

Eventide

Author: CK

Rating: P18

Summary: Sometimes you needed to lose everything first before you dared and bravely walked into the unknown.

Disclaimer: Leave it all to the BBC, Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. I'm actually quite happy with them having it - even if the BBC could be a bit quicker with passing it on to us.

Author's Notes: Sequel to "Sunrise", fifth and last part in the "Solace" series that explores how it goes on from this story and John and Sherlock's new arrangement. Can be read as stand-alone story.

The pictures were going to stay with them forever. They would never forget that case. John and Sherlock both knew it as soon as they arrived at the crime scene - one with a broken body lying at the foot of a high building. They shouldn't have been there; they shouldn't have been called in. Lestrade would have known; but it was DI Dimmock investigating the case, oblivious to the bigger picture, only realizing what he had done when it was too late.

From the rooftop the victim had fallen - jumped or pushed, it didn't matter then. All that mattered was that this was their past. Pictures and memories buried in their minds were dragged out violently, back into the light, into reality and awareness. Not that they had ever really been gone. But pretending had worked well in these past months.

Sherlock expected rejection. And John... John expected nothing. Only that things wouldn't change. Because enough had changed already.

The case was solved quickly; it was murder indeed, not suicide. Not that it helped the two friends much, whose wounds were ripped open once again. Wounds once sustained by things done wrong, decisions made without considering the outcome; wounds that had closed after Sherlock's return, but never entirely healed.

The weight on both their shoulders had suddenly increased tenfold, and when they returned home in the afternoon hours, no word had been spoken for a while, and wouldn't be for another. The air between them was filled with things unsaid; things that couldn't possibly be limited to the restriction sentences posed. They just followed their routine, making tea, checking e-mails, updating the blog, awaiting Mrs. Hudson's obligatory visit that, much to their mutual relief, didn't come this day. Her cheerfulness the two men couldn't have taken; not in an emotionally charged atmosphere only waiting to be acted upon.

It hit John then that they had never really talked about what had happened. He had shown his anger and disappointment for a while, but then readily accepted Sherlock back in his life, because he knew all too well that he needed his friend. Living without him had been torture enough, had come close to driving him insane even, the dreadful loneliness eating at him - just as did the guilt he had always felt over not preventing the Fall, and Sherlock's defamation that he had believed led to it.

Sherlock, on the other hand, had been glad the subject hadn't been brought up again so far. He was not the one to talk things through, not when they concerned matters bar logic; matters of feelings, emotions. Now, however, he expected a word on what they had skillfully avoided to address for nearly a year. May John have been angry and resentful in the weeks after his friend's return, they nevertheless had mostly foregone saying much about it, until one day John, and with that both of them, had moved on. It stopped being of importance; it stopped being an issue urgent enough to bother with.

Facing their past that apparently wasn't as *past* as they had made themselves believe questioned their non-decision to leave the subject behind, though. It made Sherlock wonder if he shouldn't rethink events, after all, and he saw how it made John retreat into painful memories of an unforgettable loss.

The evening flew by and heavy silence threatened to suffocate them as they went through routines that were a mere excuse for... *whatever*. They danced around each other, even physically, trying not to get too close to the other when they moved around the room. It was ridiculous, that much they both thought of it, though neither tried and changed it. Two, maybe even three hours their avoidance went on like this - until, eventually, it was John who broke the silence with a frustrated growl.

"Sherlock, listen--" he began, but was almost immediately interrupted.

"I'm sorry, John," the other man said, his voice tinged with nervousness, and received an irritated look in return.

"I know."

"No, I--" Sherlock let out an exasperated sigh, for once annoyed by his own emotional incapacities. "I don't think you do. I was always sure of my own decisions. I rarely, if ever, had reason to doubt them. When I... went away, I knew it was the right thing to do. I still believe it was. Yet I never considered the outcome for those around me, for... for you. I'm not familiar with people caring for me, especially not strangers outside my family. I told you once that I don't have friends; I never had any, never for long, never... never like," he motioned between them, "this." Heavily the detective sat down on the couch, looking up at John who stood rooted to the spot, his facial expression changing between emotions so fast that Sherlock couldn't keep up reading them. "What I did - it was to protect you, as well as Mrs. Hudson and Lestrade, but it was also... it was to get away. I couldn't understand it and I was..." he took a deep breath, searching for the right words, "afraid that one day, sooner or later, I'd lose you. My only friend. So I rather made the decision on my own, to consciously know when it would end; to be... prepared."

"But you couldn't have known what Moriarty was planning." It was a statement, not a question. John had gone over facts and events again and again, piecing together every last bit of information he could find; he knew that as clever as Sherlock was, there were a few details that had been unpredictable.

"I had... you would call it a hunch, I think. Despite several variables, there were only so many turns and paths the situation could take. And I knew Moriarty well enough to only include the most dramatic ones in my calculations. I knew for sure how it would end the moment we met Richard Brook."

"Why didn't you just tell me? Why, Sherlock?" Even though John's voice was shaking a bit, it - he - was much calmer than either of them would have expected. The detective saw the tiredness in his friend's eyes, his demeanor, and how all he wanted was to understand. He was past anger, past disappointment. They had moved on from this part of their lives a while ago now; this was just about smoothing the page that had remained crumpled, and closing the chapter, hopefully finally finding at least part of that inner peace they longed for so much.

"I was hoping it would be easier for you if you turned away from me just like everyone else. I didn't... Your... loyalty and your faith in me... I had no idea they were so strong." Sherlock rubbed his hands over his face, turning his head to look out of the window where dark grey clouds were visible over the rooftop of the building across the street.

John opened his mouth to answer, and then snapped it shut again right away. He wanted to tell his friend that he should have known - and then reminded himself that this wasn't any random person. Sherlock wouldn't have known. He *didn't*. Whatever had destroyed his confidence when it came to other people and the truthfulness of their affection towards him, it apparently weighed so much that no matter how often John confronted him with his trust, no matter that Sherlock himself even had acknowledged their friendship, the genius still doubted it. And more than ever, the doctor's heart ached for this man who knew so much, but not the beauty of true companionship.

Finally able to move again, John took the few steps towards the couch and lowered himself next to Sherlock. He turned to face his friend, and nudged him to do the same.

"Know one thing, Sherlock - us being friends means that I'll be there for you. At times I'm going to be mad at you, I'm going to yell at you for another body part in the fridge, another experiment messing up the kitchen, or another moment of socially questionable behavior. There'll be other times I won't talk to you because I'm angry, and there'll be times I'm gonna be out for hours on end just to avoid you." The younger man beside him straightened his back, ready to defend himself, but John didn't give him the chance to speak when he, after a small pause for emphasis, continued, "But never, *ever*, doubt that I stand by your side, or that I believe in you. You can trust me, and you can trust that before I don't see actual, believable, *very damn good* proof that you've done something that isn't easily forgiven, I will never *not* have faith in you. I'm your friend, Sherlock, your best friend - and you are mine. You are the most important person in my life, and to convince me that you are any less the man, the good man, I know you are, requires more than anyone can probably ever come up with. I have no intention to leave, and while life's not always predictable, you can at least make the best of it, and I hope this is exactly what we're going to do. Together."

Sherlock stared at John for a long while then, his mind reeling, the gears in his head turning so fast they would have caught fire, hadn't they just been element of a figure of speech. He progressed his friend's words, familiarizing himself with them; understanding them, bit by bit, ever so slowly. When it came to relationships, he had always been full of doubt; he didn't know it any other way. Facts, figures, science - those Sherlock relied on, had never been disappointed by. People, on the other hand, had rarely given him reason to let his guard down, to allow them to secure themselves a place in his life; his *heart*.

In time he had learned that John was not *people*. That there was a difference in what he could expect of the one person who didn't just call him a freak and turn away again upon meeting for the first time. But the part of him that was ever-apprehensive of feelings, of relying on another person as vital part of his life, had once again dominated his willingness to just this once trust and believe it was real. By now he knew it was, and this knowledge had managed to become stronger than any resentment of interpersonal attachment - and any distancing himself from friendships; from relationships.

The man sitting next to him would be there, come heaven, come hell, and Sherlock finally recognized this to be infallibly true. He was his friend, his best friend, and whatever happened, he could be assured of his support and presence - and his affection.

"Let's go to bed, shall we?" John then said, a smile in his eyes where it didn't yet pull at his lips. And suddenly there was something else entirely. A yearning, an indefinable impulse to pursue what Sherlock believed would be the ultimate validation of their connection. The demand inside him for it was strong, and confirmed him in his idea.

There was a bond to seal.

Their showers, taken separately, didn't take more time than necessary. They both sought each other's presence, emotionally raw after their conversation, but at the same time more convinced than ever of their companionship, and everything it entailed.

John emerged from the bathroom to find Sherlock already in bed; lying on his back, staring at the ceiling. He turned his head when he heard his friend enter the room, and shifted aside, lifting the blanket for John to crawl beneath. They settled down, both on their sides, looking at each other; anxious, thoughtful, hopeful. It could have lasted moments, or hours, or even days, this silence between them, this wordless communication. Time didn't exist. Just them. And their reassurance that they were both alive and well. But this reassurance came with yet another question they hadn't addressed earlier: was it enough?

To John, it wasn't. He had seen Sherlock die, and for three years lived with the thought that he had lost his best friend. When he returned, John at first hated the younger man for putting him through all that pain and misery. But anger soon gave way to overwhelming relief, lifting a burden off his shoulders, his very soul, he had thought he'd have to live with for the rest of his days. And then came their arrangement and with it one feeling manifesting itself: The need to keep and to protect. Sherlock was never to leave him again, not as friend, not as the one person completing him. It was what had led them to this point - the moment when they were about to cross the last threshold, dip over an edge they'd been dancing along for weeks now. Yes, they had cuddled and kissed, but this... this was different. This was the final step, and there would be no turning back from it; not for John anyways. And he would make sure that it was the same for Sherlock.

He didn't know that there was no intention of turning back; that Sherlock was ready to take that step. Was ready to walk the path that was going to lead from there also. They'd come a long way; going from flatmates to colleagues to friends; drawn to each other, at first out of their need for companionship, and later for comfort. They were two lonely souls who hadn't dared to hope for another to accept them like they were, and be willing to share days and nights, laughter and danger, adventures and routines.

It was new to Sherlock; it was nothing he had expected to ever find. He knew he wasn't considered a normal person, even though he had never understood which definition of 'normal' people could possibly apply to anyone, as humanity was a portrayal of diversity. But normal or not, he wasn't one to indulge in relationships, let them steal his time. They never bore that kind of importance to him.

Curiously enough, with John it hadn't been a distraction so far. The sharing of a bed, the closeness, the kissing. It had also stayed in the bedroom; whatever happened in that room happened in another world, one detached from their daily lives as cohabitating consulting detectives. Logic told him that he didn't have to worry about distraction now suddenly coming to pass only because they entered into sexual relations, something that had always kept him from pursuing the same; his life offered no room for diversions he saw no primary use of.

Now he faced needs he was new to, and felt ready to initiate something he hardly knew anything about. Of course he had had his share of... experiences; after all he'd been a youth ruled by hormones at some point as well. His memories of it, however, were anything but favorable. It was unpleasant and embarrassing; it had made him decide that women and sexuality in combination were of no appeal to him. It was an unsolvable mystery; years and years of trying, albeit occurring irregularly, had led him to the conclusion that the absence of logic didn't support insanity - doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. Later he understood that he'd been nothing but a toy, oblivious and easily used to learn and research, but never to appreciate.

There was no second thought about what he was to John - his friend had made it more than clear. And nothing put Sherlock more at ease in the prospect of what was to come than his faith in John and their mutual affection.

Gently, carefully, Sherlock pressed his mouth to John's, all but awaiting a reaction; a permission. He pulled back, barely a breath away, when at first there was none, but it couldn't have been more than the fraction of a second the older man's hesitation that was none lasted.

There was nothing innocent to the kiss that followed then; nothing exploring like it had been in the past days since their first accidental lip contact and then continued practice of the same. It was frantic and sloppy and *life-seeking*, because after the emotional affirmation, they both needed to know that they still had each other physically as well. And they would, for as long as they were going to be able to manage - to hold on. For the moment, however, all that mattered was that they were together, and that, right then, no one was able to separate them.

John gave a surprised grunt when Sherlock grabbed his hips and, struggling a bit because their mouths still clung to each other, pulled him atop his own body. And then John felt it - the helpless attempt to push down his pants, and the younger man wriggling to get out of his own. It was when he almost violently forced himself to interrupt a kiss he didn't want to end, and looked down at his friend.

"Sherlock, are you sure?" he asked, and wondered where from his lungs got the air to speak.

"John?" was the reply he got, a question in his friend's voice just as it appeared in his eyes.

"If we do this... I want it to be real, I *need* it... to be real."

"I don't think I understand. How is this not," he felt the word on his tongue for a moment, "real?"

"No, I mean... I need you to really want that. If you have doubts, if it is only because of what happened today, if you rather not--"

"There are no doubts, John."

"Just... please don't think you have to do it."

"I don't." John exhaled, then swallowed hard, ready to draw back. But Sherlock hadn't finished yet. "I want to," he added, and the doctor blinked twice in confusion, then let a small smile tug at his mouth. The man beneath him pulled him down and stole the smile off his lips, intending the kiss to be quick and simple, only to let it soon grow more passionate.

How they managed to discard of their pants during their mouths' ongoing erotic entanglement they never knew afterwards. Not that it was of any importance. What counted was the feeling of naked, heated skin pressed together, and of each other's proof of how much they both wanted what they were about to do.

It was Sherlock's slightly clumsy fumbling that made John's stomach flutter. Lying beneath him was a man who was almost ethereal in his appearance, a fascinating accumulation of intelligence, soul and stunning beauty in ways that were by no means natural to a man; or possibly any human being, at all. The attributes he found in Sherlock he had always only seen and deemed attractive in women; had only been able to appreciate in women. Pale, smooth skin, drawn-out lines, pronounced edges that yet finished the picture perfectly - it was as if an artist had let his brush dance across a canvas with loving accuracy, but freely nonetheless.

So much was different about Sherlock; so much was different *with* him. And just as much was right. He was the person John found himself drawn to, had for a while now, in ways he had never expected, hadn't believed possible, when they met all those years back. He was the man who had saved John's life, had broken his heart, and then revived him once again. He was the one John knew by now he wanted to be with, come what may, and in every way possible.

But Sherlock was also a man who was inexperienced; new to all this, actions and feelings equally. He learned as much as he taught, began to understand as much as he was confused by. There were so many things John wanted to show and teach Sherlock; so many things he must have missed out on his whole adult life. John knew of his friend's hesitation when it came to any kind of relationship, romantic and sexual ones especially, and now it was for him to introduce Sherlock to it - how could he not want to make it the best experience possible for the younger man?

By now he was so familiar with this body; he may never have touched in the way he did this evening, with the intention of intimacy, and yet it was nothing that scared him anymore - neither the touch itself nor the prospect of what he was about to do.

For the first time, he didn't spare the small, hard nubs on Sherlock's chest when he kissed his way along its expanse. He closed his lips around one of them, licked it almost curiously, as if he had never felt something like this against his tongue before; and in some way, he hadn't. His mouth didn't press against a supple, full breast, but firm muscle; still soft nonetheless, but entirely different. He stimulated first the one, then the other, caught them between his

lips to nibble gently, and pressed kisses to them, his thumb always occupying the one he had to neglect with his mouth for the moment.

Sherlock remained curiously silent through it all, and John couldn't help but steal a glance up to the other man's face. He swallowed at what he discovered. The handsome face was caught between concentration and bliss, between confusion and pleasure. His eyes were closed, but still moving hectically behind their lids; his lips were open, just a bit, and still swollen and red from earlier; his tongue snuck out now and then, the curious tip leisurely sweeping along full cushions.

Before him was a Sherlock he had never seen like this. They had seen each other at their best and their worst, but this... this was new. So gloriously new. This was intimate to a degree that the sheer sight set off a burning sensation low in John's stomach, a familiar yet just as unfamiliar feeling that was addictive.

For now, though, this was about Sherlock. About getting to know these new sides of him, in every sense of the word. His hands spread along the other man's flanks, John moved lower from where he'd yet been exploring the chest with his mouth, slowly but surely aiming for areas he hadn't touched before.

It wasn't a soft and gently cushioned belly he was met by; in all his leanness, Sherlock was also muscular, though not overtly, the abdominal bumps almost flat, but John nevertheless felt their strength, especially now, as they rippled under his touch. He had felt it before, whenever he had soothed his friend, but only now he allowed himself to really revel in the feeling of these firm lines and planes, and their reaction to his caress.

Only now he also took his time to inhale the barely noticeable scent of soap, the light flavor of freshness he had caught whiffs of before. Sherlock disliked all kinds of heavy odors on a body; they were unnecessary and meant for mating at most, in his opinion. John smiled against his friend's skin as the thought that maybe, he was right, entered his mind; an intrusion of his senses was one of the last things John would have needed now.

Having been rather quiet until now, Sherlock began to wriggle and writhe when John's fingers stroked over his hips and then stopped to rest at the sides of his buttocks; finding that the younger man lifted his middle just enough for John to slip his hands a bit more around his backside. A sigh escaped Sherlock's lips then, and John couldn't help but squeeze the firm rounds, kneading them a bit while his mouth worked further down and then along the crease between hip and right thigh. His tongue snuck out to draw along that line, down until his cheek bumped against the full sack in Sherlock's groin. He was rewarded with a gasp, and pulled up again, letting his lips once more wander over this gorgeous belly. Then he lifted his head.

There was no hesitation, and no reason to hesitate either. He wanted this. He wanted it so much, because he wanted *him* so much. His best friend, his closest confidant, the person his heart belonged to, the man he couldn't live without. It had taken him so long to realize it, and for a moment he flinched at the feeling of the tightest knot in his stomach, the actual pain it caused, when he thought about all the time they had lost. About how all this very nearly never had happened. About chances almost missed, and then, by some divine decision and genius intervention, given for a second time.

As he settled between Sherlock's thighs, John couldn't help but stare at his lover's - his *lover*, the thought made him close his eyes for the fraction of a second - hardness for a moment. Of course he had seen other men's penises in the past - but never like this. Never fully engorged, resting against the stomach, in expectation of attention. From him. It was a strangely beautiful sight; lean just as the man himself, but not too thin, and in his eyes of just the right length, being a bit above average. Flawless he was even inclined to call it.

It started as an experiment. He knew what he himself liked, and he knew the anatomy. He could have used this to systematically try and find out what worked for Sherlock. But he really didn't want to approach a moment like this with logic - and so he just went for it. Slid his tongue along the shaft and ended with a kiss on the underside of the glans. Then gave the slit there a short lick. And just in time freed his hands to catch Sherlock's hips when they bucked up.

"John..." the detective moaned, long and deep, and the doctor felt a shiver run down his spine. From the corners of his eyes he saw how the other man's hands grabbed the sheet beneath them and buried themselves in it, with the obvious need to have something to hold on to; so he carefully let go of where his own hands held the body beneath him down and sought out Sherlock's, lacing his fingers with his lover's.

"It's okay, Sherlock," he soothed, his breath grazing his lover's arousal, before he once again let his tongue wander from base to crown. A drop of liquid glistened atop the dusky pink head, inviting to be licked away before it would drip down, and John followed the invitation without much of a thought. And froze. That *was* different. He had never tasted it; never tried his own, even. His curiosity had never gone so far. It wasn't as unpleasant as he might have expected, but it also wasn't going to be his most favorite of tastes. It needed some getting used to - that much was obvious.

Unwilling to let go of Sherlock's hands just yet, he relied solely on his mouth to enclose the tempting hardness in front of him, swallowing first the tip, feeling it around his mouth and tongue, then taking in more of it - as far as it would go. Far away it sounded to his ears when Sherlock panted; only the pressure around his hands made him consciously aware of the effect his actions had on the younger man.

Instinct was what guided him. In fact, he had no idea what he did, or had to do; only that he wanted to make it good, memorable, for his lover. Carefully he sucked, nudged the sensitive glans against his palate, and felt with his tongue along the underside of the shaft, brushing and rubbing lightly rough texture over smooth, stretched skin and bulging veins. The longer he went on, the more saliva and pre-come coated the hardness, making it easier for John to slide it in and out of his mouth, a motion that soon became a natural rhythm he actually enjoyed. Now one of his hands unwillingly left Sherlock's, and his fingers wrapped around the base, supporting the movements of his mouth, covering the part that wasn't enclosed and caressed by lips and tongue, the latter curious enough to seek out spaces beneath the erection's head, just along its corona, lapping at it with the tip, what forced John to once again use both hands to hold Sherlock's hips down so he wouldn't thrust his length down his lover's throat.

"John... stop..." he heard the strangled whisper from above, and lazily drew back, letting go of the hardness he immediately missed having between his lips. "Too much," Sherlock drawled, voice deeper than ever, thick with lust.

Gliding the tip of his index finger along his lover's erection, John pressed a kiss right next to it into the nest of dark, wiry hairs, before murmuring, "What do you want, Sherlock?" A whimper was his answer; a helpless sound of someone faced with something he didn't fully understand. How was the younger man supposed to know, how could he have possibly put into words what he desired?

Curling his hands into John's armpits, Sherlock pulled with weakened muscles, indicating that he wanted him up again. John crawled back atop Sherlock then; he had never done this before either, so it wasn't as if he knew exactly what to do. The theory was, as usual, further away from reality than he could ever have reckoned. He didn't consciously think about what he was doing; he just followed his body's demands, and it made him align himself with his lover's body - bringing their erections together. He gave them both a moment to get used to it; the feeling of meeting in this intimate way, of having their arousals brush against each other, the heat and pulsing from them spreading through both their bodies until they didn't know anymore where one's ended and the other's began.

It was too soon to attempt penetration; he didn't know whether Sherlock was ready for it, but John himself sure wasn't yet. There would come other times; he hoped, no, he was confident about it. And there was still so much to explore. They didn't need to rush. This was something they both had to explore, each in their own way, and yet in the end, they both were new to it; and John definitely wanted to take his time, because this was too good, too intense, and too special to miss anything out just because they were impatient.

The thought, however, reminded John of something. Detaching himself from Sherlock a little, he reached over to his bedside table and pulled open the bottom drawer, rummaging blindly through it until he found a small, slim bottle.

It wasn't as if he needed lubricant anymore. Ever since he and Sherlock had started sharing a bed, masturbating in the same would have been too weird. Not that the fact that his need for pleasuring himself had subsided considerably in these past months was any less strange. If he had really felt any desire he would wait for the privacy of a shower.

Even so, had he never thought of throwing it away; it had always been there, had belonged there, in his bedside table. It was a habit, and now John was glad he had held on to it because all of a sudden, it was about to become very useful.

An irritated huff escaped Sherlock's throat when John sat back on his heels, the cool air of the bedroom hitting the detective's heated, damp skin in a very uncomfortable manner. He was about to protest - but every sound except for a series of incoherent ones died on his lips when a hand, slick with mildly warm gel, wrapped around his erection, and provided a whole different feeling to what he had been given till now, as it stroked deftly, before it was gone again all too soon.

When the hand went away, Sherlock unwillingly opened his eyes and lifted his head, looking down along his body to where he found John kneeling - between his opened thighs, in the process of squeezing more lube into his hand. He didn't expect what followed, though. Sherlock couldn't have stopped his moan - or was it a primal growl? - had his life depended on it. The picture of John taking his own hardness in his hand, thoroughly embalming it with the clear fluid, was one thing - his lover's thrown-back head and opened lips, and the expression of utter abandon, however, affected him in ways that made every last muscle in his body tense, overwhelming him with impulses and needs his brain failed him to deal with.

Like a puppet on the strings of feelings and hormones he sat up and wrapped his arms around John, holding him tight when he fell back down and capturing his lips as soon as they were lying again, the doctor atop Sherlock, his arms first flailing in surprise, but then settling alongside the younger man's shoulders so his hands could frame this beautiful face and his thumbs stroke irresistible cheekbones.

Where tongues entangled, hips shifted on their own accord, aligning erections once again until they were nestled side by side. Without thinking much about it, John began to move his body, a thrusting motion he repeated once, twice - and then stopped.

Oh God.

How could he, a sexually experienced man, not know this? Not know *of* this? Of this feeling when his hardness rubbed along another, while it brushed his own and the other person's belly? When the corona of his glans rippled over different surfaces, over skin and tiny hairs? When there was no way to predict where friction would be felt next, and how it was achieved, as the wetness between them let their shafts glide past the other in an ecstatic dance?

What he felt was different from a hand, a mouth, from lips and tongues. This was firm yet soft, rigid yet moving, with him, against him. One taut silky length brushed another, and John lifted his hips just enough to allow them both room for just that kind of repeated touch as he thrust and rolled his hips, while Sherlock frantically sought more of it. He made the man above him yelp when the rapid and uncoordinated snapping of his hips made them lose contact more than it actually caused it. Burying his face in the crook of his lover's neck, John tried to soothe the younger man, but to no avail.

Sherlock was too uncontrolled, and too far gone, when he arched his body, pressing their bellies close together again and trapping their erections. Every movement sent shocks through both men now, the friction nearly unbearable, and it caused their almost desperate jerking and thrusting to escalate.

John felt when his lover lost the battle - or won it, maybe - and tumbled over the edge, his arousal swelling even more, before coating them both with slickness as he spilled between them. Sherlock's climatic yells and groans resonated deep in his throat, as they did in every cell of John's body, making him shiver and shake in time with his lover's convulsing hips, and let him finally experience one of the most intense orgasms he had ever had - not necessarily on the physical side, but emotionally, he felt the drain more than he had in decades of sexual activity. He clung to the man beneath him, kept their bodies as close as possible, the contractions from their orgasms grinding their pelves together, until it became more than his hypersensitive nerve endings could take, as could Sherlock's, judging by the younger man's weak attempt to pull his still twitching hardness away just as he tried to keep John close. With much effort the doctor lifted his hips to shift to the side, but then decided to simply turn both of them around so that they came to lie on their sides, continuing to hold on tight, but stimulation lessening.

To kiss each other came natural to both of them when they leaned in at the same moment and captured the other's lips, and John smiled into the caress as they leisurely brushed their mouths and tongues together while hands roamed aimlessly - just to touch, to feel, to not have it end yet. Panted breaths were exchanged, their lungs demanding room to draw air in, but pulling away seemed out of question; what a faraway and foolish thought it was to not lie skin to skin, and remain a unity.

Eventually, they reduced contact nonetheless, at least between their faces, to look at each other. From under heavy eyelids Sherlock took in John's features, glistening with sweat, covered in a pink hue, and felt this unsettling and yet calming emptiness in his mind. Although, it wasn't entirely empty - for there was one person occupying it, and a rich diversity of feelings belonging to this person. Sherlock moved his hand from where it rested on John's hip up to place it over his lover's heart, feeling the still-quickened beating, gently curling his fingertips into the skin, as if he would be able to fold his hand over the organ that symbolized life, and keep it safe this way.

"Okay?" he heard John's voice, but missed the movement of his lips, as his eyes were locked onto the man's before him, unable to look away. A thousand things he should have thought of to reply with; a thousand explanations and analyses was what he had done in each and every situation, for so many years. But this was a novel occurrence, and an exemplary also, leaving him, while still confused, with an equally pleasurable, content feeling that, even though experienced only once, was already becoming addictive.

Closeness. Tenderness. Intimacy. Care and affection. How had he ever foregone this? But he knew right when the question entered his mind - he had never had anyone like John in his life. No one to trust. No one he *felt close to*. No one to stir and challenge his mind and heart in the same powerful way. John was the exception.

He nodded then, as an answer to a question that could have referred to this moment just as it did to their lives. Yes, he was okay. They were okay.

What once started as the oddest of relationships had now become an inseparable partnership, a connection of two people who found strength and comfort in each other. They had gone from strangers to friends, and from friends to lovers - but most of all, they had gone from the bitter assurance that they'd remain alone to unshakable certainty that they were now two halves of a complex whole they'd fight to never have torn apart.

END