

## Sunrise

**Author:** CK

**Rating:** P16

**Summary:** Every once in a while, fate decided to intervene. Every once in a while, fate went by the name Cupid.

**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 "Daybreak", fourth 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.

---

A warm, golden glow filled the room when he entered it.

All night they'd been awake; working, investigating, searching for clues, leads; a murderer. Half an hour ago they had finally solved the case, both of them returning home exhausted. Nonetheless John had declared that he had some errands to run, and left again, despite his near-inability to keep his eyes open.

Thanks to John insisting on him sleeping more regularly, thus also serving their arrangement of sharing bed and comfort on a regular basis, Sherlock wasn't used to nights like this one anymore. Of course did cases still have a priority and he would put solving them over personal comfort any time. But those nights in which he'd lie awake on the couch, and when he wouldn't sleep for days on end, were over - that much John had made sure of. As a result, being up for more than twenty-four hours really did exhaust him now, and made his body demand sleep quite vehemently.

His limbs were so heavy it became a strain to even shower, and he finished his routine in half the time he usually needed. With effort he closed the curtains, shutting out the sun that seemed all too cheerful and *awake*, and felt his limbs gave out entirely the moment he was in reach of the bed, relieved to be able to rest. Yet deadly tired as he was, sleep wouldn't come to him.

For several months now - six of them, plus four days - he hadn't slept alone. Every night a warm body lay next to him, for him to hold or be held by, close and secure. Every night listening to long, even breaths taken by the man at his side would carry him over the threshold to slumber.

Now that John wasn't there, Sherlock's mind refused to leave the waking world, even though his body begged for it.

What was it that held him back from finding sleep? Had he become too dependent on his friend? On his presence, the comfort he provided night after night? For the first time in months the detective felt something akin to doubts rise inside him; doubts about something he hadn't even given much of a second thought to in the beginning, save for their very first night. There had been a constant in his life for the past half year; had been there for even longer before that, despite his own absence. And constants and routines were what his existence depended upon. How had he ever allowed to let an incalculably factor take the place of one of these constants?

With his mind racing, there was no further thought of finding rest, so Sherlock mobilized his last energy, pushed back the covers and got up. Perhaps it was time to reconsider.

---

The staircase seemed endless this morning. He'd been up for too long, had walked, *run*, too far, thought too much. He had given up counting the hours, but it must have been more than a full day; maybe even more than one and a half of that. He had to drag his feet from step to step, each appearing higher than the last, and when he finally reached the first floor, all he wanted was to sink to the ground and stay there; not move another bit.

He didn't though; the prospect of a soft bed and the warm body next to his was of too much appeal. The shopping bag in his hand he dropped in the kitchen, not bothering to unpack it; only the milk he put in the fridge, and heard rather than saw the door of the same close, being already half out of the room and on his way to the bathroom.

When fifteen minutes later and at least a bit revitalized - never underestimate the power of hot spray on sore muscles, he had known that since his days in the Army - he emerged and entered the bedroom, it took him a moment to realize that something was missing. Or someone.

"Sherlock?" he called out, irritated. Where was his friend? Shouldn't he have been in bed, if not even asleep? There were not many places to look, and before he got an answer, he had already found the other man in the living room - sitting on the couch. "Sherlock?" he repeated, quieter this time, sensing that something was not right. "Why aren't you in bed?"

It must have been the first time John openly addressed their arrangement - even if indirectly - with words, and outside their bedroom. He noticed it as a side thought; it was like entering new territories - or like doing so consciously after wandering around them for half a year without acknowledging obvious facts.

There was no earthquake, no sky falling down onto them, no disruption of society and humanity. Nothing of which he might have had expected, had he allowed himself to. Most of all, however, there was no Sherlock fleeing the scene so he wouldn't have to speak about anything. And that he actually *had* been concerned of.

Instead, Sherlock simply glanced to his side, took in John's appearance - damp skin and hair from the shower, clad only in pajama bottoms, barefoot: clearly ready for bed. The doctor saw the wheels in his friend's head turn and knew he must have recognized what seemed to have been lost on him before. John took it as cue to turn and start for the bedroom once again; certain that he had brought his friend back from whatever faraway place his mind had gone to.

He was halfway down the hall when he noticed that Sherlock didn't follow him. They never needed to invite the other, or point out that they were heading to bed other than what John had just indicated by appearing before Sherlock shortly; there was an automatism there that had worked well ever since their arrangement had begun. No, that his friend remained on the couch had to have some other reason.

Walking back slowly, he waited for Sherlock to look up and properly acknowledge him. Nothing happened; not even the earlier side glance anymore. His flatmate just stared ahead, hands folded under his chin, eyes wide, gaze lost. Confusion accompanied him when John sat down next to Sherlock and faced him, wondering for a moment whether he should break the silence. Their case was solved; there was no need to fall into a deducing meditation, as John had dubbed it in his mind. Yet it seemed to be exactly what had happened to the consulting detective.

"I seem to be losing my independence." The words came out of nowhere; they didn't even sound like spoken by a person, least of all the one beside him. It was a hollow voice of a troubled soul.

"I... don't think I can follow." It was then that he received acknowledgment in form of a look - alas a disapproving one. John answered with an eyeroll. "I've been up for just as long as you have. And I don't have your brilliant brain. Humor me."

"I can't seem to sleep anymore when you are not around."

"Ah." John gave Sherlock's revelation, the concern it obviously was supposed to be, a moment's thought. But may it been for his sleep-deprived mind or *his mind*, period, he couldn't see the problem. "And this is bad because...?"

"I've become dependent on your presence, which is an incalculable factor. I can never know whether you indeed will be there whenever my body requires sleep. It did earlier, and yet I couldn't find rest because you weren't there. This is a very... unsettling development."

In theory, John was able to understand what his friend worried about; he had to rely on someone else to have a basic need fulfilled whereas it should come natural to everyone, and without aid in any form, especially to a healthy person like Sherlock. Instead, the genius detective couldn't sleep for the sole reason that his friend wasn't with him. It ought to have upset someone like Sherlock Holmes, that much the doctor had to admit.

"Do you want our... *this*... to end then? Return to how it used to be *before*?" His own answer to that question John was very sure of. Nothing he wanted less than their arrangement to end. Half a year and he had become so used to having Sherlock next to him whenever he went to bed that he couldn't imagine it any other way.

But wasn't that the point? It was no different for him than it was for Sherlock. He, too, relied on his friend's presence, every night, every time he went to bed. When he was tired, he didn't consider a quick nap in his chair in the living room. He never even closed his eyes while on the tube when coming home from work. He stayed awake and alert until he had Sherlock by his side, felt the other man's body next to his, and his skin beneath his touch.

"You know, we're in the same situation here. I'm just as dependent on you as you are on me. But that doesn't have to be a bad thing." And turning towards the detective, John lowered his voice and insisted, "People need each other. It's natural. It's human." When Sherlock looked up and right into his eyes, John saw where his doubts came from. Not just from recent developments. It was the fear that it all could end again. "There are no guarantees in life. There are no guarantees... *for* life. You can make promises, but you never know if you can keep them in the end. But that doesn't mean that we won't do our best, does it?"

It took long moments; minutes, and for all John knew, it could have been hours even. But in the end, Sherlock nodded, and the hint of a smile that accompanied the motion gave the doctor a feeling of relief he for once didn't worry about.

---

That John used kissing to calm the younger man down had become a regular habit by now. The genius was like a child in that regard; gentle kisses and a warm hand on his head calmed him down enough so he would go to sleep. Whenever his friend was restless, he would caress his face and the bare skin of his chest with his lips until Sherlock was calmed down enough to sleep. There never was sexual intent or expectation behind his actions; he did it because it helped Sherlock, and because it was his way of taking care of him.

He really saw no reason to give it any further thought that he relished in the feeling of skin against his lips just as much as Sherlock seemed to in the caress it brought. How much it satisfied him to give physical attention to someone, even though it was his best friend and flatmate... and a *man*.

It were kisses on his breast bone and clavicle his friend liked most. John once had noted how these preferred areas lay almost along the Y-shaped lines of an autopsy incision, but he has chased away that thought just as quickly; it made pictures of the believed loss of his best friend once again all too vivid.

Rather he concentrated on the gentle attention he loved giving Sherlock, like he did now that he had convinced the other man back to bed after their little doubt-loaded interlude in the living room. Still the genius didn't allow his mind to shut down, while John only wanted to sleep, and without second thought, he fell into what was almost routine by now.

As he leaned over the other man, hands placed on either side of his head supporting him, he drew his lips feathery light along the right collarbone, then down over the hard muscles covering the right pectoral, careful to not touch the nipple, before he wandered back up to neck and chin and cheek. He lingered longer on those beautifully pronounced cheekbones than strictly necessary, but thanks to the once again wordless nature of their arrangement neither of them asked about or commented on it.

Sherlock's eyes had already closed in contentment when John changed sides, leaning back to his own and thus making his friend believe he was done with his ministrations.

The turn of his head therefore was as sudden as was the meeting of their lips unintended. The unexpected touch made John's heart stutter for a moment, and his breath catch in his throat; he heard and *felt* that it was no different for Sherlock. His first impulse was to pull back, declare it an accident.

He found that he couldn't.

The feeling of Sherlock's lips against his own was so indescribable that he just remained. Didn't move, didn't shift, didn't think. Just felt. Like warm silk they were, those full cushions that he only knew as forthbringers of Sherlock's intelligent words, unique wisdom and crisp wit. Then he realized that beyond them this clever tongue, able to form and release speeches so quickly, never stumbling over a single syllable, was waiting, and a temptation arose in him, impossible to suppress.

With careful movements John began to caress Sherlock's lips with his own, whispering touches at first, soon to become more intense, more demanding. His hands found the nether man's face to frame it, hold it, guide it, while with satisfaction he noticed Sherlock joining in on a game of intimate caress, woken by a deeply carnal need that yet was guided by desire inhabiting their very souls.

Now there was an eager mouth following every request made by its conqueror, and a tip of a tongue taking the chance to draw a line along a lower lip, and the message was received when same mouth parted slightly, not sure what to expect, but ready to be taught and guided.

Only one thought was left on John's mind when his tongue gained entrance to this beautiful mouth, and it belonged to *Sherlock*. He heard himself whisper the name in his mind, over and over again, where his voice was unable to bring it forth because it didn't want to interfere with a touch that had never felt more unique. But then was the person he shared it with just as remarkable.

It was the barely audible almost-whimper his ears picked up from beneath him that broke a dam he had never been aware of before. Deepening the kiss, his tongue was already exploring before there was a chance for second thought. Lips attached themselves to the softness of a mouth he had more than once watched in awe, though right then he wasn't all that sure anymore where exactly his fascination had come from. Maybe the yearning inside him wasn't that sudden, after all.

Sherlock's tongue met John's shyly, wondering about unknown feelings, about an invasion that was none, about a tingling sensation all throughout his body and a dizziness clouding his mind. For him, this was the most difficult situation he had ever been in. Never mind danger and life-threatening scenarios. He did his best to keep his brain active; compare the experience to what he knew, even though it wasn't much. Back when he was a youth he had had a kiss or two - before he had decided that physical relations were unnecessary and distractive - and they'd always been his reference.

He hadn't known a kiss could feel like what he shared with John now; deeply sensual, arousing - overwhelming. So much his mind's awareness slipped through his fingers like sand, leaving him to feel instead of think and analyze. He wanted to panic, to shove the distraction away, to get rid of what was blocking his person's most important asset. If only his muscles had complied. They seemed to have a mind of their own though, arms lifting and hands

coming to rest on the sides of John's ribs where he felt a heart thrum and lungs expand and deflate at an increased rate.

And there was heat beneath his fingers; different from what he had felt these past months, ever since they had begun to include touch of bare skin in their sleeping arrangement. The warmth usually was comforting, soothing; now it was... stimulating. It entered his body through his fingers and palms, and slowly engulfed him, inside and out, and it made him shudder as if he was freezing; but he wasn't cold. Nothing of it made sense, and yet he found that he didn't care.

The most logical assumption was that he was aroused; nothing else served as a probable explanation. The feeling of arousal Sherlock was no stranger to, he had experienced it before; albeit very differently. Bringing himself to release, and his body's reactions to it, was not at all comparable to the condition he was now in. Whatever was happening in these moments spread to every fiber of his being, affected every last nerve. When he had assumed that physical relations were merely a distraction, he hadn't been wrong; but apparently, they were also a matter of leading his body and mind into a state of relaxation in ways and dimensions he hadn't known until this moment. Hadn't even thought possible.

Even with his lack of mentionable comparison, he knew that John was good at what he did. He awoke a desire inside him Sherlock didn't even believe he was capable of developing, and it created the irrational hope in him that it would never have to end - this encounter of their lips, the passion they shared, the intimacy. Touch and caress were suddenly meaningful; and much more so as they were given by John. The sensations the physicality of it all astounded him, even though his mind was clouded by it at the same time.

It was instinct rather than conscious thought that made him shift his hands, let them glide around the body above him and come to rest on its back, only to pull John closer, hold him faster, increase the nearness they shared. It was instinct that made him hook one ankle around John's calf, pressing it down as if it was the only way to convince him to stay. And it was instinct that made him nip at John's lower lip, keep it locked between his own lip-covered teeth to hinder the other man's movement. But it was anything but instinct that made him unwilling to let go.

And it wasn't as if John wanted him to, either. There he was, kissing his best friend - and nothing about it felt wrong. There was not even the slightest impulse to pause and wonder, rethink, reconsider; there was none of the doubt that would have been there half a year earlier. More than that; if he was honest to himself, he had to admit that he stopped denying a certain truth he used to be afraid of almost four years ago already. Sherlock was a vital part of his life. Perhaps it had been bound to result in more than simple friendship one day. Although nothing about their friendship was, or ever had been, simple.

Not even challenging boundaries, pushing past them physically, was just that - simple. There was this one thing they had skillfully avoided to even begin to acknowledge so far: bodily reactions. More than once John had woken up with an erection, naturally so, and also more often than he cared to admit the growing physicality of their shared nights had given him a difficult time to suppress certain responses from his body. He knew - he actually had *felt* - that it was no different for Sherlock, though apparently not as frequent. They were very good at ignoring it, and at allowing the other all possible and necessary privacy - by not mentioning it, looking away when one of them got up, moving away to avoid any further - stimulating - contact.

Their kiss - their thorough and lengthy exchange of tender caress and attention - had consequences; there really was no other way to describe it. It wasn't that John was ready to burst, but arousal sure had set in, and he wasn't sure if could just will it away. The bulge in Sherlock's pants, nudging lightly at his thigh, was more pronounced than usual as well, though still considerably unobtrusive - whereas the doctor was very aware of how his growing hardness pressed against his friend's hip. Discreetly he shifted, trying to move his groin away from Sherlock's body.

The sound of disapproval from the other man's throat was the last thing John expected to hear then. And that Sherlock followed his movement to align their bodies in the way they'd been before was more than surprising. He

wasn't sure how he felt about it; if he agreed to it. On the other hand had they just kissed life and sense out of each other - so what was he afraid of?

When they pulled apart eventually, it was a slow process - full of little kisses , lips coming back to each other, meeting again, grazing and brushing and sliding past. John's eyelids were heavy when he tried to open them to look down at Sherlock, but his effort was rewarded with the sight he was met by. The detective looked younger than ever, his face a mask of lust and pleasure, his reddened mouth and flushed cheeks a stark contrast to the otherwise still-pale skin.

"I think I can sleep now," Sherlock rasped, thoughtful and absent-minded, then let his tongue wander over these lush lips of his, tempting John to claim them once again. Instead, the doctor only chuckled.

"Glad to hear that," he whispered back and nudged the younger man to turn onto his side so he'd be able to spoon up behind him. An arm around him, he pulled the lean frame snug against him, and let his hand come to rest just over the heart of his friend. One last kiss he placed on his neck; then he closed his eyes, his mind slipping into relaxing unconsciousness right away.

Sherlock, on the other hand, stayed awake for a few minutes more, just to taste and feel the aftermath of their kiss a bit longer. When he finally fell asleep as well, it was with a smile on his face.

FIN