands in his and kissed them, pressing his forehead to John’s knuckles, “I’m sorry John. I’m so sorry my love. There is no way I can ever…”

“I just need some quiet.” John wasn’t trying to cut Sherlock off but his ears hurt. Sherlock still seemed to understand and lapsed into attentive silence. “I want to go home.” He did. John was tired of being at the Diogenes suddenly. So much had happened there, they were going to be
“I’ll call a car to collect us.” said Sherlock instantly. He pressed a kiss on John’s head and used the in-room phone to deliver the order. “Victor is in Bill’s hands, Mr. Herbert won’t allow anyone but Mycroft and Greg back in. We can go.”

John nodded stiffly. It was late and he was beyond exhausted now, he wanted to sleep but this place was no longer welcoming to him. He wanted to be at Baker Street almost urgently, Sherlock could read his emotional state, and the scent of remorse and shame filled the room once again. John was took his lover’s hand and urged Sherlock to pull him close, desperately needing his Guide’s support and love. Sherlock did, helping John from the bed to wrap his arms around his Sentinel, holding John tightly and pressing his cheek to John’s forehead.

A discrete knock announced their car’s arrival so Sherlock escorted John out, his arm protectively around his Sentinel’s shoulders, his body curved as much around John as he could get. John appreciated it, still needing as much contact as he could with Sherlock. Once in the back seat of a long black car Johnmmasunconsciously pulled Sherlock’s arms around him, ignoring his seatbelt and climbing into his Guide’s lap. The attack had been awful, he was drained and fragile feeling, the car wasn’t as well shielded as the Diogenes and John could sense the masses of people around them as they traveled. He needed Sherlock to stabilize him, and Sherlock did.

John felt small. He felt disconnected still, empty and gray. The world disappeared as soon as their front door closed but Sherlock’s shame did not lessen as he helped John up the stairs to their flat as soon as they arrived. Taking John into their shower immediately. He undressed them both and got the water going until it was hot and steamy before helping John under the spray. “My John.” whispered Sherlock softly, entering his Sentinel’s mind once again. I’m sorry John. I love you. I didn’t mean to hurt you. It was an accident. I feel horrible. I don’t want you to hurt. I wish I could hurt for you. I’m so sorry. I love you.

Sherlock did not ask for forgiveness, he felt he didn’t deserve it, but John gave it anyway. “I’d like a kiss.” Sherlock’s face was salty with regretful tears as he pressed his mouth to John’s, “I’ll be alright, I will.” John was well experienced with the after-effects of a panic attack. The feelings would fade and he would have an uncomfortable memory to add to all the rest but he could deal with it. “I just really need to be with you.”

“Anything you want John, take anything you need.” offered Sherlock instantly. John did. He wrapped himself in Sherlock once again, kissing his damp chest as the water beat down on them. This was better than all the other times, at least now he had a warm and willing body to hold, a heartbeat to focus on, a delicious scent to fill his nose. John closed his eyes and relaxed against his mate, greatly comforted by his lover’s presence. Gently Sherlock rubbed his hands over John’s arms and back until the water began to cool. Stepping out John suffered to be dried and enrobed before Sherlock led him across the hallway to their bedroom where he stripped John only a few seconds later and tucked them both naked into bed.

John slept instantly. Sherlock had him wrapped up in his long arms and legs, almost unable to breathe, completely unable to move unless the Guide let him and John loved it. It was exactly what John needed, to be held down, reconnected, comforted. Sherlock loved him, he was taking care of him, and John rested deeply.

It was still dark when John woke. Both of them were sprawled out now, the entire bed covered. Sherlock was sleeping soundly beside him, a soft snore breaking the silence of the night. John smiled to himself and rolled closer, enjoying the scent and heat of Sherlock’s body. He let his hand glide up and down Sherlock’s skin, just idly touching his lover, thinking about what had happened. Sherlock had not intended to hurt him, he knew it deep inside himself. His Guide had a very understandable shock, he lost control of his feelings and John’s link to his mind had willingly played out all of it. John wasn’t angry with Sherlock, he wasn’t even a bit upset about what had happened. John was actually a bit glad he knew this hidden thing about Sherlock, he knew on a visceral level now how deeply his mate hid his sorrows. Sherlock’s self-esteem was a shallow thing, he wore it like armor but it barely protected him. John stroked Sherlock’s sides and arm while he mulled over what he had discovered. Sherlock really believed he was faulty, that he was hopeless, undeserving, and contemptible. Accident or not John now understood the depths of his mate’s pain, he wasn’t going to let it continue. Sherlock was waking and when his eyes opened sleepily John smiled.

“You are just what I need.” said John softly. “You are exactly the person I need you to be. The more I learn about you the more I love you, and I already love you so much I don’t know how to keep it all inside. You’re not damaged Sherlock, or if you are it’s because we’re two pieces of the same whole, you can’t be right without me anymore than I can be right without you. We barely made it this far alone, and no matter the cost I will never regret bonding myself to you.”

Sherlock listened to John speak, the soft shamed scent creeping out again despite John’s words, “I’ve never felt such fear. I felt what I’d done the second it started, I ran to get to you. You weren’t out for more than a few minutes but those minutes John… the way you suffered… I… hurt…you.” Large tears spilled out even though Sherlock’s expression barely changed, the heavy droplets racing down his pale cheeks one at a time. “I cannot bear knowing I did that.”

John wiped the tears away carefully, “I’ve lived through worse.” he said staunchly, refusing to capitulate to his own needs any longer. His lover was still in pain, people had planted this hurt inside Sherlock during his entire life and John could not wait any longer to end it. “As long as you love me I can handle anything.” That was pure truth. The worst part of the attack was thinking he wasn’t worthy of Sherlock’s affections. That’s what Sherlock thought of himself, that he wasn’t worth John’s time. “I want you to never stop loving me because I’ll never stop loving you. I love you Sherlock.”
“John!” Sherlock gathered him close again and pressed their mouths together even though he was crying. John let him, Sherlock needed to get this out and there would be no other person in the world his mate would feel able to be vulnerable in front of. Here alone in the dark of their own shielded room was the only place Sherlock would feel safe enough to begin purging the baggage he had carried alone for so long, and John would never let him face that journey unaccompanied.

“You are clever and resourceful, beautiful and so marvelous. You are the most amazing person I’ve ever met. I am a lucky man, the luckiest man ever.” John kissed Sherlock softly, “I think you are so brave Sherlock. You did something that should have been nearly impossible, you waited for me. I’m here now, I won’t ever leave you. I’ll always be there for you. I will never be able to be with anyone but you, not ever. I will always think you are the most special person in the world, and I will never stop wanting to be near you.”

Sherlock’s lashes were still heavy with tears but the look on his face was one of pure wonder, “You have a very great heart John Watson. I am humbled that I have somehow earned it.”

“It’s an even trade, you gave me yours.” Sherlock had. John was certain that even without the bond he would have fallen in love with Sherlock, he wouldn’t have been able to help himself, would not have wanted to. He knew what he needed to do, what he wanted very much to do. John leaned in and kissed Sherlock again, trailing his hand slowly up and down Sherlock’s flat belly, “I want you.” he said. He did. John wanted to lose himself in Sherlock’s body, to renew their connection somehow.

Sherlock pulled John close instantly, “Please John.” John found himself being kissed almost feverishly, “I need you too.” Both men caressed the other, their hands anxiously seeking to map the other’s surfaces, to demonstrate their devotion to one another. The urge to kiss and touch each other resulted in writhing bodies and the loss of all pillows and blankets, everything shoved unceremoniously to the floor as the Pair used every bit of the bed to roll around in, one man after the other kneeling over his lover as they trailed exploratory lips over every bit of skin they could reach.

Sherlock was lovely, the curtains held back the shine from the streetlamps but there was just enough to allow his pale skin to almost gleam in the darkness. John was entranced. With delight he allowed himself to savour Sherlock, tasting him everywhere, allowing Sherlock to read his blatant appreciation of the Guide’s many beauties. John knew that Sherlock’s face was aflame with bashful embarrassment as he slowly came to understand that John wasn’t teasing him, or simply trying to make him feel better. The Sentinel truly thought his Guide was the most enchanting person he’d ever known, that all the spare lines and lean lengths of him were utter perfection as far as John was concerned.

John was not neglected. In a bit of a struggle made up of nips and sucking kisses Sherlock managed to get John beneath him, now taking control over the task of tasting John from head to toe. The Guide seemed particularly fond of John’s scars, making his way from one after another, the plentitude allowing him to make his way nearly everywhere, “You are magnificent,” whispered Sherlock, “Such a brave soldier, so bold.” Simple words spoken with such hunger, John had never heard anyone speak to him with as much desire as Sherlock did, “I need you.”

Sherlock’s entire body was radiating with barely repressed passion and John responded instantly. Pushing Sherlock back onto spread thighs, his fingers already busy as he leaned down to claim Sherlock’s mouth once again. He could feel Sherlock’s arm moving and suddenly their bottle of lube was being opened. Eagerly John let Sherlock drizzle some onto his fingers before returning them to their task of preparing his lover to receive him.

Time ceased to exist. There was only their flesh, the scent of desire, and a great ocean of love that swirled and rocked. John reached for Sherlock’s cock which bobbed heavily between them, and used his other hand to stroke everywhere else he could reach until he got to Sherlock’s long lovely throat. Deliberately he allowed his fingers to close over it, the tips digging in just a bit as his other hand worked Sherlock’s shaft slowly. Sherlock’s reaction was electric. His entire body stiffened except for his hips which began grinding downward, rocking back sharply to almost stab John back into his flesh.

The world went liquid for a bit. John and Sherlock seemed to flow together, their senses and abilities tangling until John could feel everything Sherlock could, and Sherlock could sense everything John could and it was almost too much. Reality fell away once again and they stood
together in a vast darkness at the edge of nothing and knew they were the center of it all as long as
they had one another. Power crackled between them as they supported one another, their talents
growing far beyond where they had been. This was the true meaning of their bond, not just to tie
them together but to unite them in as many ways as possible. The love they felt for one another
allowed John and Sherlock to do something no one had ever considered, they shared themselves
completely with their mate. Like pieces in a vast machine all their individual characteristics and
talents merged together seamlessly until there were two bodies, one named John, one named
Sherlock, but only one being.

Prime.
John didn’t expect to sleep afterward but he did. Their bodies were exhausted, replenishment of their resources was necessary. The world around them was busy with life and all the noise and disturbance that came with it but it didn’t trouble the Pair who existed in a tranquil bubble all their own. There at 221 B Baker Street John and Sherlock’s bodies lay tangled together, slumbering deeply even as their minds ranged and wandered, all their parts merging, connections forged and links solidified, all the small emptinesses filled and all their loneliness ended forever as they occupied one another. 

When John woke he felt more like himself, inside his own flesh at least, even if everything now worked in an entirely different manner, better. He could feel Sherlock next to him, not just the heat of his body or the sounds he made, but the placid calm of a slumbering mind at ease. Sherlock was content, a little regretful still for the hurts he had recently caused, but otherwise he practically hummed with good health and positive feelings. John was riveted at the play of colors he could see, a veritable rainbow of shades seemed to dance right beneath Sherlock’s skin and it was beautiful. John blinked, his normal enhanced vision even more astonishing than previously. John looked closer, and then closer still until he was reading the lines and indentations of Sherlock’s dermis like it was under a microscope. He dialed back a bit until he was viewing his lover normally and saw the colors become darker, traces of red now shivering their way across his body and John could smell desire growing. Sherlock was waking and he was aroused, “John.” 

Sherlock’s eyes were glorious. John was entranced, gazing into them raptly, “I see what you see.” John could feel everything around him for blocks, could sense everything as if he were everywhere at once, the scents, and changes in air pressure, the sounds, and now the emotions of the people who inhabited the space within his sensory zone, all of it poured into his mind in a great continuous deluge. It didn’t trouble John, not a bit, instead he seemed to be not only filing all the information away but moving through it, aware of all of it simultaneously, but it wasn’t a burden. It just was. 

“I sense what you sense, my god John, how do you manage?” Sherlock shuddered a bit, flinching as he clearly struggled to adjust to being able to see microscopically, to be able to separate individual odors no matter how faint, how everything moved, even buildings, an untraceable vibration of the very magnetism that bound everything together now apparent to both of them. Sherlock was delighted, his eyes darting everywhere as he inspected the things in his room with his new senses. John understood that Sherlock’s never-ending quest for information wasn’t just about the Work, which he took very seriously, but it was a basic component of Sherlock’s personality. He was curious about everything and now he was able to perceive the hard data he relied upon with increased ease, “It’s amazing.”

“You are amazing,” breathed John, his devotion to his lover reaching into worshipful heights, “Nothing bothers me unless I let it, not now.” John was perfectly in control of his gifts. Zoning wasn’t a danger for him, not any longer. His body was stronger than ever, all it’s potentials fully realized, his old wounds no longer inhibiting him even slightly though his scars would always remain. There was one other gift he now shared with his bonded so without speaking John reached into Sherlock’s mind, I love you.

Sherlock was astonished anew and John felt himself fill with that delicious warmth, saw how both of them filled from head to toe in a riot of colors. Sherlock was happy and John didn’t need to hear the words that followed, I love you, he could see that Sherlock did. John understood that these were things only they two together could see, no other Guide would be able to read their...
emotions, not even other Primes. This was their bond together, something only they shared and could never share with anyone else. It was perfect and beautiful and John had never been happier to have said yes to Sherlock.

“This is incredible but I need to pee.” said John out loud. Sherlock’s laughter was loud and unfettered. It was deep and rich, and John vowed to make Sherlock laugh as much as possible, it was lovely. “You know I do.”

“I know John, go on then.” Sherlock was still chuckling, “You really do make me happy.”

“I know love, I can see that I do.” John was so proud of himself. Sherlock was gorgeously radiantly blissfully happy and it was all because of him. He was aglow with delight that his Guide was so content but nature would not be denied. As soon as he was done Sherlock crowed his way urgently in and practically threw John out so he could have some privacy. John was aware that Sherlock’s behind was a lot on the delicate side after their evening so he stepped away to leave his lover to tend to business.

Their flat was spotless and their fridge was filled to the brim with groceries. John smiled again, laughing softly to himself because Mrs. Hudson was obviously eager to spoil them. When he heard the shower go on John almost began cooking except he could feel Sherlock impatiently tugging on his body, making John’s legs shuffle a bit toward the bathroom by way of a hint, “Hold on! Impatient git!” said John fondly, switching off the kettle so he could join his mate in the shower.

“I didn’t expect to be abandoned!” complained Sherlock theatrically. John rolled his eyes before Sherlock positioned him under the hot spray for a minute before switching places, and began washing him all over. “I find this very soothing.” he reported and John smiled to himself. Sherlock was practically purring, happily covering John with a thick layer of soapy foam before allowing him to rinse off. “My increased sensory perception is distracting though. I don’t seem to have the same amount of self-control you do but you don’t seem troubled at all with sharing my gifts.”

“I suppose not love though I don’t know why.” John listened to Sherlock mutter on about the detergents Mrs. Hudson used to scrub the flat down, and the fact that he could now hear a developing problem in the plumbing that would need seeing to, and somehow got sidetracked in his monologue until he ended up explaining how bats navigated via echolocation. John listened to everything with interest and when they stepped out to dry off he said, “So they just shout around.”

Sherlock laughed softly, knowing John was being deliberately obtuse to tease him, “Not exactly John.” He seemed to be having fun towelng John’s short hair dry, touching it delicately with his fingertips before leaning down and kissing the top of John’s head, “You really do make me happy.”

John closed his eyes and smiled, his heart full. This was all Sherlock needed, just someone to focus on him, someone to pay attention to him, and actually feel that what the man had to say was worth listening to. Sherlock had said he’d been raised in isolation, he wouldn’t have had friends. He wouldn’t have had someone to spend hours having aimless conversations with, random discussions about anything that came to mind, allowing one topic to follow another until the conversation’s natural end. Most people wouldn’t even be able to follow along with how Sherlock spoke, the many-fold thoughts he had were convoluted and attached to so many other concepts and ideas that it was a wonder he managed to communicate with anyone at all. “We can eat and go.”

Sherlock nodded, still chattering on about the feel of the different woods that made up the flooring or how the carpeting would need a good cleaning, the smell being analyzed and broken down into components John wished he didn’t now know about. The Guide ran his fingers over his wardrobe before carefully selecting a darkly colored shirt and a smart suit. John pulled on his worn jeans and the nicest jumper he owned. Sherlock rolled his eyes, “You don’t have to keep wearing your old things. You have new things waiting for you at the Diogenes.”

“Well I’m not going there naked so you’ll just have to put up with my tattiness until then.” said John practically.

“Don’t tell me what to do!” said Sherlock dramatically, a mobile materializing in his hand, “Mycroft? Wake up. John needs proper clothing, send someone and a car.” Sherlock ended the call and seated himself at the table, “Tea please John.”

John looked at his lover, “You didn’t just issue a command to your brother.”

“Yes I did and if he’s at all intelligent he’ll choose your clothing carefully.” Sherlock looked up, “I also asked nicely for tea.”

“Yes you did.” John didn’t waste any more time feeling sorry for Mycroft who had a lot to make up for. Being inconvenienced early in the morning was nothing. Instead John turned his attentions to cooking a large breakfast, providing his lover with a large cup of tea and a kiss. Sherlock resumed his verbal analysis of their flat, explaining the composition of the various glues and inks used on the wallpaper, and even going so far as to test his hypotheses by administering a small exam, “Sherlock don’t lick the walls please.”

“Arsenic and white lead.” reported Sherlock, ignoring John’s request and sampling another patch, “Definitely authentic, Mrs. Hudson will be pleased.”

“My love, why do you know what arsenic tastes like?” John was serving their food, “Stop licking the arsenic Sherlock.”
“Science John! I must have the facts, all of the facts!” Sherlock sat himself down and glared at his plate of eggs and sausages, “I’m not hungry.”

“Yes you are.” John could see that he was, Sherlock couldn’t hide his transport’s requirements, not from John.

“No, I ate enough yesterday.” Sherlock refused almost petulantly.

“Are you mad because I made you stop licking the wallpaper? I really think we need to eat.” John filled a fork with a mouthful of food and presented it to Sherlock, “Open up.”

Sulkily Sherlock did and John popped the bite in, “Oh fine.” he grouched. Picking up his own fork Sherlock ate half in record time before he stopped suddenly, “You’re going to make me fat.”

Sherlock was suddenly infused with a confusing combination of feelings, reluctance to capitulate on a topic he had always been firm about, embarrassment that he was at all concerned with his looks when he wanted only to be concerned with cerebral matters, and the ever-present desire to be looked after. There was a part of Sherlock that would always need a bit more attention, and John was more than happy to be the one who gave him all the attention he would ever need, even if Sherlock fought it tooth and nail on the outside.

John seriously doubted that Sherlock even had the physical capacity to become fat, John could probably shovel food into him day and night and the best he could hope for was a more athletic physique. Sherlock was naturally spare, his body obviously burned away calories operating his brain which went full tilt twenty-four hours a day no matter if Sherlock was conscious or not, John had witnessed a bit of it last night and Sherlock’s mind palace construct was the only way he’d found to manage the ongoing internal chaos. Still, this little insecurity was easy to deal with because it was true, “Good, I like a little bit of something to hold onto, though I like what I’ve got to hold onto right now.” Sherlock blushed scarlet and John grinned, glad he still had the power to affect his lover this way. With no further ado Sherlock ate the rest of his breakfast. By the time they were done the doorbell rang and Mrs. Hudson called up to announce Mycroft.

Anthea was with him and both of them bore multiple garment bags, “We’ve brought a selection to replace your current one, there is a smaller selection still available at the club should you require it.” Well that actually made sense, why keep his clothes there? Sherlock opened the bags up and inspected everything intently, touching and even smelling each jumper and shirt, even the pants and socks before setting them aside to be put away. A few didn’t make the cut and Anthea calmly accepted them back. John noted that whatever Sherlock hadn’t chosen were things John would never even want to wear to begin with, the patterns or colors jarring, or the cut of it just not to John’s taste. How Sherlock knew already what John would have preferred was a wonder, and John was impressed all over again with his mate’s powers of observation.

“Report.” Sherlock picked out a small selection and handed them directly to John and since John had been eyeing that particular jumper and those trousers already he accepted them. “Wait for John though.”

John went to the bedroom and swiftly changed. The difference in the quality of his attire was instantly noticeable, how had he endured the distracting roughness and stiffness of the inexpensive fabrics he’d been compelled to wear before this? He wasn’t absolutely sure his new clothes weren’t woven by woodland fairies out of angel-wing down but it felt like it. Everything fit comfortably, and when he was fully assembled John felt exactly the right temperature, there were no odd pinches or bunches he had to ignore, and it was weird. He was pretty sure he’d have a stroke if he ever found out how much anything cost and with determination stopped himself from calculating the net worth of his new things. He went back out and enjoyed the appreciative surge of attraction Sherlock was experiencing even if his mate looked completely expressionless. John was thrilled that he would always know how Sherlock was feeling without needing to guess or misunderstand. “Begin.” John nodded at Mycroft.

“All but three of Bill Murray’s recommendations passed our reviews, the three that did not did so for various reasons that I needed to clear with you before making a decision.” Mycroft handed over a small stack of files which Sherlock totally ignored. The elder Holmes seemed to expect it and merely began his report verbally, “One person is currently institutionalized for behavioral difficulties, one person has been charged with murder, and the last person has a substantial criminal record for a rather large amount of petty crimes.”

“Hire all of them, even the last three. We’ll sort out their issues when they’re on our payroll. I’ll look into the murder case personally and John can speak to the last person about their previous choices, Bill Murray would not have offered names capriciously, or he better not have. John will see to it.” Again Mycroft seemed unsurprised and simply sent of a brief text. “We will need an unbiased legal team to begin reviewing cold cases as well as the files at the Diogenes. There are far too many, I won’t have time to do it myself. Choose them yourself Mycroft. You understand my methods…somewhat.” Once again Mycroft made no protest over Sherlock’s demands, merely making notes and nodding politely.

“The Pairs, how do you keep in contact with them?” asked John. Mycroft had pulled a substantial amount of them to corral them outside the jewelry store. John was still a bit sore that Mycroft had ruined their moment but on the other hand Sherlock had ruined Mycroft’s entirety, if not his entire year shortly thereafter, so John supposed it all worked out.

“A mobile system managed through the Tower. I alone have direct access, all Pair commands must come through me.” Mycroft looked calm but his scent and emotional palate spoke of a nest of problems they hadn’t even begun to pick apart.

Sherlock looked at John pointedly, “You were speaking of despots?” Sherlock looked sharply at
his brother, “How is it that you control the Pairs?”

Mycroft sighed, “I designed the system Sherlock, my life’s work is the Tower.”

“Your life’s work is a perverse bit of crap,” said John, his eyes hard. “People are terrified of Pairs, did you know that? Is that what the Tower represents? Fear? Sherlock told me that the Tower used to work for the people, now it seems that the Pairs are essentially useless, just wandering around doing what? They don’t police anything. They don’t seem to be involved in any community activities. They don’t mediate anything. What is it that they do Mycroft?”

The elder Holmes seemed to shrink with each question. His eyes were low as he answered, “Initially yes, the Pairs were utilized to ensure that the people as an entirety were represented and protected with equality no matter what factors were involved. My work is not original. I took up where others had left off, part of a grand plan to ensure stability for the realm.”

The Sentinel immediately scoffed in disbelief, “Stability for the realm or the rich?” John was becoming upset as he recalled the unfair rulings and strictures that had been put in place one after another until the common person was so burdened there was no way to escape. “Apart from Richard, who was it that encouraged you to be such a shit?”

Mycroft flinched at John’s rude words, “There are a variety of interested parties…”

“Names Mycroft, don’t hedge,” snapped John, “I’m not wasting my time prying the facts out of you so you can show off what a big vocabulary you have.”

“I will provide you both with a thorough list,” promised Mycroft, “It involves nearly all of the highest seats in the country, and a large portion of our blood relatives.”

“No kidding Mycroft. Do you see all the fucks I give?” John was serious. He didn’t give one shit about how important these people felt they were or who they were related to. It was obvious to John that the Holmes family was less than considerate as an entirety and that they represented the same kind of mindset that prevailed among the self-sustaining and arrogant upper-classes. As someone who had devoted a substantial portion of his existence to a cause greater than himself John had a very dim view of people who were self-serving. “Hire Bill’s recommendations first, leave all their files here. Once you’ve produced your huge list you will go and sort out a legal team to work for us. We will be reviewing a great many things so you will also be helping set up a computer system for us to do so and nothing will be linked to the Tower, do you understand me Mycroft Holmes? We are not affiliated with that place, we never will be.”

John’s words made a deep impression on both Holmes’ men but apparently their much increased bond was allowing Sherlock to restrain his sexual impulses though John felt them anyway. He kept his smirk to himself. “As you wish Prime Watson.” Mycroft sounded almost humble. “The Pairs are yours to command.”

“Great.” John thought for only a second, recalling his miserable walks through the London as he’d Emerged, “There’s a lot of crime going on, muggings, beatings, that sort of thing. Get the Pairs working with the police, have them do sweeps of entire neighborhoods, Wherever there’s violence being done, stop it. We’ll deal with paper crimes some other way.”

Mycroft had the temerity to sniff disparagingly, “The jails will be filled with thugs.”

“And that’s a problem how?” demanded John, “I’d rather fill every cell in the city today with people who hurt other people than worry about a bunch of manipulative bastards who, believe me when I say this, are going to get what’s coming to them in the fullness of time. Track everyone you’re listing, and if I find that you’ve missed someone you will be sorry. The Tower has a new purpose, at least new targets. Stop spying on the regular people and turn your attentions where they should be. Now, get your stalker arse moving and get to work. Send your husband to the Diogenes, Sherlock and I are heading there shortly. Tell our driver to wait.”

“As you wish Prime Holmes.” Mycroft was chastened yet again. Anthea was close on his heels as they left, their fingers flying over the keys of their mobiles as they began to work immediately.

John knew his mate well and the second the door was shut John allowed himself to be dragged back to their bedroom where Sherlock fell to his knees in front of John and spent the next several minutes sucking John off while he wanked himself almost savagely, their trousers both barely pulled down enough to release them. When they’d recovered a bit from their separate orgasms they washed up a bit shakily, Sherlock was grinning, “It surprises me every time.”

He was referring to the white-hot bolt of arousal that struck him while John was commanding. John had felt it clearly this time and it took all of his training to seem unaffected. He’d have to maintain that ability, he and Sherlock both would be issuing a lot of orders over the course of their lives and they wouldn’t always be conveniently alone when it happened. As much as John wanted to bend Sherlock over and fuck him raw they had issues to sort out and an entire country to save. It was time for work.

They read the files on Bill’s recommendations on the drive to the Diogenes, “There’s a lot of diverse talent here. They will be very useful.” remarked Sherlock, “I look forward to your army arriving.”

“They are not my army, please love, don’t call them that!”

“Very well, I’ll claim them, they are my army. I can’t wait to play with them.”

“Fine, they’re my army, don’t destroy the city Sherlock.”
“I would never my dearest! We have different methods, that’s all.”

“Just don’t give them some weird name.”

“I was going to call them the Baker Street Irregulars, they’ll be like my homeless network, our eyes-and-ears for everywhere.”

That actually wasn’t a bad idea. They weren’t really an army, not exactly. They weren’t going to be Tower affiliated, they would work directly for the Primes, not even a part of government or any other civic organization. They weren’t going to be allowed to rampage or bully, John wouldn’t have it. He wasn’t going to remove one oppressive regime only to replace it with another!

Sherlock had ideas about using the experience of the ex-military to help coordinate various Pair efforts and John thought that was an excellent idea. He was still thinking about it when they arrived, several files still to review in hand.

Mr. Herbert was waiting for them, “Detective Inspector Lestrade is waiting for you in the conference room.” Sherlock swept past the man without a word but John nodded his thanks at least and followed his Guide through the building.

“Lestrade,” snapped Sherlock the second they were through the doorway, “You have many times complained of the strictures involved in doing your job, I recall several instances when it seemed that you were being forced to pay attention elsewhere than you might have preferred.”

Lestrade was taken aback for a moment, “Well, you were there so I can’t deny it. There’s been a fair few cases that should have been my division that were given to other DI’s to investigate but my plate is so full I can hardly complain about getting some help.”

“Consider those files and any others you think are relevant. Mycroft will be sending a legal team at some point so I want names to be added to the review, make a list brother-in-law, we’re cleaning house.” Sherlock’s demands didn’t seem to fluster the Detective Inspector any longer, he was smiling now.

John stepped forward, “Sherlock has commandeered a laboratory as well, we’ll need someone reliable to oversee the facility. Recommendations?”

Lestrade had no time to answer, Sherlock knew just who he wanted, “Doctor Molly Hooper, she’s currently working as a pathologist at the morgue but her skill set is substantial, and I find her tolerable. She will need a PA of course as well as a functional staff, I believe our mutual acquaintance Mike Stamford might be able to assist locating appropriate personnel.”

If his prickly and standoffish mate knew someone he didn’t entirely dislike then that was a win in John’s book and he hadn’t even met the doctor in question. “We’ll go talk to her personally love, it’s a big job, I need to know she understands the situation correctly.”

“Very well John.” Sherlock smelled content again, things were going his way and he liked that. “I will also need your best investigators to assist reviewing the Diogenes staff, we need to depose as much information as we can from each of them. All of it must be recorded in detail and I would prefer to have people who have a firm understanding of the law, there are many hidden crimes we are searching for and I don’t want to waste time or opportunity due to incompetence.”

“As you wish Primes.” Lestrade seemed to understand that it was time for him to get to work so he left.

John and Sherlock proceeded to visit Bill and Victor. The Sentinel was alert and obviously had just completed his breakfast, still strapped to the bed, still wearing smoky goggles. Bill snapped of a sharp salute and waited at ease for Sherlock to finish rolling his eyes and huffing in exasperation, “That is already beginning to annoy me.”

“Apologies Prime Holmes.” Bill didn’t salute but he may as well have and Sherlock frowned a little at him until the nurse busied himself cleaning away the now empty breakfast tray.

John stood at the end of the bed and read Victor’s chart. Without a word he inspected the incisions and called Sherlock over, “Look at how far things have progressed overnight.” John had unceremoniously loosened the brace that had immobilized Victor’s thigh, cut away the bandages and was pointing at the stitches. The seam of the flesh had already fused together into a bright red line. John could smell the chemical processes involved in healing the Sentinel’s flesh and he knew that there would be barely a scar and that the Sentinel would be fully healed in just over a week. The rate of rejuvenation was astonishing, even for one of the Emergent who could not be categorized like human beings.

Sherlock gave Bill a significant look and John wondered for only a moment. He hadn’t even bonded with Sherlock before he began to feel the positive effects of being around him. John hadn’t thought of his cane a single time since he’d left it behind a lifetime ago. Could Bill and Victor’s potential bond be so strong already? John thought it might be because Bill was buzzing around even though he really didn’t have anything to do, he just seemed incapable of leaving Victor’s side even if he didn’t realize it. John noted a small blanket folded up on a soft chair. Bill had slept in the room last night, probably telling himself he needed to monitor his patient. The Sentinel had remained silent until Sherlock poked him with a long bony finger to test the healing line, “That hurts!”

“Don’t you have some kind of mental exercise to help you deal with pain? Surely all those methods you studied for so long had something to say about pain management? Put it out of your mind Victor, if I want to tear you open again to see what’s inside I will. Now be silent until we have begun to question you.” Sherlock was harsh but didn’t do anything to damage their guest.
There was no point, Victor was going to cooperate and they wouldn’t need to do a thing. Bill’s presence alone would have guaranteed it as the un-bonded man on the bed nearly salivated at having an available Guide within arm’s reach.

Victor’s driving motivation was to bond, he’d been denied over and over again, a fact that was working out well for Bill. John and Sherlock together could sense a particular tension between the two men, a tenuous bond was already growing. John was impressed all over again at the truth of what he’d been told. Bill had met his match and he knew it, at least subconsciously, Victor wanted to impress and assure his potential mate that he was a good partner, a worthy one, and his answers to their questions were the only way he was going to be able to do that. No matter what Richard might have promised the Sentinel, his basic nature would not be denied. John made a show of consulting the new Guide, “Report.”

“The patient slept through the night, not that he could help it. He’s been awake approximately ninety minutes, has had a soft breakfast and the required medications. I’ve reapplied the mutes so he’s as restrained as he can be.” Bill made a good effort at sounding strictly professional except John and Sherlock were watching for the physical and emotional cues they knew would be displayed and sure enough they saw them. Bill was as attracted and interested in Victor as Victor was in him. Perfect.

“Excellent, then since we are waiting on other matters we have time for a lovely chat with our guest.” Sherlock’s smile was once again unpleasant but John didn’t begrudge his mate his dark feelings. The detective had spent his entire life being targeted by different people and perhaps Richard was on an entirely different level but being seen as a commodity to be utilized was not a new experience for the Guide. It made John angry and Victor could tell. The bed-bound Sentinel swallowed hard when Sherlock asked, “Who is Richard?”

With a sigh that spoke of reluctance as well as resignation Victor answered, “He goes by Richard Brooke but I’ve heard a couple of people call him Jim. He’s real careful, he’s got two…well I don’t know what to call them but they work closely with him. The man is ex-military, Bill, he knows you. Sebastian Moran.”

“The Colonel?” Bill sounded aghast at discovering someone he knew socially was connected to the mess he was now in. “The Colonel works for Richard Brooke?”

“For Jim whoever he is,” corrected Sherlock, “Who is the other?”

“A woman, she’s his undercover. I’ve heard him speak to her but I’ve never seen her. Moran knows who she is. I’m not sure what their situation is but the three of them are definitely tight.”

John was as unhappy as Bill was to discover someone they would have considered one of their own had been actively spying on them. “How many secrets did I tell him?” Bill looked ill for a moment and then he looked angry, glaring at Victor as if he were responsible, “What do you know?”

Victor’s expression was one of mollifying pleading. “Look, my entire family is involved with this alright? I’ve been told for years now that someone was going to want to bond with me and it hasn’t happened. Everyone knew Sherlock wasn’t interested in a mate, he’d never pick anyone so why shouldn’t I have him? At least, that’s what I thought I thought. Now I don’t know, I…think I decided on my own.”

Sherlock’s eyes narrowed suddenly and his nostrils fluttered. If their bond had not been so complete John might have been dismayed to watch his mate sniff another Sentinel’s neck but the rage of curiosity and puzzlement that came from the tall pale man was one of pure intellectual consideration. Sherlock had put something together, “John did we secure the cologne from Mycroft yet?”

“No, as far as I know it’s still at their house. Why? I can get someone to fetch it, I’m sure Mr. Herbert has someone we can send.” John was wondering what a bottle of scent could have to do with anything.

“No, we’ll go fetch it ourselves. I want to go to the lab.” Sherlock looked at Victor, “You are a hormonally motivated idiot, I would never have chosen you however that’s not to say you are entirely useless. You’ve earned one of your parts this morning. Pray you continue to earn them. Behave or I won’t ask a question first, I’ll just present John a jar and see what he can fit inside.”

“Oh I’ll keep him in hand.” promised Bill.

“I just bet you will,” smirked John and enjoyed seeing his old friend wince as he realized he’d made a target of himself. “No visitors, not even staff. I’ll get Mr. Herbert to assign you someone to do your running around.”

“So we just sit here in this room listening to his stitches dissolve?” complained Bill.

“We’ll get you something to entertain you, don’t worry.” This club was all about providing diversions, John was certain Mr. Herbert could find something to occupy both of them, “No getting distracted.”

“Patient John.” reminded Bill tightly and John nodded. Even if Bill were openly head over heels in love with Victor, which he might not be yet, he was a damn fine nurse who took his responsibilities seriously. He’d never compromise himself, not even if the patient wanted it too.

Sherlock made the driver take them straight to the Holmes-Lestrade residence. A call en route to Mycroft had the butler waiting anxiously by the door, a small paper bag in his hand. “This is the
The neatly liveried man seemed terrified and awestruck at being near the two most powerful men in London but John just said, “Ta, thanks.” took the bag and gave it to Sherlock. They left the butler standing in the driveway while they proceeded to the laboratory they hadn’t even visited yet. Sherlock opened the bag and considered what it contained but did not move to touch or open it. “What is it love?”

“A suspicion, one I think we’re going to be proving correct very shortly.” Sherlock looked somber, thoughtful, “If I am right this changes a great deal.”

The Guide would not say another word, not until they’d swept into their new lab, nearly accosted the temporary head of the facility, and ensconced themselves in a well-ventilated room while several people took the cologne like it was a live bomb. John rolled his eyes a bit at the extreme precautions Sherlock then undertook, getting into a full haz-mat suit complete with sealed air system, forcing John to don the same even though it was overly warm, going through an extensive decontamination procedure before being allowed to enter yet another room where serious faced professionals in similar garb now had the bottle open under a vented hood and were preparing a variety of samples for testing. John made himself scarce by sitting on a stool against the wall out of the way while Sherlock and everyone else buzzed around watching various results being produced and discussing things in low voices.

John must have dozed for a while because Sherlock was waking him up with a gentle hand on his shoulder, “John, I was right. The scent given out by Richard is imbued with various elements that seem to target the Emergent. It would make us very suggestible over time, we wouldn’t even consider arguing a direct order.” Sherlock’s hand was gentle but his face was not. “Whoever created this wanted to weaken Pairs somehow, or control them which is more likely. If Richard has been making his followers wear this scent it means every Sentinel or Guide who is exposed to it over time would become…”

“Mycroft.” snarled John, “That’s why Richard gave this shit to Mycroft, to get to you. He didn’t count the fact that you don’t get on with your brother, you’d almost never see him.”

“Victor was wearing it as well, he probably has no idea at all how he’s being controlled. Who knows how many Pairs have been affected by this substance or even if this scent is the only one it is combined with! There could be lines of perfumes or other products that weaken Pairs decision making.”

“Is this how Victor was convinced to come attack me?” wondered John.

“Likely. He’d need to be drugged with something to be able to even stomach the concept of killing another Sentinel to get his bonded Guide. Someone has tapped into the more animal properties of the Sentinel mindset. It’s far too early to tell how it affects Guides.”

“You are not exposing yourself to this shit.” John was terrified and angry at the same time. A chemical that targeted Guides and Sentinels? The creator was fascinated with the Holmes brothers as well, there was no reason to think this creation wasn’t aimed directly at Sherlock, “Order all the tests you want Sherlock, hire as many people as you want, but you are not testing anything on yourself.” Sherlock clearly wanted to argue it. He obviously had many things he wanted to try but John’s love and overwhelming concern for potential consequences made him rethink his impulses, “Please love, I can’t bear to know I could have stopped something bad from happening and I just know this concoction is bad news.”

Sherlock capitulated instantly, reading John’s earnest face clearly, “Very well John. I will remotely review the work done but regular humans will do it all.”

John relaxed, “That’s all I ask Sherlock. Thank you.” John knew this was a big concession and that he was the only person in the world Sherlock would make it for. “We need to talk.” Sherlock gave a series of orders to his new staff, all of them nodding solemnly as he arranged for an expansive series of tests to be run. John was edgy now, this maneuver spoke of a lot of advanced planning and higher level thinking. It would have taken time and resources to create the cologne to begin with, Richard Brooke was clearly more of a danger than he’d suspected. “We should get back to the club, Mycroft will be back by now and I have a lot more questions for Victor Trevor.”

Sherlock nodded and took John’s hand, both men were serious and silent as they began to mentally review the dangers that might be out there. Someone had planned for years to overturn society so that the people were virtual prisoners, had gradually changed how Pairs worked so that they were a constant menace rather than an assurance, and had developed a compound that was tailor made to strike at the strength of the nation. There were so many questions and John could not hesitate to seek the answers.

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Chapter End Notes

I will post as soon as I can but my available writing time is spare. It can’t be helped but I have obligations that refuse to become someone else’s problem so yay for being an adult. It’s the most fun in the history of fun having, swear.
To say they were busy men was an understatement. John and Sherlock were occupied every minute they could spare and despite their desire to return to their home, their first day was so long that they ended up not leaving the club even for a minute. Meetings began the moment they arrived at the once restricted building and did not stop until late in night. Molly was first. Their time was suddenly too precious to use traveling back and forth so the Guide asked her to come to them. Now the small dark haired woman bobbled nervously in front of Sherlock to whom she was clearly attracted to, but admirably she controlled herself the instant she became aware of their bond, and only a lingering tinge of regret let John know that the young woman had fruitlessly fostered a crush on his mate. She was nervous but immediately struck John as highly competent if socially awkward. In a weird way the jittery doctor reminded John of Sherlock, someone filled to bursting with knowledge but unlike his mate, Molly had not yet found an occupation that fully explored her potential, at least, she hadn’t. “You want me to what?”

“I’m not asking you, I’m telling you this is what you’ll be doing.” said Sherlock impatiently.

John cut in, “Yes, we’re asking you, Doctor Hooper, my Guide feels you are the person most suitable for this position in that he likes you, and if you know Sherlock at all you know he doesn’t like many people. I understand that the job will require work in areas you aren’t familiar with. I’m sure we can find people to assist you with that. What we want is someone to be responsible for telling us what’s happening there without us needing to have to filter through all of it.”

“So I run everything and I have to know everything about the entire place?” Molly was sitting on the edge of her chair, her fingers twisting a kerchief into a hard rope. “I’m a junior pathologist, I don’t even have a key to the morgue.”

“Well you won’t need one, you’ll have the key to an entire facility.” Sherlock sniffed loudly, sat straight and looked hard at the cringing woman in front of him, “This position is straight-forward Molly Hooper. We have a compound that needs identifying. If we were at the morgue what would you do?”

“I don’t even have a key to the morgue.” she protested again.

“Send it off for testing and wait for the results?” she said timidly.

“Correct. Now at this new job you will do the exact same thing except the tests will be run just down the hallway and after they are complete you call us up and tell us what you have found. Think of it this way, you are graduating from the morgue, with its beginner forensics, and upgrading to a job that will make you the envy of everyone you’ve ever worked for.”

“I don’t know how to manage living people.” she protested again.

Sherlock waved her concerns off impatiently, “You will have staff who will deal with those sorts of things, what I want is for you to do the talking when I call or when I drop by! That’s not
“No sir.” Molly seemed to be finally accepting that this was actually happening and John could see the tiny flame of confidence in her grow a bit brighter. She could do this, she knew she could. He had been watching her carefully as the discussion had gone on, he saw what Sherlock saw. Molly Hooper was a bright young lady who had persevered in an unglamorous line of work, striving to increase her skills constantly, because just like Sherlock she couldn’t leave a puzzle unsolved. People dying for mysterious reasons was a problem a thoughtful person like Molly Hooper, who cried over lost pets and baked treats for the seniors in her building, couldn’t leave alone. People needed answers, how could she not try to give them what they needed so they could begin to heal their grief? With an entire laboratory at her disposal those answers would be likelier to be found, and that was a motivation she could understand. “When do I begin?”

“You already have, congratulations. I believe Anthea is overseeing the paperwork aspect of all the changes we’ve been making.” Sherlock turned his head and called Mycroft’s old assistant over. He introduced the two of them and left them to begin sorting out Molly’s new responsibilities and obligations. Sherlock had forced John to examine their personal fortunes online before he had a stroke over how much Sherlock planned to pay his new manager, and John nearly had a different stroke when he saw the vastness of the amount, “There is no reason whatever not to be generous.” John’s concerns faded away, they were more than fine.

Mycroft and Lestrade both eventually produced a large group of skilled professionals who were ready to do a critical analysis of everything Sherlock wanted reviewed. As they arrived the elder Holmes got them working immediately, accessing the Diogenes files, and cross-referencing with the cold-cases and now other assorted case-files that Lestrade had provided. Another call had an entire tech team arrive and by the end of the afternoon one of the once elegantly appointed drawing rooms had been re-purposed as an access center for the new review team. State-of-the-art laptops and extra screens were everywhere as data was examined and compiled. The Diogenes had been reborn with a new purpose.

Bill was commandeered to make calls to everyone on his list, his discretion assured as he explained the job offer. Since many of their new personnel already lived right there in London it wasn’t very long before there was a queue forming of people who needed a minute of the Pair’s time. Much like Molly each new hire had to see Anthea who was in charge of making sure all the finer details were taken care of but it was a lot even for her so Mycroft made a call and had a PA assigned to her. The soldiers were hard-eyed but merry, pleased to see each other, and extremely pleased to either reacquaint themselves with John or at least introduce themselves to the Primus. “Captain.” all of them seemed incapable of referring to John as anything but and Sherlock liked it.

“We’ll tell you more about what we want you to do a bit later, for now go home and wait for your calls.” John smiled around as he dismissed one group after another. Anthea had obtained yet another PA who was working directly on banking information to ensure that everyone received a hiring incentive as a surprise, an idea that Sherlock had tendered and that John agreed with. Most people lived from paycheque to paycheque if they could make it that far, ready cash was always acceptable so he made sure that by the time each soldier got home they would have a bit of a happy surprise waiting for them. It would make being patient easier if they didn’t have to worry about their immediate future.

Lestrade was made the official liaison between Pairs and the police, his position shamelessly appointed by Sherlock who called the Commissioner directly to inform him in only a few short words before turning to face the stunned once Detective Inspector, “You annoy me the least of all your associates. I don’t feel like dealing with them directly. You do it.” Sherlock then gave Lestrade the authority to seconder assistants from various divisions to build a support team for himself so he could dedicate his efforts directly from John and Sherlock rather than through the hierarchy. He currently attempted to function within, “You know who has talents that are being under-utilized, don’t make the same mistakes.” The DI’s new job also ensured that Lestrade worked closely with Mycroft and both men, while still being as busy as they ever were, would now at least be busy side-by-side. Neither complained about their new roles and got right to work.

In between meetings John occasionally made Sherlock have a piece of fruit and something uncaffeinated to drink, “We can’t burn out Sherlock, slow and steady.” the comment silenced any protests the detective might have had about his eating habits. John wasn’t making him stop for a full meal so it was an acceptable compromise. By the time they fell into their bed that night they were too exhausted to do more than lay side by side and fall fast asleep, piles of paperwork sorted into projects waiting for them in the morning as well as many discussions as they could squeeze in.

A discrete analysis of Victor Trevor’s blood revealed a small concentration of some of the elements they’d discovered in the cologne. When Bill learned of it he was intensely upset and demanded that the Sentinel be put on a dialysis machine to clean the contaminants away. It took some discussion with various experts but soon enough a special system was being rigged together in another part of London. When John went to check on the patient first thing the following morning he saw that the chair across the room was parked right beside the bed now, and that the nurse and Sentinel were both still fast asleep, not exactly touching but their bodies as close as could be managed in the circumstances. John woke his old friend gently, “You have to get him ready. It will be here soon.”

It was amazing what having undisputed authority could garner you. A few phone calls had obtained the services of some of the best engineers and medical developers around and by the time the morning was well on its way Victor Trevor’s blood was being carefully separated from whatever it was that Richard had exposed him to. Bill barely noticed how he hovered, his hand on top of Victor’s unbroken one, his eyes glued to the machine that was recording the process. They were being monitored by other specialists and a quiet word from John ensured that the nurse
would not be required to leave his patient’s side.

Lestrade was enjoying his new authority, plucking away talent from other DI’s with impunity, sending Anderson away for a series of refresher courses, and making Donovan responsible for the paperwork that needing filling and filing at their end of things. Disgruntled both accepted their fates and got to work. Mycroft took the opportunity to do some teambuilding as well. Now that he wasn’t bound by the restrictions of government work the once civil servant obtained John and Sherlock’s permission to do some talent-poaching of his own. It was a little surprising where he got some of his people from but by the end of the day the Diogenes club was bursting at the seams with busyness that it had never experienced before.

Mr. Herbert and the staff took it all in with equanimity, roving the crowds with trays of snacks, keeping rolling carts of beverages and other refreshments filled, and doing what they did which was catering to whatever need their guests had. Supplies were required so John gave Mr. Herbert permission to obtain whatever was needed with the assistance of whichever staff had already given their depositions to Lestrade and Mycroft’s team.

In the city Pairs worked directly with police just as ordered, sweeping neighborhoods to clear up as much violence as they could though it was no easy task, even with combining their efforts. Just as Mycroft predicted the holding cells quickly became full almost to over-crowding in just a day but at the same time violent crime in the city came to a screeching halt as word got around. Dramatically other crimes seemed to taper off and within two days the phones at the switchboard of the Met were barely ringing. Exhausted but very content with the progress they had made the Primes finally went back to Baker Street for some much needed private time and rest. They almost made it.

The vehicle that slammed into theirs was equipped with a large metal attachment on the front that stabbed into the vehicle, narrowly missing John who fortunately had elected to buckle himself into the center seat to be closer to Sherlock. The shock was enough to daze the men and set a ringing in John’s ears that made it difficult for him to make out the voices and bodies that were coming closer. “Shoot it right in there, don’t get any closer.” Suddenly a small canister was projected into the cabin, smoke instantly billowing out. They began to cough and grown dizzy, “Sherl…”  blackness descended as the drug took effect. John was out.

The first thing he noticed when he became aware again was that it was chilly. John kept his eyes closed and allowed all his other senses to range as they would and instantly he was aware of everything around him. He was lying in a tunnel but why he could not fathom. He wasn’t bound and except for the small things that lived close by he was also entirely alone. John opened his eyes pointlessly. It was pitch black, not that it mattered to him. He could sense his way as if in broad daylight. John’s back was sore but he sat up easily and got to his feet. Sherlock?

John? Relief pulsed between them as their mental connection was verified and as strong as if they were side by side, I believe I’ve been taken by Richard Brooke. I’ve been hooded, not that it prevents me from knowing exactly where I am. The smugness in Sherlock’s mental address made John snort with laughter. A hood wouldn’t stop Sherlock from being able to smell, feel, taste the air, and combined with his personal and expansive knowledge of the ancient city it was with contempt that the Guide showed his Sentinel that he was being hurried away north. I’ll be waiting John.

I’ve got a bit of walking to do, don’t incite violence, cautioned the Sentinel, knowing very well that Sherlock would be tempted to give people a piece of his mind, I’m on my way now.

John could practically feel Sherlock rolling his eyes, I know how to be suitably victimized, never fear. I will wait patiently for you and won’t try to do anything until you get here. An invisible kiss pressed itself to John’s temple and then Sherlock seemed to become engaged in memorizing everything he could perceive, just to spite his captor. John laughed again and got walking.

By the time he’d reached street level he was dirty, sweaty, and incredibly annoyed. This was a game, clearly it was a game. If getting rid of John permanently had been a goal they could have killed him easily while he had been unconscious. Instead he’d been stuck in a place that would force him to be physically stalled while Sherlock was taken away from him. John couldn’t physically sense his lover at all but he could feel Sherlock in his mind, his Guide humming aimlessly in his head as he occupied himself. John stopped the first Pair he came across, “Prime Watson? We’ve been searching for you.”

“How do you know?” Mycroft wasn’t doubting him, he just needed information.

“How Sherlock is guessing but who else would it be? I was left in the tunnels so whoever it is doesn’t want me dead, at least not yet. Sherlock is being taken north, he’s hooded.” John closed his eyes for a second, Can you tell how you’re being transported?

Van, I’m in the back. We’re on the motorway and traveling just under the posted limit. Obviously they’re avoiding attention. I can smell cut-flowers so a delivery van I would imagine. We went east for a while but now we’re going north. I heard the city airport a while ago so combined with the smell of the farms around me I’m guessing we’re on the M11. Sherlock was having a good time analysing the various things he knew were whizzing past him and John chuckled again but at the same time he was dismayed. Sherlock was so far away already!
Are you alright? He could not help it, he knew Sherlock was physically unharmed, he knew his Guide wasn’t distressed but he had to ask.

I miss you. Sherlock’s thought was wistful, Hurry John.

We’ll be on our way soon, promised the Sentinel. It was all John could do not to race right out of the club and give chase but that would help no one. They had to mobilize somehow even though they were woefully unprepared, Hold on.

If there are bees we’re coming back for a proper look, said Sherlock who was still apparently having the time of his life, At least I’m not bored.

“Sherlock thinks they’re on the M11 in a flower delivery van. He’s masked though so he doesn’t know for certain but his guess is better than anything we’ve got right now. How can we do surveillance over the entire area?” John looked at Mycroft expectantly.

“There are various methods, CCTV is scattered, and accessing cameras en route is possible but not in time to be effective for our purposes. It might be best if we allow him to get to a destination before we leave.” Mycroft’s hands were flying over the keyboard of his personal laptop as he got all his suggestions into motion even as he made them. “We can get a helicopter but it would only be able to bring a finite amount of people and only for so far.”

Between 200 and 900 nautical miles depending on make and model. Reported Sherlock silently.

John was shocked, You can hear Mycroft?

Not exactly, I hear what you’re thinking about what he’s saying so in a way it’s the same thing except I also know how you feel about it as he speaks and it’s quite amusing. I’m glad I’m hooded, I’m trying not to laugh because he is rather pompous. Sherlock’s thoughts were entertained and filled with assurance. He knew John would come for him, no matter what.

“Get something fueled right this minute, I’m going after him as soon as possible,” insisted John. Mycroft nodded and got to work. John looked over at Greg, “Get everyone you can involved, the police, the Pairs, everyone on our payroll. If there is any way at all to get information about where Sherlock might be going or if we find out where that is, any information about that area at all will be useful. Get on it.” John was exhausted but at the same time his body was filled with the desperate need to get his Guide back, all his Sentinel instincts screaming at him to find and protect Sherlock. There would be time for sleep another day, right now he had things to do. Shrugging it all off John simply got himself ready. “I need to speak to Bill Murray.”

The nurse was just getting ready to administer Victor’s sedative when John stopped him, “What’s up John?” Bill had been smiling but now he looked entirely serious, “Captain?”

“Sherlock has been kidnapped, he’s pretty sure it’s Richard Brooke, and he’s also pretty sure he’s been taken north. I need as much information as you can give me on Moran right now.” John looked at Victor, “What do you know that’s of immediate use?”

Bill looked concerned, “He’s dangerous John. He’s a cold one, Moran has been in so many blood-baths it’s a miracle his skin isn’t stained red. He’s good to his people though, backs them one hundred percent.”

“Prime Watson, Moran is not one of the Emergent but he’s still dangerous. I haven’t seen it with my own eyes but whispers get around. He’ll take every advantage, he only cares about killing quickly.” John nodded. He expected as much but Victor had more to offer, “There’s a place they referred to as the farm. They said the name once as I was leaving the room, I can’t quite recall it but it was some plant name. That might help a bit?”

Well any tip was a good one and since that was all they could think of John left the men and went back to Mycroft and Greg to give them what he’d learned. Instantly Mycroft began searching and came up with a list of properties with botanical names. He divided them all by region and began coordinating with someone online, “Prime Watson will meet you at the heli-pad in ten minutes.”

Anthea appeared and she offered John a bullet-proof vest which he put on as he left the building, also accepting a knife that he buckled to his thigh, and a handgun that had its own holster on his hip.

Bill was at his side, “Hey John.” he said with a huge grin, “Not going to the playground without me are you?” The nurse already had a vest on and was holding a mess of straps and weapons. John grinned back, “Where is my head? I should have known you’d want to come with.”

“I’m always up for a challenge, and I might have a couple of scores to settle.” Bill really was in deep with Victor already if the new Guide was already feeling vengeful because his not-yet Sentinel had been abused.

John had no problem with that attitude, “Let’s go.”

A long sleek car pulled up as one of Mycroft’s many functionaries drove the two of them to a tall office building. They were escorted directly to a bank of lifts that took them right to the roof where a medium sized helicopter was already waiting for them, the air whipping around them as the pilot got them inside and strapped in. We’re lifting off now love, I’m on my way. John felt Sherlock’s jubilation and love coming through their bond.

Alone? Sherlock felt concerned now.
John rushed to reassure his lover, "Bill's with me and I'm sure Mycroft is sending in a small legion as soon as I've found you. He tried to remain calm but it was difficult. He wanted to be with Sherlock right then, he was impatient to get going, the tug of distance feeling uncomfortable and unnatural. "Brooke is going to know we're coming."

"Probably," said Bill laconically. He was checking himself over as he adjusted the weapons he'd been given, "He doesn't know when though does he, he can't expect that you'd be able to know where Sherlock is, right? I mean, that's not normal is it?" John had no idea. Sherlock had meant to tell him more about Guides and Sentinels but they hadn't gotten to it yet. Bill knew even less than he did and he wasn't even bonded. It seemed to take forever to get to the helipad even though John knew rationally that it had been a very reasonable amount of time, and that there was no faster way to get to his Guide than this. He cursed his impatience as they rushed forward, both men silent. It felt like it took too much time to strap in and get everything organized and more minutes than John cared to spend had trickled on by before they were in the air and heading toward Sherlock. The pressure that had been building began to ease and John knew they were going in the right direction.

John, we've stopped. Sherlock sounded intrigued. I smell fresh turned soil, and we're walking on some kind of aggregate material instead of soil or paving stones. There are flowers... wild-flowers, lots of them. The smell of turned soil has faded but the air is damp, not salty. John used the com system and got in touch with Mycroft, relaying Sherlock's impressions and accordingly Mycroft narrowed his search. "I know we're going the right way. Focus on the M11 and all exit roads in that region," ordered John. Mycroft assured him that no resource was being unused and rang off.

The pilot was receiving messages of his own, his hand pressed to his ear as he listened carefully. "We're about to be joined by local airmen." he reported. John looked outside the window and saw a small fleet of other helicopters converging on them, falling into formation behind their small unit and maintaining it. John relaxed and shut his eyes, We're getting closer, are you still alright?

They've taken me inside a building, it's much cooler but the smell of flowers is very strong, it's likely a packaging area. I think I smell cellophane. Sherlock was relaxed as well, merely testing the parameters of his new combined senses and trying to be patient. John I smell the cologne. It's very strong. Perhaps this is where some of the components are produced? Sherlock was now trying to deduce each scent separately so John asked the pilot about an ETA. Once a brief discussion with Mycroft and others was concluded it seemed that they were mere minutes away from wherever Sherlock was.

The pilot was getting instructions and confirming them with John. When their course adjusted the first time John could feel them shifting away from Sherlock and anxiously he shook his head. The pilot adjusted a second time for a different destination and the weird feeling inside faded, this was the correct course. John nodded. Soon they were correcting more and more until it was obvious they were heading toward a series of long low buildings set in the middle of a series of flower fields. The helicopters that had followed them suddenly broke away, fanning out and deploying themselves so that the entire region was ringed with hovering machines.

John existed in a timeless state the second his feet were back on the ground. His senses flung wide in a way that was rapidly becoming second nature to him and almost immediately he located his lover. Sherlock was hidden deep inside a vast building, tucking inside a room that could only be accessed through a maze of corridors. John could read every inch of the facility and surrounding properties, "Vehicles, further north, detain them if you can. There are about three dozen others inside. Sherlock is in the middle. Watch for traps." John wasn't skilled enough yet to be able to detect things like that.

Bill looked concerned, "We can't handle that many alone."

"We're not alone, look." John nodded toward the other machines which had landed among the flowers. Small teams of armored and armed people were racing forward, "Let's go Bill. I don't want Sherlock to find out I wasn't there first." John raced off and Bill was hard on his heels.

They didn't bother with finesse. There was a large metal door in front of them. John pulled out his handgun and shot the handle off, it swung open almost sullenly. The smell of Richard's cologne was powerful and John regretted not having some kind of gas mask or air filter, or something, anything that would provide even a modicum of protection against it. Since there was nothing he could do he pressed on, deftly weaving his way through the interior, pushing his way through doors and rooms, making his way toward whoever waited for them.

The lights went out and Bill swore as they were plunged into darkness. Suddenly they came back on, flashing wildly and unseen speakers began spewing shocking blasts of noise that stopped and started over and over again at random intervals. John realized his enemies were trying to trigger a zone but it wouldn't work on him, or on Bill. Feeling a bit dizzy because of the constantly shifting level of light they staggered toward a doorway.

The scent in the air grew almost imperceptibly foggier as the cologne was released in great quantities. John fruitlessly covered his mouth and nose with the sleeve of his shirt and Bill was coughing, "What the fuck is this shit?"

"It's going to make you suggestible," said John sharply and hoped it wouldn't work on him. They were definitely in a game, someone had set a trap to test their product and Sherlock was the bait. Richard Brooke was toying with them and John began to grow very, very angry. "Try not to kill me and definitely no killing Sherlock, alright?"

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," muttered Bill. They had reached the end of the hallway and beyond the door stood a group of people. John could sense them and clearly Bill was able to as
John opened the door. There was a great long room containing only the people they knew had been waiting for them. There was a door at the far end and John knew he'd need to get through it to get to Sherlock. I'm here. Got a bit of business to take care of first.

I'm on my way. These fools just locked me in. I'm not even handcuffed! Sherlock's voice was contemptuous. It's insulting. John had to bite back a laugh as he felt Sherlock stand up and walk toward the door. Of course Sherlock had small things secreted about himself, he was always prepared for the unexpected while investigating and there were very few things the man enjoyed more than breaking and entering. The Guide was still a few minutes away and the group in front of John wasn't waiting. They attacked.

Four came first, all of them shifting into full assault almost instantly. John felt adrenaline supercharge his already enhanced system and with a teeth baring grin he strode forward. He heard Bill swear as the nurse was almost barrelled into by a short but savage man with a blade in each hand. John ignored them. He had three people on him now, two were women and one was a man, but all of them were armed and sure of themselves.

John had never tried to extend himself physically. In all the months since his enhancements took over his life he had never once tested his strength or speed. His bout with Victor had been laughable, almost pathetically easy. This wasn't going to be the same thing at all but John was still a seasoned warrior and more than one target or not, he was no easy kill, and just because he didn't like to hurt people did not mean he wasn't really, really good at it.

John dismissed everything about the people in front of him and focused his attentions on their movements and body language. Time seemed to slow down for him as rapid-fire calculations took place, he could almost hear Sherlock's voice chanting vectors in the back of his mind as they assessed everything on a microscopic level, their minds working perfectly together as their combined talents and bond allowed them to do what had never been done before. Inhaling carefully John braced his feet, his body shifting into a neutral pose for an instant before he simply allowed his flesh to react.

It was devastating.

John wasn't one to fuss over who was trying to kill him. He was in essence a very practical man, and now with a new way of being the danger he had been before was vastly amplified. They had no chance whatsoever. With ease John struck one of the women and then the man slightly below their shoulders. The blow threw them slightly off balance, giving John just enough time to land three precise and focused strikes on the second woman's body. In mere seconds she was on her knees, struggling to breathe and unable to move.

The other woman recovered first, compensating for the blow and very nearly landing a powerful blow to John's throat. He blocked her easily but it left him momentarily vulnerable to the man who managed to swing his arm in a violent arc, attempting to connect anywhere at all. John sidestepped him neatly, almost flowing from one position to the next, learning to let his body shift and move as required. It was strange. A warm presence was close and John quickly reached out, Love don't come in, there's one more waiting, he must be dangerous. Wait, please wait! John sensed his lover on the other side of the far door, and thankfully Sherlock once more obeyed John's intuition.

Lights flashed and loud sounds boomed. Suddenly everything went dark before the walls blossomed with vibrant psychedelic splashes of color. John closed his eyes immediately but he could hear Bill swearing and smelled blood. The nurse had been wounded but it wasn't life-threatening. John continued to battle, easily able to tell where his enemies were without needing his eyes. They smelled of fear and determination in equal measure, they had trained for this and much like Victor, they had been convinced they would triumph.

John disabled them of that notion in less than a minute, their bodies falling to either side of him as he broke both their necks one after the other. The third woman was sprawled on the floor, asphyxiated from the blow to her throat that John had landed so quickly she hadn't even felt it. Three people dead, Bill was still fighting the man but they were behind John who was advancing toward the remaining member of their greeting party, "Moran, I'm assuming."

He was clearly a soldier, hard and calm. He was tall, clearly heavily muscled, and very obviously well experienced in battle. His heart beat steadily and he was breathing easily. He smelled of Richard's cologne and confidence, there wasn't a trace of fear or anxiety on him, instead the man simply stood there, examining the fight as it happened, and John knew he was being assessed. "Colonel Moran." Moran's voice was almost soft, almost gentle, but there was menace there, a warning to a subordinate. John had been a Captain in the army, he outranked John except for one thing.

"Prime Watson." reminded John with a tight smile and noted that Moran didn't even bat an eye, merely watching John walk across the long room.

"It's been a pleasure." Moran saluted and smiled and then everything went white. Sound seemed to scream at John from all direction and desperately he clapped his hands over his ears and squeezed his eyes tightly shut once more. It seemed to go on and on but after a short while it all stopped and the normal overhead lights came on. John felt Sherlock almost tearing the door open, knew his lover had run to his side to help him up and that they were alone.

“He's gone John, there's a side panel he used to leave the room. He is already on the roof and in a helicopter of his own. I'll call Mycroft to give chase.”
John nodded, his head pounding and his stomach churning. The smell and the lights as well as the sounds had been stressful, and now there was the scent of blood in the air, “Bill.” he said.

Both of them turned and looked, there was no one else standing in the room, “He’s alive.” said Sherlock quickly, both of them hearing Bill’s heart fluttering weakly, “Hurry John.”

John shook off the after effects of everything as best he could and Sherlock hurried him to Bill’s side. The man who had attacked Bill was dead, his face bloodied and bruised from Bill’s blows, his death clearly from the knife in his chest. Bill was right beside him and there was a gash on his ribs where his opponent had gotten a blade on him. John shifted into doctor mode instantly. He felt Sherlock in his mind, using the information he found there to help John staunch the bleeding while using one free hand to snap orders out to his brother over the mobile. Without needing to ask Sherlock relayed John’s requirements and the Sentinel knew that assistance was on its way, that a small fleet of helicopters were chasing not only Moran but the vehicle that had left the compound right after they’d arrived, and that a number of people had been apprehended, and a small number more had been killed.

Sherlock kept a strong presence in John’s mind to steady him, the air was hard to breath and John wondered if the cologne was building up to toxic levels. The second the paramedics arrived John said, “We have to get out of here.” so they managed to get the nurse up and on a stretcher to get him out of the building, surrounded by other nurses and doctors who began to tend the man even as they moved.

The fresh air hit John like a wall and he almost fell to his knees, fighting to fill his lungs with something that wasn’t cloying. Sherlock was there, holding him up, swaying slightly as he too tried to clear his head, clutching at John just a bit as they steadied themselves. As soon as John stood Sherlock spoke the words John knew were coming, “This was an experiment and we were the subjects.”

“I know. They left me in some tunnels underground, this is a game Richard is playing. He’s testing our defenses and responses.” This was very worrying. Bill was loaded into a small helicopter with his new medical team and flown off for emergency surgery. Mycroft’s team was reporting in. Moran had been flown to a nearby woods where the man had actually jumped from the machine as it hovered low and disappeared into the foliage. The vehicle that had been pursued had been detained, but contained only a frightened driver who was being taken into custody, “So basically we have nothing.”

“We have this place John, there are answers here, even if Richard Brooke doesn’t realize it. Whoever Jim really is he has no idea what I can discover. They have left traces of themselves all over the place.”

“We’ll have to vent the building first, no Pairs inside there until it is cleared.” warned John, “We weren’t there long enough for things to affect us or perhaps we’ve been contaminated with something, we don’t know.” John looked around him and knew their enemy was toying with them, “Call the Tower, we’re bringing in Pairs to help.”

Everyone looked at him and suddenly John realized all the faces around him were filled with deep respect and a tinge of fear. He looked down at himself. How had he gotten so bloody? Sherlock hadn’t said a thing. His Guide was merely standing there looking and feeling…proud? “Don’t be silly John, you look like a rather dashing hero right now. Don’t question it.” John rolled his eyes but smiled up at his Guide who was very nearly rapturous, though outwardly contained. Sherlock looked at everyone milling around, “Get to it. Prime Watson has given an order, make it happen.”

It had already been a long day, John’s adrenaline rush was wearing off and suddenly he felt weary. There was so much to do and everything that had just happened only made him more aware of what remained to be accomplished. Wrapping his arms around his Guide, the Sentinel took in the scent of his lover and together their minds blended together easily as they began to plan their strike back. Whoever Richard was, he had finally irritated John.

Chapter End Notes

I unabashedly beg patience and forgiveness for my tardiness in posting. I’ve been distracted as well as busy, and getting words down just seems to take up time I don’t have and I hate it. I will post as I can, but it’s going to be at least a week between installments minimum and there doesn’t seem to be anything I can do about that. I’ve tried. Subscribe to the story if you haven’t already and you will receive notifications telling you I’ve finally managed to post.
Despite John’s intentions he fell asleep right after Sherlock manhandled him into the shower at their flat. The doctor was dead on his feet, all the stress and fury he had felt taking its toll on his resources. The hours it had taken to secure their neighborhood while they travel back to the city had been filled with reports from teams all over England. Moran and Brooke had disappeared and without a foe right at hand the adrenaline rush that had kept the Sentinel focused and alert subsided. His Guide had known what would happen and had prepared accordingly, ignoring John’s protests as his lover tucked him into bed, spooning up behind John and holding him as the soldier drifted right off. John was so tired and he slept dreamlessly for long hours. When he finally woke he discovered that they had both shifted in their sleep and Sherlock was once again pillowing his head on John’s chest, drooling a bit, and clinging tight. It made him smile as he carefully kissed the corkscrew curls that were jutting up wildly all over the place. Delicately John allowed his free hand to wander, enjoying the delicacy of Sherlock’s skin, the warmth of it, and how even the lightest touch made tiny flutters of arousal grow for the slowly waking Guide. John shifted himself carefully, gently easing his lover to the sheets so he could press gentle kisses along the hard lean muscles of his back. Sherlock woke with a languid sigh as John reached his lower back, and John knew he was smiling to himself as he enjoyed the attention being lavished on him.

John enjoyed so many things about Sherlock. His responsiveness for one, John knew each loving kiss was making Sherlock more aware of his flesh, teasing him into arousal in tiny increments. For another the level of trust, Sherlock had let no other into his life the way he had welcomed John and the soldier was covetous of his rights. His lover would always be the most important part of John’s entire existence. There would never be time enough to show him exactly how treasured he was but John was willing to at least make a beginning. The way Sherlock relaxed beneath him was beautiful, his body in lazy repose as he allowed John to indulge himself as he would. John did.

He had learned a great deal about a certain transport during their short but powerful relationship, so with great care John employed that knowledge, knowing Sherlock’s body had begun to change and adjust to his new perceptions, and that each almost feathery caress would be delivering delicious waves of pleasure that would slowly grow into a storm. John was patient and let the fury build on its own. Working his way back up Sherlock’s spine he paused to dot small kisses along the back of Sherlock’s shoulders before making his way over the nape of his long neck. There
pressing kisses gave way to sucking ones, and when appropriate, a flick of tongue until Sherlock had his head craned to the side to offer John as much access as he could manage.

John urged Sherlock to roll on to his back and the Guide did so willingly, eyes still closed as John continued to tease and explore. He noted the flush on Sherlock’s cheek, and the growing tumescence that seemed to want attention, so he gave it. Using his mouth still, John wandered his way over Sherlock’s chest and flat belly, licking and tasting carefully until his lover was already beginning to writhe a bit. Kneeling carefully to the side John leaned down and continued to use his tongue to explore, savoring the changes in taste and texture as much as he was the sense of growing desire he could feel inside the man below him. He got lost in the pleasure of it all, his mouth and hand working together as the rest of him took in all of Sherlock’s responses and reveled in them.

John loved the feel of Sherlock in his mouth and in his hand. He loved the way Sherlock’s breath had already begun to catch and how his large hands were beginning to clench at the sheets. John adored the smell of desire that filled the room, how Sherlock’s heart was racing, and how his mind was still foggy with sleep and completely free of worries. He was in the moment entirely and John loved that more than anything. The small gasps for air slowly turned to whimpers and almost inaudible moans. Sherlock’s hips bucked a bit now and then, and he was so certain he was going to bring his lover over the edge except, “No, no, stop, not like this.” Sherlock’s voice was ragged and hoarse, “My turn.”

Sherlock was nearly shaking with the desire to orgasm, he’d been on the precipice, John knew he had been but he didn’t resist his lover, allowing his Guide to push him back against the pillows. As expected John watched the dark curls begin to bob slowly up and down, hissing a bit as the warmth of Sherlock’s mouth enveloped him, but before very long Sherlock pulled off and slid forward. “Oh yes,” moaned John as he reached down to grip them both. His lover’s hand joined his and together they bucked and strained to keep touching one another in as many ways as possible, their soft moans building in volume.

They managed several minutes but Sherlock broke first, unable to hold back. He was almost growling as his hips jerked, his mouth pressed to John’s as his eyes squeezed shut. John allowed him to ride through their hands at will, letting Sherlock enjoy himself for as long as possible but again, his Guide has his own ideas. Still panting hard and trembling a bit Sherlock slid down quickly and pushed John’s hand away. Hunggrily his mouth once again took John, his tongue lapping and licking as he very deliberately worked to get John off. He knew exactly how to stroke, exactly when to change pressure, everything John needed to feel his body arch back, his skin popping with sweat as his moan became a sharp cry of release.

Sherlock was nearly laying on John’s legs now as they both tried to recuperate. Eventually he lifted his head, his curls stuck to his forehead in a sweaty tangle, “Good morning.”

John couldn’t help it, he laughed. Sherlock just grinned and let his head drop back onto John’s thigh, completely relaxed as he rested. John let his hand card through the dark hair on Sherlock’s head before saying, “We’ve got so much to do.”

“I know.” said Sherlock simply. Lifting his head a bit he planted a deliberate kiss on John’s hip, “Time to get going.”

John already felt renewed, contact with his Guide had helped as had their shared intimacy. Scrubbing one another down quickly the two men wasted no more time getting ready for their day, completing their preparations with almost eerie synchronicity. By the time they were dressed and ready for breakfast the Pair had unconsciously resumed planning with one another, wordless concepts ricocheting back and forth as Sherlock made toast and John scrambled eggs. When they both realized what they were doing they stopped cold and stared at one another in surprise, “Is this normal?” asked John out loud, “Do Pairs do this?"

“No, no, stop, not like this.” Sherlock’s voice was ragged and hoarse, “My turn.”

“For being perfect for me.” said Sherlock simply. John grinned and followed his Guide to the street where their car was waiting to take them to the Diogenes.

John went directly to the infirmary where Bill was already groggily awake and flirting with Victor who was trying to hover as best he could despite his own injuries. Someone had considerably slotted the hospital beds side by side and lowered the center rails so that the yet un-bonded Pair could remain close to one another. The doctor in attendance had a quiet word with him about the injuries and the steps taken to mend them, as soon as he was done John dismissed him for a few minutes and turned to speak to his friend. Bill was pale, weak, and sported a large bandage around his ribs. John examined the chart and read the report quickly, “You look like fried shit.” he said, “Hard to kill as ever.”

Victor scowled but Bill laughed faintly, “He didn’t even buy me a drink. I was never going to..."
down.” John was relieved that Bill was in good humor, and clearly not in mental distress. Bill had been wounded nearly as many times as John, all in the line of duty, he would pull through alright. The cut up his side was shocking and deep, but the Guide would recover soon enough, especially with his Sentinel right by his side. Bond or no bond it was obvious to the Primes that the two in front of them were linked already, a proper bond would be a formality, albeit a very important one.

John smiled at his friend before looking directly at Victor, “We’re taking Richard down and we need to know absolutely everything you know about anything at all that might help us do that. We’ve got plans already but more information is always a good thing.”

Victor didn’t hesitate, his whole body arced as best it could toward the man who would one day be his bonded Guide, the Sentinel was also very clearly filled with righteous anger and the need to retaliate for the harm done to his soon-to-be mate, “Richard sometimes has a bit of an Irish accent, he works at it but it slips now and again. The third one, the woman, I’ve never seen her but it stands to reason she’s waiting for them somewhere for just in case. There’s an online communications network that Richard uses to contact people who are tied to him, my family is on that list, as is Sherlock’s. He’s got all these people in his pocket for different reasons, I can’t say to what. They’ve been grooming me for a long time now, paying for training, getting me to go around to different social functions whenever I was told, all high-society stuff.” It was obvious to the Primes that the Sentinel was becoming very aware of how well he had been used. “Our mothers.” he said flatly, not looking at Sherlock but most certainly addressing him, “They’ll know where Richard might go if anyone does.”

John expected Sherlock to be upset but instead marveled at the intense satisfaction that began to emanate from his Guide. A moment’s concentration allowed John to understand and with a tolerant smile he gave his silent permission for Sherlock to do as he would. Lifting his mobile to his ear Sherlock called his brother, “Get Mummy and Mrs. Trevor over here at all speed. No questions answered.” He ended the call with a careless swipe of his thumb, “We will check in later.”

Sherlock simply left without another word so John went with him. Their plans required swift action on a large scale, so ready or not they found where Lestrade and Mycroft were working, the elder Holmes already organizing cars to pick up the parents in question, “There is nothing to argue Mummy, the Primes wish to see you, the car will be there shortly to collect you.” He ended the call with slightly less grace than Sherlock, “She and Mrs. Trevor will be here later this morning.”

John looked directly at Mycroft, “How many Pairs can you organize before noon?”

Mycroft blinked and hesitated for only a moment, “Ninety percent.”

“What?” John turned his gaze to Lestrade, “Every single off duty officer not actually sleeping today will be called in, get someone to call the Irregulars as well. I want every Pair deployed according to the extent of their sensory limits. The Irregulars will be in relay position like so. Lestrade, when we have some numbers from you this is what I want to happen.” John roughly sketched out a drawing for Mycroft to examine, noting that the man was surprised as well as impressed with the plan they had come up with, “Get everyone moving now.”

Both men looked entirely taken aback but John stood firm. Sherlock glanced over, “Names Mycroft, you should have a lovely long list of names waiting for me. Once you have performed your task you will give me those names, all of them.”

Whatever games Mycroft might have once played with his younger brother to annoy him were entirely absent, “As you wish Prime Holmes, the instant I am done.” Mycroft lifted his phone to his ear, contacting Anthea, and setting into motion his Prime’s orders. Lestrade was a bit wide eyed but managed to sound appropriately authoritative as he issued his own commands.

“All air and water traffic stops for as far around us as you can manage, if it’s not too late for that. Placements begin along the southern coast and works north. We are going to turn this entire place upside down until we find Richard Brooke and Sebastian Moran.” John’s lip curled in a snarl and he saw both Mycroft and Greg almost step back. The anger that John had kept carefully banked in the back of his mind flickered. Somewhere there were two hearts that no longer had the right to communicate with their Primes that the Sentinel was becoming very aware of how well he had been used. “Our mothers.” he said flatly, not looking at Sherlock but most certainly addressing him, “They’ll know where Richard might go if anyone does.”

John went back to tend Bill and Victor personally. Sherlock drifted along behind him, clearly lost in thought and merely trailing after John instinctively. John could feel the press and churn of thoughts that consumed his mate’s vast attentions and smiled grimly to himself. Sherlock was responding to John’s need to retaliate, so much like Victor’s but amplified many times over. Victor might rampage, a one man destructive force against whoever stood before him but he was not John, not even close.

John wasn’t about to stand back and waste his time chasing down two people, no matter how elegant they were as targets. He was going to take his mate, and absolutely destroy everyone and everything responsible for their separation. John burned with cold anger. Sherlock had been taken right from his side, their lives endangered, experiments run not only on them but on uncounted others. John wasn’t putting up with that, not in his home town, not in his own country. He was a Sentinel Prime and he would do whatever necessary to make sure no one ever attempted such a thing ever again.

Victor was well on his way to being entirely healed but it would be some time yet before removing his leg braces was prudent, he was as bed-bound as he’d been on the first day and John could smell and feel the frustration rolling off of him. Bill had drifted off again, the sedatives he’d been given still capable of keeping him drowsy, the blood loss and shock enough for his body to
crave the sleep. Despite his misgivings John loosened the cuffs and released the Sentinel’s arms and legs, “Don’t move around too much,” warned the doctor. Victor immediately reached over and took Bill’s hand in his, both their bodies relaxing as they finally made contact. With some relief he rested his other hand on his chest and closed his eyes, “We won’t be back for a bit, I’ll try to have someone keep you updated. We may call for information.”

“Yes sir,” replied the Sentinel calmly. Victor had accepted his situation fully. No one was doubting his imminent bond with Bill and that was all that was important to him right then. His Prime would be exacting the justice he needed as payback to the harm done his mate, and even if it wasn’t entirely satisfying at least he would be with his Guide no matter what. Victor Trevor had achieved contentment.

Leaving the pair to slumber side by side as they healed John and Sherlock made their way to the conference room that had almost accidentally become the visible seat of their power, a power that the corrupt leadership that festered most in this place was about to feel and recognize. Mycroft put his calls on pause and handed Sherlock a tablet where a database was already waiting to be examined, “The names you requested. More are to be added of course, the list will be much larger very soon depending on how you plan to deal with these individuals.”

Sherlock scanned the list and John felt him grow cold and upset again. Mycroft clearly didn’t need to be a Guide to sense his brother’s dismay, “Yes, she’s been funding him for years now. You know Papa has no idea what she gets up to. As far as he’s concerned nothing matters but growing roses and keeping bees.” John wasn’t sure about the specifics of Sherlock’s family except that they were the kind of rich and powerful that got no media attention because they did not wish it. They were the sort of people who made things happen because they wanted their lives lived a very particular kind of way, and they didn’t care who suffered for lack due to their excesses. If a wealthy man wanted to lock himself away to indulge his hobbies then it was more than possible.

“How did you found her involvement?” demanded Sherlock.

Mycroft answered immediately, “I suspect she set up the original meeting between Mr. Brooke and myself. You know how she’s always longed for more influence, more power. All that Papa has freely given her has not been nearly enough to sate her greed. You remember the dinner parties, the extravagance of it all. Papa is happy to let her spend her time as she would, he has never cared for the family fortune, and even now I don’t know that he would try to do more than have a gentle word with her.” John’s mind was suddenly flooded with images of a man to whom Sherlock bore an uncanny resemblance to, absent-minded and dreamy, someone who obviously lived their entire life inside their own mind. John sensed only love and tolerance from his mate about his sire, whatever his mother had been up to his father had been likely entirely unaware.

Mycroft endured several more questions, and John stood silent for only a moment before they got to work. Sherlock was almost glowing now, his intense satisfaction and anticipation a warm bonfire compared to the almost uncontrollable rage that only the Guide could feel burning inside his Sentinel. Outwardly John was pleasant as always, his eyes a bit harder, his smile a little less warm, but always gently polite as he spoke with various people. The Irregulars were happier receiving orders from their Captain, so he made a few calls personally, ruthlessly utilizing old ranks for practicalities sake and with eagerness his new people moved themselves into position with sharp efficiency.

It was nearly half eleven when Mr. Herbert tapped on John’s shoulder, “Your guests will be here soon, do you wish to have a small repast now or with them?”

John thought for a second but had no time to answer. Sherlock spoke decisively, “Before. Bring a meal here, make it substantial. We have a lot to do today and John will need all the food he can get inside him.”

Mr. Herbert had two steaming hot trays on the conference table only a few minutes later, clearly he’d done what was always done and anticipated their requirements. John was almost bemused when his lover sat himself right next to John and began to eat heartily. Still Sherlock wasn’t wrong, they needed every calorie they could harvest right now, and probably should have made a bigger effort at breakfast as well but there was nothing to be done for that now. The game was on and there was no more time to waste.

By the time their plates had been cleared away and the last of their tea sipped and enjoyed their guests were waiting for them in what had once been called the Stranger’s Room. Most of the club rules had been trampled and discarded thanks to John and Sherlock, but it was easy enough for the staff to adapt and accommodate. They knew how to make an impression, and how to foster exactly the right atmosphere.

Pages threw two huge doors open and stepped smartly inside, preceding John and Sherlock with almost arrogant pomp. Both young men came to attention so completely John could practically hear their spines turn to stone as they stared blankly forward in a way that let the two people waiting inside know that the pages were there to do more than open doors. Security was taken very seriously at the club and a pair of soft surprised gasps greeted the gesture. Sherlock strode ahead, “Mummy, Mrs. Trevor.”

John stepped ahead slowly, using all his senses to evaluate the two older women seated in front of him. The fashions they wore were expensive and contemporary, and enhanced the well-paid for looks of each woman who were silvery and dignified Dames of society. Both of them were seated rather defiantly on large plush chairs provided by the club. Each of them stank of contempt and derision, clearly these women were well accustomed to getting their way, and not caring how that came about. “Mrs. Holmes, Mrs. Trevor,” John looked down at them, and saw both women refuse to meet his gaze. He smiled, “We need information. You are here to give it to us.”
“I most certainly will not,” said Mr. Holmes hotly, “I don’t have to answer any questions posed by a derelict or my addict son.”

Sherlock stilled. The Guide felt pain at his mother’s words, a flash of childish sorrow at being found unworthy by his parent before it faded back to where that sad terrible feeling had always lived, and the rage inside John grew that much hotter. He’d known about her selfishness and cruel coldness, the arrogance was no surprise. That Sherlock was accustomed to this sort of treatment from his mother, so used to it he’d barely noted the pain he’d felt, that made John rage inside. Though the wrath was growing it didn’t stop John from being able to let Sherlock feel how much he was loved by his Sentinel, how every part of the Guide was precious and adored. Two bitter old ladies couldn’t change that, no one could. John loved Sherlock and that’s all there was to it.

“No you believe the lies you tell yourself Mrs. Holmes? Did you think calling me names would somehow invalidate me?” asked John gently. He sniffed the air, “You reek, did you know that? Sour right down to the bone, and all the expensive perfumes in the world can’t mask that. Did Brooke tell you he could hide that stink?” John’s gaze slid over to Mrs. Trevor who gamely tried to maintain an air of icy disdain, “When your son came over here to kill me and rape my mate, were you proud? Does knowing you encouraged your only child to become an attempted murderer gain you something? It would have been so easy for me to have killed him, not much more difficult that it would be for me to kill you right now.”

The lofty feelings of arrogance in both women were draining away and caution was replacing it. John didn’t care that he was menacing two old women, these poisonous wretches had used their own children as currency to attain power and social stature. “That’s murder,” declared Mrs. Holmes with a wavering voice, “You can’t kill someone in cold blood.”

John smiled gently, “Who told you that Mrs. Holmes? When I bonded with my Guide we both became Primes, did your oldest not mention that? I’m sure he did so I’m going to assume you’re being stupid on purpose. I’m not going to say ignorant because you clearly aren’t so that means you are deliberately trying to antagonize me and that, my dear mother-in-law, is very stupid.” John stood back and assessed both women critically, “You don’t love your sons, I love Sherlock, and I will protect and defend him as is my nature. Victor will be similarly lucky soon enough and you will have nothing to do with that Mrs. Trevor, I am taking your only child away from you. That is the way of it. He will be cherished with our people in a way he never was with his own. As Prince I can do whatever I wish and what I wish is for the two of you to begin enjoying the life to which you have worked so hard to give others.”

“What do you mean?” Mrs. Holmes. She looked uneasy now.

“I mean I’m stripping you of all wealth and privilege, ejecting you from all your homes, seizing all your properties and possessions, and installing you in a lovely government run facility for seniors. Tell you what, I’ll even give you adjoining rooms so you can still be best friends, can’t be fairer than that, can I?” John was still smiling gently, his eyes sparkling merrily. “It will be like the old school days all over again, just you and your bestie forever, won’t that be fun?”

“You can’t do that to us! You have no cause!” shriiled Mrs. Trevor. John noted she was clutching her purse so hard her knuckles were white.

“No cause?” John nearly spat the words out, “The pair of you have done nothing but serve and caused others to pay whatever price you demanded. Everything you have is due to your greed and heartlessness. I don’t think you deserve to live in luxury, so you won’t. I have the power and authority to do whatever I wish to whomever I wished, I doubt that Sherlock is going to stop me.”

Sherlock shrugged elegantly before dropping into a plush chair of his own, bonelessly melting into the cushions like a cat, “John is very sensible, far more sensible than I. I wouldn’t have bothered with the home frankly. I’d be just as happy to watch you live on the streets, lots of people manage, I’m sure you’d be fine.”

Both women looked on the verge of fainting, clutching at their hearts and reeling where they sat. John perched on the arm of Sherlock’s chair, and felt his Guide carelessly sling his arm about John’s hip, his long fingered hand resting proprietarily against John’s thigh. John looked sternly at both of them, “Your entire existence is in my hands, Sherlock truly does not care what happens to either of you. I’m not really for killing defenseless old ladies, so this is what we’re going to do. I have a system that seems to work quite well. I now have everything that used to be yours. You can have bits of it back, and what you can purchase your luxuries with is information.”

Mrs. Trevor recovered first, her eyes as hard as the diamonds hanging from her ears, “Information? What information?”

John nearly snorted in contempt. He expected no better. “Richard Brooke, I want to know what you know about him. He has gained my unkind attentions, and I’m not really in the mood to be discriminating over who shares in the pain I plan to deliver.” John was scowling now, “You have willingly played his games for years now, both of you are despicable. I could have killed your son without even trying. He’s laid up now, not that you’ve tried to get in touch. We’ve had him monitored.” Mrs. Trevor had no response, her mouth opening and closing silently several times before she simply sat back, tight-lipped and blank-eyed.

Mrs. Holmes tried to look offended, “Richard Brooke is merely a business associate, I have nothing to do with his dealings!” She sounded entirely indignant.

John could not stifle the snort this time, “Merely a business associate?” he sniffed the air dramatically, “You’re wearing the poison he made to ruin your youngest child. We have financial records proving you’ve been funding him for years now. Both of you have allowed him to prey
on your own children, so please excuse me if I don’t give a fuck how offended you might feel! You are going to give me all the answers I require and you will begin doing so immediately. To make myself perfectly clear both of you are paupers as of this moment, you don’t even own the clothes on your back. I have decided it is so, so it is so. If you want your homes back you must give me Richard Brooke.”

“We can’t pull him out of our pockets!” exclaimed Mrs. Holmes, her indignity intact, “I don’t know that anything I know is of use to anyone. He had lovely table manners and exquisite tastes in fashion.”

Sherlock smiled over to his dam and John nearly shivered in response to the dark delight his lover was feeling. “Oh Mummy,” said Sherlock softly, “The importance of what you know is not really up to you to decide.” The Guide leaned forward and smiled coldly at his mother, “I am going to begin asking questions now Mummy, and you will answer them. John can tell if you are lying and let me just explain that Mycroft and Gregory both are simply terrified of him, and he hasn’t even laid a finger on either of them. I’m losing count of the number of people he’s killed since we’ve bonded, but it’s becoming a significant number.” Sherlock slowly turned his smile toward Mrs. Trevor, “Victor didn’t even last a minute, he required immediate surgery before John was done with him. How many years did your son train for? None of it seemed to matter and John has told me he shouldn’t be disabled for terribly long, that’s nice isn’t it?” Sherlock sat back and indolently stroked John’s thigh, “He’s quite amazing, and he’s such a talented doctor.”

Both elderly women were sitting rigidly in their luxurious chairs, the expressions on their faces both shocked and horrified in equal measure. For the first time since they arrived, the aristocratic women finally began to smell of fear. John said reassuringly, “I only act out when I’m provoked, so as long as I’m happy everyone is pretty safe.”

“Let’s keep him happy, shall we Mummy?” with a sigh Sherlock gave John’s hips a squeeze and began. After thirty minutes of straight questions he allowed Mr. Herbert to bring in a refreshment tray while Mycroft and Greg presented themselves before they escorted the ladies to the restrooms for a break. When they were ready both woman were returned and with frightened eyes witnessed Mycroft’s deferential attitudes towards both Primes, and the fear in their scent began to grow stronger at last.

“Prime Holmes, all the arrangements you requested are in process.” Mycroft had a tablet in his hand and he wasn’t looking at his mother at all.

Lestrade had a tablet too, but he was carefully assessing everyone in the room, noting his mother-in-law’s incredulity. “When you are available Prime Watson, there are questions.” Greg’s voice was respectful, and while not as submissive as Mycroft who had a far less stable relationship with his Primes, he made it absolutely clear to the women sitting there that all the power rested in the hands of the men they had so recently held in contempt.

“Ta, give us a tick.” John winked over and turned his smiling face over to their guests, “We have a bit of a busy day planned. Please, relax for a while. Mr. Herbert has brought a lovely selection, I’m sure you’ll find something acceptable. Rooms will be made available to you.” John helped Sherlock to his feet, tucked his arm in his, and escorted his Guide away with a loving look. “Richard’s scent doesn’t seem to affect me, both of them practically bathe in the stuff.”

Sherlock wrinkled his nose for a moment before exhaling gustily, “Indeed my love.” He walked for a few steps in silence, “They’re both lying.”

“I know love.” Both Mrs. Holmes and Mrs. Trevor had spun pretty tales about accidentally meeting Richard at various functions, and explained away their various investments as arts related donations, pretending confusion and innocence about various results of that support. John had maintained a steady façade the entire interview, he and Sherlock laughing internally at the pathetic attempts to fool them. There were a thousand tells that both of them could read, and together they re-interpreted the words they heard and re-translated them into facts that were apparent by their absence, “They’ll be at your family home won’t they?”

“Yes my dearest, Mummy probably gave Richard the key herself. No one uses it, maintaining it is all part of the family trust. Essentially the servants live in the luxury the family avarice affords them. Now I suppose they are his servants.”

“Are we still doing the plan?” It was an amazing idea, John was eager to give it a go but if they didn’t actually have to…

“Oh we are doing the plan my love, never fear. Brooke and Moran are the main catch but we are throwing our net wide today. Have a bit more to eat John, we’ll need the energy.” John was still full but as soon as they arrived at their conference room a valet appeared with another refreshment tray and John nibbled down a biscuit and another cup of tea. Sherlock asked, “Are they ready Mycroft?”

“I’ve contacted all the region handlers, everyone has been dispersed, all zone south are at the ready, west is nearly complete, east is completing now, north is still situating, but will be complete within the hour. Do you wish to wait Sirs?”

“Greg, what were your questions?” Lestrade came over, “Go on.”

“The Irregulars have been sent out, most of them are in place already. I’ve supplemented their numbers with some retired cops I know, the Irregulars are spread pretty far and wide, we needed more eyes and ears. I know these ones, all good people.”

“They’d better be.” said Sherlock with a hard voice, “Still, we can’t be under-prepared.” he turned
his head a bit toward his brother. “Have you made the other contacts I requested?”

“No sir, they stand at the ready in all sectors. Your request has been considered most reasonable.”

No one turned down a Prime request, and as far as Sherlock was concerned the trouble they were about to put people through was the least they could do to help solve a rather large problem.

“Appropriate silence is in place?” demanded the Guide sharply, and his brother nodded affirmatively, “Excellent.” Tenderly Sherlock led John to a large comfortable chair, sat his Sentinel down and tucked a cushion behind his back while John smiled at him. Another chair was placed directly in front of the soldier and Sherlock sat himself in it, making himself similarly comfortable. There was no real need for contact but despite that both men toed off their shoes, pulled off their socks, and set their bared feet next to each other on the plush carpet.

They leaned forward and exchanged a brief kiss, John’s eyes sparkling at the excitement in Sherlock’s, “We’re ready my love.”

“I know my dearest, come along John, let’s change everything.” That delicious rush of warmth filled John again as Sherlock’s love and adoration came shining through. With such sustenance for his soul there was nothing John couldn’t do.

“Mycroft are you ready?” John looked at Sherlock’s brother who was standing in front of a bank of monitors and screens. He wasn’t looking at the Pair, his fingers were flying over keyboards as he continued to work, but he nodded sharply. “Lestrade, are you ready?” Greg was sending messages back and forth as well, his fingers moving with less grace but no less urgency, and after a few seconds he nodded as well.

“They won’t understand what is happening. We are affecting many people.” said Sherlock softly.

“I know love, some will be hurt that do not deserve it, but more are being hurt every day right now. It can’t continue. We’ll make it as gentle as possible but it’s happening, now.” John felt Sherlock’s acceptance as they sank back onto their cushions and began to do the impossible.

John had an idea and when Sherlock had sensed it his incredible mind had taken the idea and grown it into a vast plan almost immediately. It was simple and devastating at the same time, no one had ever once attempted anything like it, “Let’s begin.” said Sherlock. They sat back once more and closed their eyes, their feet pressed together tightly. John cast his senses wide and immediately Sherlock picked up all the data his Sentinel could sense, rooting John in place mentally as his mate began to extend himself cautiously.

The first Pair they encountered were startled but compliant, a characteristic that John both hated, but at the moment appreciated. He needed their acceptance in order to do this. John wasn’t certain how he managed but he tied a mental thread to the Pair. Moving outward John’s mind met another Pair, and another, tying threads to all of them one at a time, working his way out faster and faster as he grew deaf at the procedure. Further and further he went, Sherlock keeping him from feeling lost or overextended until he was far beyond his original four mile radius. Their union had changed something, and just as John expected his reach grew and grew, each thread that he tied both strengthened and bound him. Dozens of threads became hundreds, and hundreds became thousands as John reached and reached and reached until finally there were no more threads to be tied.

The entire country blazed in their joined minds. John and Sherlock could sense every bit of the land where their kind existed. John had connected to every Tower Pair he could reach and now a vast network of minds were joined together in a vast collective awareness piloted by the Primes. John sensed Mycroft and Greg nearby, Anthea was there as well, as were several others, all waiting for commands.

“Begin.” They said together. Speaking separately was impossible at the moment, John and Sherlock spoke in tandem, their words blending together in deep harmony. “Search commencing.”

Their minds rippled through lists of problems, names, situations, cause, effect, and a vast litany of other factors. Over each region various people were being detained, identified by the Pair on location. Their various questions and their unique ability to see so deeply had provide John and Sherlock with the key to changing everything that was wrong.

They were removing corruption. With surgical precision John and Sherlock had particular people removed from their jobs, the vacancies left behind rapidly filled with others who looked on in shock and burgeoning hope. It disgusted John that this was necessary, but one place at a time needed to be purged of everyone who allowed vast inequities to flourish. Most could be returned to their jobs and homes quickly, but it was necessary that this first round be as thorough as possible, no matter who ended up in the net.

It got ugly several times as people rejected their fates but the combination of the police and the Irregulars soon saw caravans of detainees being taken off for a bit of a time-out while the Primes altered the way their world worked. John could feel his body working to supply his mind the energy it needed for this undertaking. He was draining rapidly, his resources weren’t enough to sustain this amount of mental output so as soon as each region cleared he allowed the threads to untie themselves and fall away, the distant tintinnabulation of disjointed voices subsiding. He was exhausted now, it had been hours apparently and he was weak as well as ravenous. “Did we do it?”

“We did it John, you were magnificent.” The love and adulation in Sherlock’s voice were unfettered for all around them to hear. The Guide looked as wan as John felt but also exultant.

“We’ve completed the first step of our plan.”

“Is it fun time now?”
“Oh yes my love, rest for a bit, then I’ll let you kill Brooke and Moran.” Sherlock’s voice was tolerant and fond, indulgently warm as his words caressed John’s ears.

John smiled and closed his eyes again, floating on the rapturous sea of love his Guide felt for him, “Thank you love, I’ll just need a short nap.” It had been a big day after all, a short nap was warranted. They’d just boxed up and shipped off every single participant in the great scheme to oppress the people of their country. Simply removing them was merely a beginning, there was so much more to do. Those two hearts were still beating after all, and John was not yet done. He could feel them beating in the distance, they had no idea he knew exactly where they were and his smile stayed firmly fixed to his face as he drifted off. One short nap was all he needed and then, he’d make some lovely silence.

Chapter End Notes

I love you all for your patience. I am incredibly distracted and I’m so sorry for how long this is taking. You are all saints and beautiful souls for following along.
The Final Problem

Chapter Summary

John and Sherlock are setting out to finish a fight they did not start.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

John slept the night away and woke to a lavish breakfast which Sherlock practically hand fed him, his Guide nearly purring with satisfaction and contentment. After washing up they spent a bit of time just nuzzling and kissing each other but the anticipation was too great, both of them dressed quickly and left their suite to join the group waiting for them in the conference room. John was trusting that the doctor on staff had Bill and Victor well in hand, he didn’t have time to spend seeing them. He’d slept far longer than he would have liked but there was nothing he could do about that now. Mycroft was waiting next to Lestrade, both men tense, “Everything is prepared?” John looked up at the tall man.

“Yes Sir, a car will take you to the landing pad. There are teams waiting to be deployed as ordered.” Mycroft didn’t need to say more than that. John knew how aware the once-diplomat was of his own fragile existence. One unintended detail could endanger John, and Sherlock would not tolerate that. Once mistake could risk Sherlock and if that ever happened, Mycroft was witnessing the tangible result of raising John’s ire. Everything would run as smoothly as he could manage with the resources he had on hand, and in the country, no one now had more access than Mycroft, thanks to his Primes.

“Surveillance?” Sherlock was terse.

“Eyes and ears confirm your suspicions. They’ve gone to ground at the location indicated.” Mycroft’s jaw was set. He wasn’t any happier than Sherlock was that their mother had chosen to shelter Richard Brooke in their ancestral home, openly choosing an outsider over her own flesh and blood. “The entire district has been flooded with our people. Collateral damage will be localized.”

John nodded briskly. He intended no mercy but he wasn’t a mad-dog to go in guns blazing indiscriminately. He was a surgeon, and he would be precise. He had two lives to terminate, that was it. Anyone else who died at his hand would do so at their own provocation, and not John’s. Suddenly he was nearly consumed by the rage of passionate love Sherlock felt for him, his Guide was acutely aware of John’s mental processes, admiration burned just as brightly and it was all John could do to keep from blushing furiously.

Sherlock complained loudly but John made him change out of his bespoke suit and into tactical gear, the Kevlar vest producing an almost childish tantrum as Sherlock protested every single piece of protective clothing John dressed him in. “I am not a delicate flower! John, I will be in no danger.”

Sherlock nearly squawked indignantly as he shouted, “IN THE HELICOPTER?” he was sputtering now, “I am not hiding in the helicopter like a helpless infant. I’m not entirely useless!”

“I know love.” John kissed Sherlock tenderly one more time before brandishing a thigh holster for
a rather savage looking knife, “Like I said, hot.” he winked and enjoyed the resurgence of Sherlock’s blush. Calmly John strapped on various weapons and when he was done Sherlock’s blush had calmed and he was looking speculatively at his mate, “What?”

Sherlock glanced down at his armaments, “How do you know I can use these?”

John shrugged, “Well I can. You can do a bit of what I can do now, I can do a bit of what you can now. It seems logical.” There was very little need for weaponry, but if that’s the way the fight went John wanted everything at the ready.

Sherlock nodded and helped John get dressed in similar fashion. The tall man had a bit of a crooked smile on when they were ready, “You’re right John. You do look a bit amazing in all of this.” John laughed again and enjoyed the short but heated kiss Sherlock gave him before his Guide slung his arm easily over John’s shoulder and led him outside to their waiting vehicle.

Mycroft appeared with a small bundle which he handed to Sherlock silently. When his Guide unraveled it John saw a large variety of metal tools, some thin and twisted, others straight. Sherlock smiled and tucked them in various pockets all over his body and gave John another kiss. There was a lot of respectful silence wherever they left, not one person spoke a word out of turn, and everyone worked with maximum professionalism. John was bemused at first but Sherlock looked around with great satisfaction. John’s blush bloomed against his will when he realized people were eyeing him with something akin to awe, and Sherlock was reveling in it.

Once they were onboard the flight took on a surreal quality because the information they could perceive side by side was almost mind-bending. Flying together was a very different experience, clearly proximity to one another amplified their abilities, and both Primes were wonderfully distracted by examining their environment from a new perspective, not just flying over communities and farmlands, but experiencing minute changes in the weather, the feel of the lay of the land, the populations of not just people but all the living things all over. They passed over the country in an almost dreamlike state as they enjoyed themselves.

By the time they landed John had achieved a state of tranquil serenity. The Holmes ancestral home was only a couple of kilometers away. John and Sherlock stood together in a field of flowers, adjusting each other’s gear until they were both comfortable. Stamping their feet to make sure their boots weren’t going to be a bother John took one more kiss from Sherlock before leading the way through a small copse of trees. He’d never been here before but Sherlock had grown up on these lands, John knew them because his Guide did. Easily John extended himself far outside of his corporeal form, his awareness stretching outward, flowing in an ever increasing sphere until the woods around them sprang up in John’s mind like a three dimensional map. He could see their teams hidden away behind various obstacles. Allowing his senses to range as they needed he opened his mind and let all the information flood through.

The house was massive as befitted its history. It was heavy, made of stone and slate, stately and unforgiving. Armies could dash themselves to pieces on the exterior of such a place if it were locked down but hubris had its place in all things, the locks on the doors could not stop John or Sherlock, and the few people within were never going to be a hindrance. Blinking a single time John walked briskly forward, deftly making his way in near silence toward his target. Sherlock quickly learned how to place his feet as John did, and was soonghosting along in near silence behind his Sentinel. Even if there had been guards John saw a hundred ways to slip around them. Still ever cautious he narrowed his focus along his intended route and discovered alarms along the doors. Sherlock was the one blinking now and a barrage of technical information flowed between the two of them.

Even the dew on the grass did not betray them with damp trails. They made it to the house unnoticed, their senses winding together once again so Sherlock was monitoring everyone inside while John used his knowledge combined with his medical skills to deactivate one device after another. Once completed Sherlock took great enjoyment in picking the lock, mentally reminiscing of all the times when he’d done the same as a youth. John laughed silently and brushed his fingers down Sherlock’s back in a loving caress. He adored his Guide so much, every moment with him was bliss.

The door opened silently and both of them wrinkled their noses as the Richard’s scent wafted out. As with elsewhere the compound had been used heavily, there was no escape from its almost overpowering sweetness. John wondered if Richard realized it had no effect, at least not on the Primes. Apart from making him feel a bit like sneezing it didn’t seem to be hampering him at all. John didn’t need to look around to see what was around him. He could sense servants working in various parts of the house, and deep in the centre, enclosed in a small suite of rooms lounged two men. Realizing the heavy overlay of scent would prevent them from being able to tell one person from the other by their smell was supposed to be a tactic to confuse him, as well as make him suggestible which thanks to his unique bond to Sherlock, had still failed to work. They had no idea he was unaffected. John smiled and loosened his knife. *I love you John.* That addictive warmth was back and John smiled, returning the feeling with just as much ardor as his lover.

Their mutual silence continued and John knew their associates were surrounding the house even now. They made note of the locations of the different men and women but they weren’t who John and Sherlock were searching for. They made their way through one long hallway after another, soundlessly ghosting past one unsuspecting maid or butler after another until they finally stood in a broad corridor that was heavily carpeted and fitted with ancient furnishings and large paintings. Various people were moving around them in other rooms and hallways but right here they were alone. An ornately carved door was firmly closed on a space within but that would hardly hamper John, and Sherlock could vicariously discern information filtered from his Sentinel’s mind. The Primes ignored everything around them, both men listening intently to the conversation inside.
Moran’s voice was instantly recognizable, “Stop pacing around baby, you can’t call anyone until tomorrow, all you’re doing is wearing a hole in Mrs. H’s carpet.”

A high-pitched and heartily amused giggle followed. “Oh Sebby, like I give a fuck what that dried up old cunt says about her carpet, though hand woven Persian is rather special. All I want are her two boys, both of them. *Almost* had them Sebby! Explain to me again what went wrong?” The amusement faded and intense dissatisfaction had taken its place.

Sebastian snorted contemptuously, “Why do you want *Mycroft*? Sherlock I understand, he’s pretty and I don’t mind sharing, but the older brother?”

“Tish tosh Sebastian, don’t be jealous. You know I’m all about what’s *inside.*” the laugh that followed was dark and unstable, “…Mycroft is wicked and powerful, no he’s not beautiful the way the lovely Sherlock is, not on the outside, but inside. Oh yes, Mycroft is lovelier even than his sweet delicious little brother, and oh, to have him in my hand. Mmm, yes my love I know you don’t mind sharing, that’s why I don’t kill you.”

Sebastian’s laugh was hearty and fond, “Whatever keeps you happy baby. Still this was a lot of effort to get a couple of bed-boys.”

“Fucking them is only one of the things I’m going to do, and won’t *that* be fun. They are going to be so very entertaining, why between the lot of us there simply isn’t a single naughty plan that could go wrong, just imagine in Sebby. We could have the world right in the center of our greedy sweaty little palms.”

“You should have killed the Captain when you had a chance.” Sebastian reminded calmly, “I’m telling you, don’t underestimate Watson. He had a real reputation in the army, and doctors don’t normally get reps like that.”

Suddenly Brooke was nearly hissing with fury, “That little usurper! How dare he bond with my toy? You’re right sugar-plum, I should have opened his throat when we took my baby back. Still, how else would I have found out how far they were willing to go to get him back? I had to know, you know I did!” Brooke was almost whining now, petulant and upset sounding.

Moran was almost crooning, “Aw baby, don’t be sad! Everything worked out exactly the way you thought it would, no one else could have laid a trap like that and you did it. It’s not our fault that idiot Mycroft couldn’t keep tabs on his brother! For fuck’s sakes what the hell is so wrong with the chastity collar anyway? At least we could have kept the little bastard from stretching his neck for the first Sentinel to sniff in his direction.

Brooke was laughing in little broken gasps now, “Oh Sebby, I love the way you think. Yes sweetening, we’ll do that next time. Kill Watson for me and we’ll collar Sherlock until we find a better Sentinel for him. Victor was such a disappointment. Oh well. At least he’ll die knowing what a failure he is, him and that simpering nurse he’s attached himself to.”

It was to Sebastian’s credit that he grew still and silent at those words, and even through the barrier between them John could smell Sebastian’s anger and disgust, “Murray isn’t dying, not because of your thing with Victor. He’s a good man, a soldier. He’s earned his free pass a hundred times. No baby, you’re not going to.”

“Don’t tell me what to do!” screamed Brooke, “If I want that late-bloomer dead he will die!”

The Primes felt Moran get to his feet suddenly, his soft voice cold and flat, “James. You are not killing Bill Murray unless he attacks one of us.”

There was a brief silence before the newly verified James answered, his voice petulant and fond at the same time, “I don’t know why I bother trying to keep you happy anyway. *Fine,* your girlfriend can live.”

Moran’s voice was still soft but now filled with the heat of desire, “You are one crazy little shit Moriarty. I love that. You keep me because you like the way I fuck you, and you like the way I kill for you, and you just like the way I say your name.”

“I hate being called *Richard Brooke.* Do you know how many people have tried to call me *Dick*?” the petulance was back but there was no trace of the killing rage that had consumed the small man so recently.

“Six baby, that’s how many bodies we had to bury.” the fondness hadn’t dimmed a bit and John was scowling. *Six people dead because a madman was offended about a nickname?* “Richard Brooke is a brilliant cover, it still makes me laugh. No one gets it and all of them are supposed to be geniuses, what’s with that baby? You’re too clever for them, and I love that too.”

“Sebby you do know how to say all the right things to keep me happy.” Sherlock was working in front of John now, his motions nearly silent but John could hear the tumblers of the lock shifting position, and suddenly the door to the inner rooms clicked open, “The door!” shouted James.

“Fucking hell!” shouted Moran as John and Sherlock stepped into the room together. John recognized Sebastian Moran instantly, his semi-tactical outfit making the dangerousness of him that much more apparent. John also recognized James Moriarty from the sketch that Mycroft had shown them, momentarily marveling at how well his likeness had been caught. James had flat brown eyes, cold and calculating. His suit was simple and elegant, perfectly fitted and sumptuous looking without being overwhelming. John could see why Mrs. Holmes thought so well at him, he fit her shallow standards perfectly. Moriarty’s body was fit and small, he moved with weird grace, almost slipping behind Moran who had produced a knife, “Captain Watson.”
“Colonel Moran.” A pair of sharp salutes were exchanged even as both men positioned themselves in front of their lovers, “We have a bit of business.”

“Do we now?” Moran was easing Moriarty backward toward a wall. “I can’t imagine what.” Moriarty was peering at John from behind Moran, and his face was filled with anger, “Well aren’t you a surprise?” he spat out.

“I’ve been saying that since the day we met,” replied Sherlock happily, “He’s really quite amazing, a game changer. Hello James Moriarty, I’m very pleased to meet you at long last. I do believe making my acquaintance has long interested you.”

“Sherlock. Well, this isn’t quite how I planned starting our new lives together, but it is rather dramatic and I do love drama.” John watched as Moran was nudged forward, with a careful hand John reached behind him and pushed Sherlock back toward the door, their minds linked still I might need to spin or something, I don’t want to get caught on you.

Of course my love, whatever you need. Sherlock melted back gracefully but John could feel his lover loosening his own weapons. With a grim smile John accepted that he might only need to put down Moran. That was fine with him, they weren’t here to ask questions. Two dead men were still standing in front of them and that was number one on John’s “To Do” list for today. Out loud Sherlock replied, “I promise to stay with you until death do us part.”

Brooke/Moriarty laughed with delight, “Clever boy! Oh yes pretty one, till death do us part.” John’s mind unfettered itself once again, unfurling gracefully away from him to encompass not only the house but the grounds as well. The expression on his face must have been very telling because Richard’s face went from gleeful to cautious in an instant, “Something is up precious. Daddy has a bad feeling.” The man’s voice had become a sing-song, his high sweet voice a bizarre indication of the madness within.

Moran went from being arrogantly relaxed to on point within an eye blink. “What have you done Watson?” he demanded in a hard firm voice.

“Nothing you wouldn’t have done in my place Sebby.” replied John calmly. He drew a blade and watched the Colonel grow still. John’s army reputation had definitely preceded him. “I’m putting an end to this. You have threatened my Guide, I’m doing exactly what I’m supposed to do, I am protecting him. I like to do a good job, I enjoy the sense of closure.”

John shrugged. So far nothing was impressing him. Sure this man held sweeping powers and had countless influential people in his control, but right now all he had was a single soldier to keep John from tearing him apart, and frankly John had doubts that Sebastian would be able to be much of a match. Still, better to be prepared so John made sure to let no detail go unnoticed.

People were swirling all around them as everything kicking into gear. Sebastian’s attack was swift and savage, and to John’s surprise James was right behind him, a long wicked blade already in hand. Sherlock! John was determined and Sherlock was unafraid, merely drawing blades of his own. There was no time to worry because a blow of terrific force had just been thrown, one that John deflected just before it landed. Sentinel or not Moran was a real threat. Undaunted John simply did what he’d done before and allowed himself to react to each and every move the man made.

Distantly John saw that Sherlock and James were cautiously circling one another, Sherlock’s inexperience offset by his protective gear. Even an awkward strike would cut through Moriarty’s suit like it wasn’t even there. John had no time to try anything because Moran fought with a savagery John had never encountered before.

Sebastian Moran was a human weapon; that much was clear. Victor Trevor’s skill was pathetic in comparison. This man was a stone killer, hardened in battle, tempered in the dark alleys of Moriarty’s underground empire. The knife in his hand was weapon enough as he deftly sliced through the air, narrowly missing John again and again. Moran shifted from one style of fighting to another effortlessly, simply wearing whatever skills suited him best at the moment and enhanced though he was John had to put real effort into returning some of what he was getting.

Sherlock was in a bit of a spot. He’d been backed into a corner and for the first time a thread of panic was beginning to develop. Without thinking about it John and Sherlock’s minds merged seamlessly once again and suddenly it was like John was fighting two battles at once. The triumphant look on Moriarty’s face was nearly as enjoyable as the look of sweaty concern on Moran’s.

Sherlock was flexible as well as long limbed. Suddenly it was as if he were dancing with the smaller man, and the look on Sebastian’s face was one of horror and desperation as he fought with John to get closer to his lover. It was clear that Moran’s entire being was devoted to the love and protection of the madman who was still trying to extinguish his Guide’s life.

A door opened and John heard a soft inhalation of air before everything turned to madness once again. The room was first plunged into darkness which was actually an advantage because John knew what was about to happen and closed his eyes immediately. He knew there was one more heartbeat in the room now despite the fact that scents, colors, and flashing lights were all doing their best to disorient not just himself, but Sherlock was well. John, Moriarty is gone. I can’t find him. John searched with his mind and located the small man hiding behind a tall china cabinet.

With glee Sherlock practically pounced forward and resumed the fight just as the third mysterious presence attempted to glide up behind John.
The newcomer wasn’t expecting a wide armed blow across their chest which revealed their status as a woman, and John knew he’d found the missing third of the evil triumvir that was attempting to take over his homeland. With a snarl he lashed out again, this time with his foot as he extended himself forward to shove Moran away for a second even as his leg came up directly between the thighs of his new opponent. He could sense the shock of pain from her, and felt a vindictive moment of triumph because even though women weren’t as vulnerable as men, it still bloody well hurt to be kicked in the most sensitive part of your anatomy by steel-shanked boots.

“Bastard!” spat a woman’s voice breathlessly, “I’ll fucking kill you for that.” the woman hissed and now John was seriously pressed to protect himself. Moran and the woman both came at him simultaneously and only John’s enhanced senses allowed him to weave out of reach of flashing blades that attempted to slice and cut at him. He could feel Sherlock fighting, Moriarty was skilled as well, not as skilled as Sherlock sharing John’s abilities but more comfortable with them which the detective was not. Sherlock was still hesitant as he battled, pausing a little too long between attacks, unintentionally opening himself up for attack but John couldn’t spare more than a worried Move faster thought tossed at his lover.

Sherlock moved faster and John focused on the people currently attempting to disembowel him as he pressed his arm forward striking the woman directly in her abdomen. The woman’s scream was answered by a blast of fire right from her fingers causing her to flinch away as her hand was engulfed in flames. John was taken aback by this, not sure if he was imagining things or if she’d actually set herself on fire, but he didn’t have time to ponder it as the new woman leaped forward and John rolled away as her knife flashed down to where his back had been. She dropped to the floor, her shock evident in her gaze as John’s eyes passed over her. John’s eyes passed over her and then he smiled. “Mary don’t.” cried Sebastian weakly from the floor, “Stop.”

“Shan’t. This little puke owes me blood.” Her voice was warm and friendly, a happy voice in other circumstances but right now was not one of those. Mary as she was so named was filled with righteous rage.

“Seb!” Moriarty’s panicked shout caused all three of them to turn to look. Sherlock had the smaller man pinned against the wall. Without pause he drew back his arm, a long knife firmly in hand, and right in front of all of them Sherlock cut the heart right out of the villain once known as James Moriarty.

“JIM!” Horror was in both voices as Mary and Sebastian literally wailed the man’s name out. Sherlock had moved so quickly, deftly cutting the flesh right beneath the man’s ribs, flicking his wrists exactly right there and there before he dropped the blade and extracted the organ he’d just won, brandishing his gruesome trophy to the devastated remainders of his inner-circle.

“I WILL FUCKING KILL YOU!” shrieked Mary. Abandoning Sebastian and John both the small woman ran toward the Guide, producing new knives that she hurled at Sherlock as she moved. It was John’s turn to shout when a small blade struck Sherlock directly over his heart and stayed there. That moment hung in the air, John’s pain and anxiety exploding in a storm of fear and terror like he’d never felt before. He felt it sink into his lover’s body, he felt how it nearly kissed the fragile beating flesh it had been aimed at and silently he said take it out she’s going to strike it home. Neatly Sherlock’s hand came up and he plucked the short weapon from his bosom just as Mary’s fist came forward open palmed. Swiveling on one foot Sherlock stepped away so that she crashed gracelessly into the slumped corpse of the now thoroughly deceased Richard Brooke before he moved back again almost instantly, mimicking John’s earlier pose as he sat on her hips and smiled down at her. “Don’t.” she begged. “Please stop.”

“Shan’t.” said Sherlock pleasantly before he ended the conversation terminally. Mary bled out onto James, her throat slashed wide open by her own knife. “No amount of dry cleaning is fixing this!” complained Sherlock petulantly as he flinched away from the warm spray of blood. “That was a bit dramatic.”

Moran was still on the floor, attempting to sit up as his own life oozed away from him. John ignored him and went right to Sherlock. Using his sleeve to wipe the blood from his Guide’s face John kissed him hard. “You’re okay, sweetheart, you’re okay, so wonderfully alright.” John knew that for all of Sherlock’s external calmness he was anything but.
“You killed them.” Sebastian couldn’t stay upright. He slumped over, “You killed them.” his voice was blank with shock. “Why?” he sounded confused now, his eyes fixed on the lifeless bodies of his partners.

John stepped away from Sherlock slowly to turn toward the soldier now breathing his last. With a slow blink of his eyes John walked toward the dying man, his step nearly predatory as he reached for the last blade he had waiting. Sinking to one knee beside Moran John leaned forward and spoke in a kind voice, “You threatened Sherlock. I won’t stand for that, not ever. You tried to hurt him, and that will never happen. You took him from me and for that alone I would have hunted you down and ended you.” John’s voice was soft, patient. “I’m an honorable man, well, for the most part. I’m going to do you right, don’t worry. You were a good soldier for a very long time, that you chose the path you chose is something I can’t judge but whatever else you did serve once, and because of that I’m going to give you this mercy.” Sebastian relaxed. He lay back on the floor, his body limp and unresisting as John placed the tip of his knife directly over his heart. Their eyes locked and with a single thrust John killed Sebastian Moran.

Sherlock came over, and greedily they clung to one another, their mouths tacky with blood and sweat as they kissed each other hungrily. Desperate hands wandered, assuring each other that their lover was unharmed, that nothing needed tending, that they were both alright. They were.

John allowed himself to become aware of the rest of the house and property once again. The building was filled with their people, the workers inside the building already removed and contained in vehicles outside, their legal status to be determined as soon as possible. Many would be honest servants of the house, long time carers for a property that was otherwise unused. Others would be tied to the now late James Moriarty and they would need to be detained and questioned while all others were released. That was a problem for Lestrade and Mycroft to sort out. “Come on love, let’s leave this place.” urged John softly. Sherlock nodded and put his arm around John’s shoulder to lead him from his old home.

What happened after they stepped out of the building was vague. John and Sherlock were acutely aware of only one another, and though they gave orders and spoke with people the only thought in their minds was the need to leave and to return home. “Find a place to land that’s closest to Baker Street.” ordered Sherlock, ruthlessly commandeering a helicopter pilot, “Now.”

A sharp salute was instantly given and the Primes were led to a small vehicle that already had the pilot buckled firmly in place. Once again John experienced the strange sense of connection as they flew over the fields and communities, but despite that all he could think was Sherlock Sherlock Sherlock and though they were buckled into their seats their fingers were tangled together as tightly as their thoughts. Merging as best they could both men silently whispered words of love and devotion back and forth, sustaining each other during the almost painful wait before they could be inside their haven.

The helicopter dropped them off on the roof of a posh hotel where they were whisked via lift down to street level where a long black car waited to rush them directly to their front door. Anxiously John unlocked it while Sherlock crowed up behind him, the taller man nearly kicking it shut behind them as he urged John to race up the stairs and into their flat.

The second their door was bolted closed John and Sherlock were pawing at one another, fumbling fingers undoing buckles and belts, zippers and clasps, pushing away layer after layer, discarding remaining weapons as quickly as they did their clothes. Their mouths met again and again until they were finally naked and kissing their way to the shower. “John.” this was the first word Sherlock had uttered out loud since they left the chaos of battle behind. “My wondrous Sherlock.” replied the soldier ardently because that’s exactly what Sherlock was, a wonder. How had he existed before this? How had life had any meaning whatever before he’d stumbled into the life of the most amazingly magnificent person imaginable? “So perfect. All mine.” John was almost delirious with worshipful devotion, his lover was so many incredible things, John would never be able to love him enough but he was going to try.

The hours passed in a sensual blur as they took turns worshipping each other. Affection and lust were present in equal measure, neither man feeling the slightest bit fatigued no matter how long their passions ran hot and hard, or slow and deep. They made love. They fucked. They ravished each other in as many ways they could manage. John loved the sight of Sherlock on his knees nearly as much as he loved being on his knees for his lover. He loved feeling Sherlock inside him, could not get enough of feeling his mate entering him with his tongue, or his fingers, or his cock. They drained each other dry, hungry for more, incapable of stopping until a new day arrived and their bodies simply could not take it anymore. They slept.

During the day John sensed Mrs. Hudson creeping about, and later in the morning Mycroft showed up, discreetly waiting in the foyer until his Primes could peel themselves off their sheets, take a brief but absolutely mandatory shower, and make themselves somewhat presentable for public viewing. John didn’t say a word as Sherlock called his brother up, just putting on the tea he desperately needed and gratefully demolishing the large breakfast platter their not-housekeeper had provided. Mycroft waited patiently until Sherlock had also had some tea and at least half a slice of toast before beginning his report. “James Moriarty, Sebastian Moran, and the woman now identified as Mary Morstan have been posthumously charged with endangering Primes and their deaths listed accordingly.”

“Medical experiments for the lot of them.” said Sherlock glily and John nearly spat out his tea with a laughing snort, “I’m not joking John. Have their bodies delivered to Molly and we’ll have them in pieces in no time. You promised me some time in the lab!” Sherlock looked petulant.
“Whatever you want my darling, Mycroft, make that happen.” John was smiling warmly at his young lover who now looked indecently pleased with himself. Mycroft smoothly made the call, clearly unsurprised with the decision. “At least they’ll be useful somehow.”

“Indeed Prime Watson. The family home was filled with their records. Clearly Moriarty had no idea how quickly Prime Holmes would be able to locate him with your remarkable assistance.”

John ate for a while longer and watched Sherlock eat the rest of his toast with an exuberant amount of jam on each piece. “What now?”

Sherlock crunched noisily and looked up at his brother who answered, “Now we put Sherlock’s original plans into place.”

Ah yes. Sherlock had outlined a rather grand scheme days ago, it seemed like a lifetime ago actually. “Do I get a recap? You know I’m not as sharp as you two.”

“That’s what they did. The hours, days, weeks, months that followed were chaotic and hectic as massive changes were instigated. There were gaps at the beginning of course but the Primes were generous with their resources and retained more and more people to their personal service until finally the entire country was connected as tightly to them as the day John had managed to link himself to every Sentinel available. As each issue was addressed other issues found ways of healing and slowly their new world knitted together. The economy stabilized as people grew confident that their homes were secure, that their jobs were well paying, that their children were schooled in safety, and that any problem of any sort could be taken to any Pair on the street and be dealt with.

The homeless network still existed after a fashion but it was voluntary. Anyone who wanted a home or needed help was assisted. People who had once eked out a dismal existence at the bottom of everything were lifted up and taken in but there were many for whom the life could never be given back. Places to eat were plentiful now, many restaurants offered hot meals that were pre-paid by customers for no better reason than they wanted to, so anyone who decided to not find a permanent place to lay their head were still taken care of. Social issues were dealt with, major obstacles to care and healing falling away one after another until health care was freely available, and resources were no longer pinched and stretched further than was useful. John was adamant about that. He knew far too many cases of people who lingered without help, he’d make sure that did not happen again.

During their off time Sherlock revealed in his lab work, gleefully dissecting all three corpuses with Molly’s assistance, grimly reporting gruesome facts to John. Both Primes had discussed and agreed to keep regular work hours, and to try and live a relatively normal life as they could manage despite the fact that they were the two most powerful men in the entire country. Sherlock learned to ruthlessly delegate responsibilities, and no one dared cross John by doing shoddy work. They made time for each other, sometimes spending an entire day in bed together to recoup some of the emotional energies they had expended doing their duty to the people but no one seemed to mind. The great and very obvious love between the Primes was something the people were proud of and sentimental of, and the Pair were welcome everywhere they went.

They met other Primes. Nearly all the Pairs were unequal, one Prime and one Guide or Sentinel of ordinary abilities. A rare few Pairs were full Primes like John and Sherlock but none came close to the London Pair’s raw power except one. Several of the monetary elite had reached far into the east to procure an elderly Pair with a stern and nearly harsh reputation for judgement. John and Sherlock were stopped in the street right in front of their home by a small group of hopefully ordinary abilities. A rare few Pairs were full Primes like John and Sherlock but none came close to the London Pair’s raw power except one. Several of the monetary elite had reached far into the east to procure an elderly Pair with a stern and nearly harsh reputation for judgement. John and Sherlock were stopped in the street right in front of their home by a small group of hopefully indifferent business people who vaguely thought that the elder Pair would somehow displace the London Primes. They were quickly disabused. John stood comfortably at ease though Sherlock was strung tight as a bow, ready to react in any way necessary when the group parted to reveal the theoretical replacements. The Guide was a tall woman with a heavily lined face but raven-black hair. She wore a long red gown that clung to her from throat to ankle, trailing behind her in ribbons that looked like blood. The Sentinel was a tall spare man, thinner even than Sherlock and taller too. His hair was mostly white but his eyes were sharp and piercing, his gaze razing over the Pair in a flicker. “Shura. This is Annushka.” Shura’s voice was gravelly but warm, and Annushka’s eyes twinkled almost merrily though her face remained sober. The Pair clasped hands and to gasps of dismay from their hosts they bowed deeply to John and Sherlock, “Grant us your time, if you will it. We have much to discuss.”

One conversation led to two and an invitation to see their Pair. Since they were traveling far everyone decided to meet in Moscow where the elder Pair would arrange for the London Primes to meet other Primes from other countries and so it began. One cup of tea at a time and John and Sherlock changed the world. One Prime Pair after another listened to their tale, of what they had accomplished and at the end of every meeting they made the same request. John always deferred to Sherlock’s final decision but in the end the answer was always yes. It taxed their internal resources greatly but time and time again the London Pair offered themselves up to create massive Pair Links to clear cities, towns, and slowly over time, entire countries, of the poisons that were killing them. It took their entire long lives but they were glad to dedicate themselves to it, solving
the greatest mystery of the ages, how to gain peace.

At the end of their days John and Sherlock knew their final moments were coming and that was fine, all fine. Their hearts beat nearly in tandem so when one stopped so would the other. They would never be parted, not even for that. They’d lived a rich and full life, they’d met all their goals, and together they changed one last thing. No longer were organizations like the Tower above the law despite all the good that had resulted from John and Sherlock’s reign. Such power would not always rest in the hands such as they two, so carefully they re-wrote the laws and guidelines, ensuring that the people would be cared for, that the Pairs and Irregulars would always be there as saviors and support and not as monitors and guards. When it was their time to go, the world would be ready to continue without them…but not yet.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who waited so patiently for this final chapter, most especially dilvin who has invested the better part of a year waiting for this. Much love to all, I hope this story caught you up.

End Notes

Note from the author:
http://distantstarlight.tumblr.com/post/125131965560/distantstarlight-on-a-creative-break

Thank you to everyone who has sent me emails and suggestions in all the various ways I receive them. I’m currently working on wrapping up my most recent story (Liminal) and after that I will be taking a much needed break. I’ve produced a lot of stories in the last two years and I need some time to mentally churn over the next large batch of stories I’m working on. While I enjoy posting as I create I’ve slowed down significantly due to Real Life and feel it’s a bit unfair to leave my readers hanging. I need time to recharge, to get my head organized, and to just live for a bit outside my brain. I’ve been struggling for months with productivity and have finally admitted to myself that I simply cannot keep going day and night the way I’ve done in the past.

Thank you to everyone for their story ideas and prompts. I have a WIP list that is tremendous, and while I would love to produce every single plot-bunny that hops my way I simply cannot. Despite my vast ego I’ve had to admit I am but a single person who needs to do things like eat and sleep and make my life go.

as always you can email me directly at distantstarlight@hotmail.com or you can hit me up on twitter at @distantstarlite

I’m not super great about answering back immediately, again I need a break and I’m having a hard time making it to those day to day tasks like answering fan mail, which I absolutely love to get, I live off of them, I swear I do. Your words are sustenance to me, I welcome them. I’m just being up front about my inability to be there 24/7.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!