

Moonshine

Author: CK

Rating: P12

Summary: Sometimes, routines changed.

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 "Nightfall", second part in what is now a series that will explore how it goes on from this story and John and Sherlock's new arrangement. I'll try and write the sequels so that each can be read as a single story, but of course you are welcome to read the other parts as well ;)

I usually don't do sequels, but I felt tempted - as I do a lot recently when it comes to John and Sherlock - and really needed to get more into writing them.

I still struggle a bit with it, because ten years and more than 100 stories have never seen me write slash and especially no, ahem, slash adult material, so I take the long way together with John and Sherlock because I think they are perfect for a slow build-up.

Five months ago they had come up with the most unconventional of arrangements. Five months ago they'd made a decision that hadn't really been one, but more a mutual agreement that never needed any agreeing upon. Five months ago they'd become closer than either of them would ever have expected, and yet, despite their closeness, they never crossed lines that should have been hard to resist.

Five months.

For five months John Watson and Sherlock Holmes had been sharing a bed. Not for the fulfillment of sexual needs, no; not for romantic reasons either. They were not a couple. They were just friends. Friends who found comfort in the other, late at night when reality caught up with them and the rush that blurred the harsh truth of the horrors their daily lives held slowed down. Friends who sought a warm embrace in their sleep, to assure them that they were safe from harm.

To Sherlock, being so close to someone bore a fascination that didn't seem to wane, even after such a long time. That he not loathed what he, for more than three decades, always had done his best to avoid he still failed to understand. It wasn't as if suddenly he allowed nearness to everyone; quite the contrary. He'd even become more aware of people standing too close or touching him when he wasn't prepared, and it repelled him greatly.

With John, it was different. His friend and flatmate was like a constant his rational mind understood he needn't have to fear. He had become a part of him, physically and mentally, an extension of his mind and body he felt incomplete without. None of his logic explained what he felt, and yet he was merely astonished by it, willing to accept it, explore it further, and learn about it as much as he could.

The doctor, on his part, knew that his inability to grasp what was happening between him and Sherlock should have bothered him. It didn't. He was sharing his bed with another man on a regular basis and didn't give it so much as a second thought. There once was a time this would have been different; but now he found himself accepting it readily, as if he had never expected anything else for his life. Gone were complaints about the lack of a girlfriend, and gone was the need to actively pursue a relationship with a woman. He was content as it was, and where it should have at least irritated him, he saw it as a natural given at most.

Still, their routine couldn't have been any more peculiar. There was no talking, no conscious acknowledgement of what they did. There weren't whispered words before falling asleep, or good night kisses. There weren't shared blankets or pillows, nor the neglecting of nightclothes. There was no lying in bed a little longer after waking up in the morning to savor the feeling of a partner's body and warmth. Instead, as comfortable as it was, it was purely functional. They went to bed, got into one of their regular positions, fell asleep, woke and got up. Even a good

morning was only shared in the living room, or over breakfast. Sometimes it was as if their arrangement didn't exist at all; as if it was part of another world, another *them*.

But those things stored away in silence always found a way to make themselves known; found a voice, so to speak.

For John and Sherlock it was the first nightmare in five months, one that violently rose Sherlock from his slumber, and thus also John. A scream passed the younger man's lips, followed by panted breaths that John feared would end in hyperventilation. A hand on the shoulder was supposed to calm Sherlock's tormented soul, but unable to recognize his friend with his horror-ridden consciousness, he shoved John away before he began to fight a losing battle against air.

It took John much effort and more force than he felt he had the right to use to pin Sherlock's frantic form down and get his mind to return to reality. Confused eyes stared up at him, a moment of unguardedness, before clarity set in and the detective relaxed. Immediately John loosened his grip, lay down next to his friend and waited. He didn't ask for explanations or for him to talk about what had been terrible enough to disturb him that much after he hadn't had any bad dreams in five months.

He didn't expect Sherlock to talk either. It would have surprised him if he had. This was not the genius' way of solving problems; *talking*. Not when it came to his innermost thoughts and emotions. About cases he would go on and on, bouncing ideas off his flatmate - whether he was in or not. Personal matters were a whole lot different though. Maybe, one day; but not today, and not tomorrow.

John was proven right when Sherlock wordlessly turned towards him to snuggle into his side, indicating that he was about try and fall back into unconsciousness. His blanket had ended up in a pile on the floor, and to the doctor the most logical thing to do seemed to be spreading his own cover over his friend's body. What was a shared blanket after months of sharing a bed anyways? There really wasn't anything to it; even though the difference was significant. The outline of Sherlock's long, slim figure, the body heat... he had never felt it like this.

Nor hadn't he the hand sneaking under his pajama top to come to rest on his waist.

For a moment, the older man didn't know how to react. Whether to react at all. This was not any normal person at his side. This was someone who didn't recognize any special meaning in actions such as touching the bare skin of another past clothing. This hand resting on his body's side wasn't there to caress, to initiate anything John may have thought of as inappropriate - even though he wasn't sure whether this was a term definable and applicable for them in any way. These fingers, pressed motionless against his skin, apparently only wanted warmth and assurance beneath them.

So John let them remain, and when a cheek came to lie against his shoulder, he reciprocated by bringing his hand to find its place on a slender yet muscular upper arm, seeking a way past the borders of clothing as well and sliding beneath the short sleeve of Sherlock's t-shirt.

With each of them having claimed the other's bare skin under their palms and fingertips, they finally returned to their well-earned and once again undisturbed slumber.

Two nights later they had left any hesitation that may or may not have been there behind when they lay down face to face, a single blanket covering them after they had abandoned the second an evening earlier once and for all for reasons of convenience - as they told themselves - and placed hands firmly on bare skin wherever they found some. Even legs began to tangle, albeit only by shins and feet coming to lie on the other.

If he was honest to himself, John was only mildly, if at all, surprised when a week after that Sherlock appeared in the bedroom sans t-shirt. Much less did he wonder about how his friend managed to urge him, without words or obvious actions, to shed his own top piece of clothing and snuggle into his embrace, back to chest, naked skin on naked skin, warmth and softness and firm planes of muscle merging to a unity of everlasting comfort.

Occasionally hands would start to caress in the following days. The first time it happened it worried John; he let his hand glide up and down Sherlock's back, and when he realized what he was doing, he experienced a moment of anxiety because he thought he had crossed a line. That was until Sherlock mimicked his motions, nimble fingers drawing along his spine, as if learning shape and position of each vertebra, one by one. On the detective's side it wasn't actual caress; and on the doctor's more an automated movement than conscious action.

In conclusion, John decided, there was no reason for concern. It was just routine, after all.

They solved crimes together, he blogged about it, and they shared a bed solely for comfort reasons.

There really was nothing out of the ordinary.

FIN