

Available Evidence

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/131996) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/131996>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Sherlock (TV)
Relationship:	Sherlock Holmes/John Watson
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2010-11-07 Completed: 2010-11-08 Words: 5,202 Chapters: 1/1

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by [lamardeuse](#)

Summary

John is the one mystery Sherlock can't solve.

Notes

Thanks to expectprism for most thorough beta and Tora for most excellent Britpick. Any remaining errors are mine.

Written for Mav and the help_pakistan auction.

When they got back to the flat, John immediately collapsed onto the couch, his head flopping against the back with a faint thud.

“Fuck,” he breathed (interesting, that; Sherlock had never heard him use the word before this, not that it was impossible he'd said it before under duress, being a military man), “I would really, really love a cup of tea.”

Standing in the middle of the living room, mind running on three tracks at once, it took Sherlock a moment or two before the meaning of John's words sank in. Track one: speculating on just how badly Lestrade and his minions were bungling the pursuit of Moriarty (best guess: extremely). Track two: replaying those four point six minutes before the police arrived, the scene splintering at dozens of different points as he played a macabre Choose-Your-Own-Adventure, looking for a path by which he saved John and himself without eleventh-hour intervention from Scotland Yard (conclusion: inconclusive, damn it).

The third track was nothing but annoying, distracting impulses, creating a white noise that helped to derail the other two. He was constantly fighting to keep his hands still and at his sides, when they itched to gather evidence: evidence that John's skin was still warm, that his heart still beat, that he was still pushing air in and out of his lungs.

Unnecessary, he told himself firmly. It didn't help.

“Tea,” he said suddenly, “yes, excellent idea. I'll make some.”

He heard a snort as he turned toward the kitchen. “I wish I weren't so bloody tired. I'd get my camera.”

Oh, shut up, Sherlock thought. He didn't say it aloud, then immediately wondered at himself.

Welcome to impulse control, John's voice drawled in his head.

“Oh, shut up,” Sherlock muttered, but he wasn't sure if John heard him. When he turned back round, John was asleep.

“Mmmnnngggpphhh,” John said.

It was a measure of how exhausted he was that he only made this much noise when Sherlock eased him carefully onto his bed. Sherlock stood for another few moments – in order to ensure John settled properly, he told himself – then turned away when it began to become impossible to write off as simple concern.

“Sh'lock? Wh –”

Sherlock stopped but didn't turn. “Good night,” he said.

There was the rustle of sheets. “Is this your bed?”

Sherlock turned to him with a raised eyebrow to see John propped on his elbows, blinking at him dazedly. “Less effort than dragging you up the stairs.”

John stopped blinking. “Less than leaving me on the couch?”

“You snore horribly when you fall asleep in a sitting position. And I might need it later.”

John frowned. “What you need is sleep.”

Sherlock lifted his chin toward the window. “I should be out there looking for Moriarty. The police will only cock it up.”

“They're following your advice.”

“Exactly. They're following; he'll run circles round them. They need someone who can think on his feet, who can *anticipate*—”

“Sherlock,” John said, quietly enough that Sherlock shouldn't have heard him, but his name spoken in that weary voice was like a gunshot. “He outsmarted us – both of us – tonight, but it's all right.”

“How could that possibly be all right?” Sherlock snapped.

John sat up. His gaze was steady and calm, as though he hadn't just spent half the bloody night strapped to two kilos of Semtex, and Sherlock found himself unable to look away. “Because our friends came through for us. And that's why we'll win in the end: because a bastard like him doesn't have any of those.”

Sherlock shook his head once, as much to clear it as to negate John's statement.

“Look, whether you want to admit it or not, Lestrade is a friend. He cares about you –”

Sherlock's jaw twitched. “No. I don't mean that.”

“Then what?”

Sherlock clenched his fists at his sides. He was out there somewhere, he was out there and he nearly – John nearly – “It’s not enough. I need to be better.”

“You will be. But not until you’ve had some rest.” At Sherlock’s huff, John added, “Look, I know you don’t like to think of yourself as human, but we’ve been running ragged for days now, and not even you can withstand that much sleep deprivation.” John leaned down and removed his shoes, tossing them onto the floor, then took off his jumper and discarded that as well. “Come on, then.”

“Come on...” Sherlock repeated, confused, as he watched John lie down again.

John patted the side of the bed closest to Sherlock. “Come on,” he insisted. “Doctor’s orders.”

“You’re ordering me to sleep with you? People will talk.”

“People do little else,” John shot back. “Don’t worry, I’m too knackered to molest you.”

“It does my heart good to know my virtue is safe,” Sherlock drawled, but his heart was hammering as he toed off his shoes.

“Glad t’hear it,” John returned, already drifting back into sleep. By the time Sherlock joined him on the bed, he’d rolled onto his side toward Sherlock and was snoring softly. Sherlock was sure he wouldn’t sleep, but when he reached out and found John’s wrist in the dark, the pulse pounding strongly just under the skin, he plummeted into unconsciousness like he was falling off a cliff into deep water.

Of course, the trail was cold in the morning, but if Sherlock wanted to be honest with himself (which he was, always), it was cold the moment Moriarty escaped. A split second of inattention when Lestrade and his team despatched the snipers and Moriarty was gone like a puff of smoke in a strong wind. While Sherlock tried to remain furious at himself for allowing it to happen, the feeling was swiftly superseded in the coming days by his grudging respect for the man’s ability to vanish. More than a decade’s worth of practice in catching criminals had taught him that no one could disappear completely; not even a person of Mycroft’s talent and resources could avoid leaving some sort of record of his existence. But no matter how many rocks he turned over, there was no indication there had ever been a man named Jim Moriarty.

One of the most promising leads, of course, was Molly; he'd wanted to question her himself, but Lestrade refused to allow it, and John, damn him, backed Lestrade up. "The poor woman's been through enough," he said, when Sherlock confronted him about it. "To be interrogated about a man who used her by a man who – well."

"Well, spit it out," Sherlock snapped.

John pursed his lips before speaking, the way he did whenever he was contemplating an assault on an entrenched position. "She fancied you. Probably still does. Having you ask her all sorts of intimate questions about Moriarty would be the ultimate humiliation."

Sherlock drew himself up. "If you're trying to make me feel guilty, it's not working. I'm not responsible for her schoolgirl fantasies."

"I'm not trying to make you feel anything. That doesn't change the fact that Moriarty got to her because she was vulnerable."

"So what are you saying?" Sherlock snarled, rounding on him. "That I should spare everyone's *feelings* and let Moriarty slip through my fingers *again*?"

John looked at him for a long moment. Sherlock resisted the urge to squirm, but it was a close run thing.

"You're going to get him," John said quietly, "and I'm going to help you every way I can, because he is a *monster*. But I will not help you by letting you become him, in even the smallest part. Do you understand?"

Sherlock blinked at him; there was an odd feeling in his limbs, as though they might float free of his body at any moment. "I don't think –"

"You think too much," John said, still in that same soft tone. "Try feeling. It can be surprisingly rewarding." He walked over to his chair and grabbed his jumper. "I'm just popping out to the shops. Be back in an hour."

"John –"

"Don't worry, I'll bring the Sig with me," John said, mouth quirking to one side as he tugged the jumper over his head.

John was gone forty-eight minutes. By the half hour mark, Sherlock was pacing the flat, and by the time forty minutes had gone by, he was glued to the window, fingers tapping a frantic staccato on the glass. At fifty, he had been planning to start throwing things.

Feeling, he was sorely tempted to tell John when he returned, *is highly overrated*.

By the time a week had passed, it was clear that Moriarty had gone to ground, at least for the time being. While the police continued their investigation, John suggested that Sherlock take a break.

“A *break*?” Sherlock demanded, words insufficient to convey the depth of scorn he felt for this idea.

“Fine, not a break, exactly,” John said, raising his hands as though placating one of his hysterical patients. “I mean, *think about something else* for a while; it might help you to come at this a different way. You've no new cases, so perhaps a study of some kind? Nothing involving heads in the refrigerator, mind you,” he added hastily.

“Usually the studies are related to a case,” Sherlock said, and if there was a smidgen of petulance in his tone, it was wholly intentional.

John scrubbed at his face. “Forget I said anything,” he murmured, and the weariness in his voice was strangely alarming.

“Have you been sleeping?” Sherlock demanded, stalking toward him until he was standing beside John's chair. John lifted his face from his hands, startled.

“Like a top. Why?”

Sherlock peered at John's face, searching for evidence to confirm or deny John's statement. John only gazed calmly back, face completely open to Sherlock's scrutiny.

“Well?” John asked after a time. “Am I telling the truth, then?”

Sherlock straightened. “You always tell the truth,” he said.

“Do I,” John murmured. “Then why would you check to see whether or not I was lying?”

Sherlock smirked. “Because there's a first time for everything.”

John chuckled at that, and suddenly it struck Sherlock that he may have a worthy subject for study after all.

Three days later, Sherlock was no closer to solving the mystery of John Watson than he had been to finding the key to Moriarty's whereabouts. In a world where very little tended to surprise him, this was frankly shocking. He'd been certain that finding the motive for John's crime would be no more than a minor diversion. One might say that John was not a criminal, but had the police ever bothered to pursue the matter, they would have likely at least brought him up on charges for the shooting. And while not a crime, the willingness to sacrifice himself for Sherlock's sake at the pool was mystifying, to say the least, and Sherlock felt they were of a piece, since the intended result – Sherlock's continued survival – was the same in both cases.

Sherlock had rarely found it difficult to discover a motive when dealing with other people. Most crimes, Moriarty's included, were the result of fear, greed, lust, or some combination of the three. None of those applied in John's case. He had the usual panoply of fears that most humans were burdened with, but they didn't seem to dictate his actions in the slightest. He had no craving for money or power, and it would seem no desires beyond the stunningly mundane ambition to pair off with a stunningly mundane woman and possibly produce a litter of stunningly mundane children.

True, John did have a fascination for adrenaline-charged thrills, but this was not a sufficient motive for trying to save Sherlock's life in either case. In the latter, had he lived and John died, John's need for further excitement would have come to a rather abrupt end; in the former, John could no doubt have moved on from following Sherlock to other pursuits such as skydiving or drug abuse. And so there had to be another motive, one that Sherlock had not yet discovered. Altruism was as much of a myth as heroism; everyone, in the end, wanted something.

“Oi, Earth to Sherlock. Sherlock?”

Sherlock looked up from where he was sprawled on the couch to see John peering at him from the kitchen. “Yes?”

“You've been at it long enough. Time to rejoin the living and help me make dinner.”

“I'm not hungry,” Sherlock muttered, turning his gaze back to the ceiling.

“You're never hungry; that doesn't mean you don't need to eat.” John's face loomed into view, the expression that familiar mixture of exasperation tempered by a doctor's built-in empathy for the defective. “Come along, I'll let you use the big knife.”

“Oh, fine,” Sherlock huffed, because resistance was simply too much effort. He was soon set to work chopping vegetables for a stir fry, which John added to a sizzling wok as they were

prepared.

“I didn't know we owned a wok.”

“That's because we didn't until yesterday. I bought a couple of new pots and such. Also, some new food containers.” He pointed to a cupboard to the left of the stove; it now bore the label *NOT FOR EXPERIMENTS*.

Sherlock rolled his eyes, and John laughed.

“Next you'll be putting a padlock on it to keep me out,” Sherlock muttered.

“Nothing quite so drastic. Might be an idea for the fridge, though.”

“Oh, for God's sake, it was *one head*.”

John raised an eyebrow at him. “You really should listen to yourself sometimes,” he murmured, then handed Sherlock a corkscrew. “Open the wine, will you?”

Sherlock stood stupidly for a moment with the implement in his hand. John was seemingly absorbed in shifting the vegetables round in the wok, and wasn't looking at him. The tips of his ears, Sherlock noted, were slightly pink.

Sherlock realised he was staring and shook himself. “You bought wine?”

“Yeah,” John said, nodding, eyes still glued to the hob. “Nothing fancy, but it should go nicely with the stir fry.” John's ears were now decidedly more pink, though whether this was due to the steam rising from the wok or something else, Sherlock couldn't be sure.

Sherlock opened his mouth, snapped it shut again. “Right, yes,” he managed, “I'll just – get that,” he finished lamely, his mind already careening down a new and unexpected path.

“Solved your mystery yet?” John asked, a couple of minutes later as they sat down at the table to plates heaped with stir-fry and steamed rice and a cheap but palatable chenin blanc.

“No,” Sherlock replied. Looking down at his dinner, he was surprised to realise he was ravenous. “Maybe. I don't know.”

“You will,” John said, with that simple confidence in Sherlock's abilities that had struck Sherlock from the first. Raising his glass, John waited until Sherlock followed suit, then smiled. “Cheers.”

As Sherlock took a sip, it occurred to him that he really should have figured this out two days ago.

Sherlock set aside the problem of John Watson for a short time when a not terribly interesting yet lucrative burglary case landed in his lap. He had it solved within twenty-four hours, which impressed the American client so much that he signed over a handsome bonus. Sherlock thought this was rather generous considering the thieves had turned out to be the man's wife and her lover, but Americans tended to be a little odd that way.

After that, he tried applying himself to the problem of Moriarty's whereabouts again. He combed the papers and the news blogs, analysing the nature and geographic distribution of crimes throughout the country, but came up empty. He widened his net to the Continent, then to North America, but no pattern emerged, nothing that bore Moriarty's distinctive stamp. Either he was truly lying dormant or he'd found a new way to disappear. It was infuriating.

In the middle of all this, John began leaving the flat for longer periods, to work (though Sherlock paid the surgery's receptionist to let him know when and if John left the building during the day, and when he returned) and then to dinner with Sarah. And then one night he returned early in the evening and switched on the telly to some foreign film about circus performers, which he switched off again within three minutes.

Sherlock considered asking if John were all right, then realised to his horror that he was about to enquire after someone's feelings. He sat and watched John instead, while at the same time trying not to appear as though he were doing so.

John stared off into space for half a minute or so, then blew out a breath and said, "Have you gathered enough evidence, then?"

"I – I don't –" Sherlock spluttered, caught completely off guard.

"Good," John said smartly, springing to his feet, "then I'm for bed."

"John, wait," Sherlock said. When that failed to stop him, he added, "please." John paused, his back still turned to Sherlock.

"I just need," John said. "I need to be alone, all right?"

Sherlock came up to stand behind him. He watched his own hand, as though it belonged to someone else, reach up to hover over John's shoulder before finally falling to his side once more.

"She didn't end it," Sherlock said, the realisation striking him full in the face, "you did." He couldn't say how he knew: something in the weary tone of John's voice, the taut line of his back. It was as though being this close to John made his thoughts less susceptible to the

definitions of language, sent his brain tumbling down pathways guided by instinct rather than reason.

John turned round at that, nodding. “Well done, as usual.”

“You always try to be so *noble*,” Sherlock almost spat. “What's the point of that?”

“None, I suppose,” John answered, gaze piercing as a drill. “Just seems the thing to do. Anyway, it could very well be selfishness, couldn't it? Wanting to avoid the inevitable letdown when she became tired of wondering if today was the day I got myself killed.” He barked a short laugh. “You know, I was grateful that I wasn't in a relationship when I was deployed to Afghanistan, because it's so hard on the other person. But going to war makes more sense to most people than – this.” He made a gesture between them on the last word, and Sherlock's heart thudded against his ribcage, like a prisoner slamming his body uselessly against iron bars.

“It makes sense to me,” Sherlock murmured. John tilted his head to look at him, because Sherlock was standing very close.

John smiled, and this time it was genuine. “That's hardly a recommendation, you know. But then, I suppose I should be grateful there's someone else who understands my particular brand of madness. Perhaps even shares it to some extent.” He reached out and clasped Sherlock's bicep, and Sherlock felt completely staggered by it, as though John had punched him in the solar plexus instead. “Well, good –”

Which was as much as John got out before Sherlock kissed him.

Despite Anderson's endless speculation about Sherlock's supposed preferences – or lack thereof – Sherlock was possessed of a sex drive. Unlike most other people who were helplessly dragged round by their hormones, however, Sherlock's brain had always been more than equal to the task of keeping them under control. As a result, he'd lived thirty-four years on the planet without ever allowing his reproductive organs to dictate the terms of his existence. Relationships were difficult, annoying, and far too much of a distraction; other people were whiny, needy and demanding; sex was messy and ridiculous. He had no use for another person sweating all over him when his right hand would do equally as well, and required none of the social niceties.

Which was why, if he'd bothered to think about it, he would have been quite distressed to contemplate exactly how much he was enjoying this.

“Sherlock,” John murmured. He sounded half-drunk, drugged, perhaps because they'd managed a fair amount of kissing by now, perhaps because he had the faint imprint of Sherlock's teeth in the skin of his neck where Sherlock had bitten a tad too enthusiastically. Sherlock's hands were undoing John's shirt buttons, and John's hands were light on his waist, fingers flexing as if unsure of how they'd got there. “Sherlock.”

Sherlock reached the last button and slid his palms slowly up John's torso, noting the fine tremor as he passed, the surprising tautness under the thin layer of fat. He bent to kiss John again as he pushed the shirt off John's shoulders, then tangled both hands in John's hair to angle his head the way he liked. John stiffened for a moment, then relaxed, following Sherlock's direction. His hands moved up to cradle Sherlock's ribs, the shirt cuffs still bunched around his wrists, and Sherlock sighed into his mouth.

“Do try to keep up,” he murmured, pulling back and unbuttoning John's cuffs for him, then tugging the shirt off the rest of the way. He looked up, and his attention was caught and held as surely as a rabbit in a snare.

It was uglier than he'd expected, not that Sherlock usually assigned aesthetic values to wound scars, but it was – yes, ugly, marring the pale, freckled skin of John's shoulder. Someone had hurt John, and Sherlock wanted – he wanted to –

Kill the person who tried to hurt him? That's rather ironic, wouldn't you say, considering you nearly killed him yourself two weeks ago; there would have been nothing left, nothing left of him, you almost missed this–

“Oi, Sherlock!”

Sherlock's head snapped up. “I'm sorry,” he murmured. He tried to lean in again, but John placed a hand against his chest, stopping him. He was clear-eyed now, watching Sherlock far too closely.

“God, if ever there was a time I wish I knew what was going on in your head,” he said, not unkindly. His fingers splayed over Sherlock's heart. “You're bloody magnificent, but you can't leave me behind here. I won't survive it.”

“Don't say that,” Sherlock snarled.

John stared up at him calmly. Finally, he nodded. “All right then,” he said. Sherlock felt John's hand move, then looked down and saw him pop one of the buttons on his shirt.

“There,” John said when Sherlock's shirt lay in a heap on the floor, as though he'd put the kettle on for tea, “just needed a moment to catch up,” and then he reached up to tug Sherlock down once more.

Sherlock's brain catapulted him from sleep with a revelation so startlingly perfect he nearly wept with it.

“Scotland!” he shouted, sitting upright. “Bloody Scotland!”

“Christ!” John's voice beside him – oh, yes, John. Sherlock had a momentary flash of memory from last night – the shockingly delicious weight of John's cock in his hand, John's short fingernails digging into Sherlock's back, John gasping lovely, ridiculous nonsense as he shook apart – but he resolutely shoved it aside.

“Moriarty's in Scotland. Don't ask me how I know, I'll explain later, send you a text.” He swung his legs over the bed, rose to his feet – clothes, clothes, clothes – everything was crumpled on the floor, had to get a new shirt and trousers from the wardrobe – “Ring Lestrade, would you? Tell him to contact the police in Fife, I'll meet them at the Edinburgh airport – no, Dundee, Dundee, it's closer to where I'm going – at –” he snatched up his mobile and began searching for flights, flights, flights –

“You'd better be booking two tickets.”

Sherlock's fingers stilled on the screen. “No,” he said.

“Wrong answer,” John said, and Sherlock could hear the rustle of sheets as he rose from the bed. “Look at me.”

Sherlock considered being contrary – it was a habit, so it would be no effort at all – but decided to risk setting a precedent. John's gaze was understanding, but that emotion was wrapped around a layer of steely determination that Sherlock had come to recognise and – value. Yes, value.

“I know you heard what I said last night,” John murmured, stepping closer. “And you might need to delete information off that massive hard drive of yours, but I'm assuming it's usually stored for at least twelve hours.”

“There's no need for you to come,” Sherlock said flatly.

“That's not the reason you don't want me along.”

Sherlock's jaw clenched. “I don't have time –”

“Sherlock, it wasn't your fault that Moriarty kidnapped me. That you had to make the decision you did.”

Sherlock clenched his fists against the trembling in his hands. “Is that your studied medical opinion?” he tried to sneer.

John, damn him, refused to rise to the bait; in fact, he hardly reacted. It was as though he'd been expecting it, as though Sherlock had become thoroughly predictable. “Are you any better qualified to assign the blame?” he asked softly.

“Yes, actually. I was Moriarty's intended target. I strolled into his lair unprepared. I nearly – I nearly – God, this is intolerable,” he snapped, turning away. John's hand shot out and wrapped firmly around his wrist, halting his progress.

“Bit annoying, this caring business, isn't it?” he murmured.

Sherlock turned back to look at him. “Frustrating,” he corrected. “I don't enjoy things I'm not – good at.”

“Yeah, already caught that,” John said, quirking a smile. “I'd say you're doing just fine, actually.”

Sherlock stared at him, but John only looked back at him with that same steady calm until Sherlock could do nothing else but sigh in a put-upon fashion, signaling his surrender.

“That's better,” John murmured, giving Sherlock's arm one last pat before releasing him. “You know there's nothing else for it; we get into too much trouble when we're apart.”

Sherlock couldn't help a small smile. “And far more when we're together.”

“Mmm,” John agreed, a spark in his eyes that hadn't been there twenty-four hours ago; it rather floored Sherlock to realise he'd been the one to put it there. “But it's the fun sort of trouble.”

It was completely anticlimactic.

Moriarty hadn't been expecting him – which Sherlock found extremely insulting, incidentally – and thus had set up only the most basic of defences around the seaside cottage he'd made his hiding place. There had been no hired guns this time, which made it even easier for the Fife police to take him, though they could have done without the driving rain and chill wind that Sherlock half believed the man had conjured to lend at least a little drama to his arrest.

“You've not seen the last of me!” Moriarty screamed, practically frothing at the mouth as he was led off toward the waiting police van. “I'll destroy you, do you hear? I'll be the death of you!”

After they'd bundled him off, Sherlock hunched a little deeper into his coat. Damned Scottish weather.

“That was far too easy,” John said, coming up beside him. “Why was he alone? The bugger has enough money to employ a small army, after all.”

“Because he couldn't trust any of them not to betray him.” Sherlock inclined his head at the van as it drove away. “A fortnight with no one but himself for company and he's completely –” Sherlock repressed a shudder and shoved his hands into his pockets.

There was a light touch to his back that he felt through the coat. “What are you thinking?” John murmured.

“That I could quite easily become him,” Sherlock said flatly.

There was a pause. “No, you couldn't,” John said.

Sherlock rounded on him, suddenly angry. “You can't possibly know that.”

John met his gaze without flinching. “I do. Because I know you,” he said, with such conviction it leached the anger from Sherlock's bones and replaced it with something warm and unfamiliar.

“Do you?” he murmured, holding John's gaze and watching the faint flush rise in his cheeks.

John glanced in the direction of the police, then leaned closer. “You're an open book.”

“I always fancied myself somewhat mysterious.”

“Oh, I'm sure you are to most. But as you once said, there's a first time for everything.”

“John,” Sherlock murmured, stepping closer. John tipped his face up, smiling, and he was drenched and bright-eyed and *beautiful*.

“Come on, let's get out of this rain,” John said, and this time Sherlock followed his lead.

“So what triggered your sudden revelation about Moriarty?” John asked, hanging up his sodden coat in the hotel room wardrobe.

Sherlock tossed his own coat over the back of a chair – earning an eye-roll from John – and stepped closer to him. “I’m not exactly certain,” he said, “but I think it had something to do with the strenuous physical activity of the night before.”

John stared at him, his jaw dropping. “Are you saying that all you needed to clear your head was a good shag?” he spluttered.

Sherlock bit the inside of his lip briefly, then moved forward, crowding John back against the wall. John glared up at him but allowed himself to be crowded, which was all the sign Sherlock needed. He could almost laugh at how easy it was; why had he ever imagined this to be difficult? “Apparently sex is marvelous for freeing the subconscious,” he said, deadpan.

“Git,” John said, clearly fighting a grin and losing. “But seriously, why did you kiss me last night?”

Sherlock brushed his lips against John's ear, relishing the resulting shudder. “Because you wanted me to.”

Before he knew what was happening, John had planted his hands on Sherlock's shoulders and pushed him back. “What the devil are you talking about?” John demanded, frowning up at him.

“Oh, don't be coy. It was obvious,” Sherlock said. “You were mad about me.”

“I was – for Christ's sake, I had just called it quits with Sarah barely two hours earlier. I didn't have a bloody clue which end was which; I certainly wasn't *mad* about you.”

Sherlock stared at him. “You –”

“Now look, I don't mean to hurt your feelings. It wasn't as though it hadn't crossed my mind – bit hard for it not to have, with everyone assuming we're a couple – but until you kissed me I'd never seriously considered it.”

Sherlock shook his head. “That's not possible.”

John watched him for a long moment. “Oh, my God. You – *deduced* that I fancied you? You studied me as though I were one of your cases?”

Sherlock swiftly decided that anything he could think of to say would probably not be well-received, so he held his tongue. After a moment, John burst out laughing.

“It's not funny,” Sherlock muttered, stung. He took a step back, but John's fingers dug into his shoulders, stilling him.

“No, it's not funny, it's brilliant,” John said, grinning up at him. “I mean, you knew what I wanted before I did; that's pretty sharp, even for you.”

Sherlock looked down at him. “Now you're being facetious.”

“No,” John assured him, hands turning gentle as they slid into his damp hair. “Not even a little bit. Kiss me, would you?”

“Why?” Sherlock asked, leaning down in spite of himself.

John smiled against his mouth. “Because you want to,” he murmured, and Sherlock found he couldn't argue with that logic.

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