

# Dead and Buried

## (BBC Sherlock)

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John didn't flinch, didn't even look surprised when - one fine, ordinary morning just like any other - he found Sherlock sitting in his chair with raised brows and an expecting look in his eyes.

"I'm back," he said and John only responded with a quiet "I know" and fell silent on the matter.

This wasn't right, Sherlock thought, didn't fit with how he'd imagined John react. He had imagined yelling and heated arguments, maybe even objects thrown and abuse being shouted. Calm resignation was one of the traits John did not possess - or rather, should not be able to possess. It was puzzling. Sherlock didn't like puzzles (yes, solving them was nice, was wonderful, was what he strived and lived for, but puzzles themselves were not likable in the least), but it seemed that this one needed further investigation.

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John had started seeing his therapist again. Sherlock wondered why, for he still believed her to be rather incompetent. One time, he told John this in so many words, but John only smiled the kind of smile that didn't reach his eyes.

He did it often, these days. Only smiling with his mouth while his eyes never lightened up. The sight was deeply unsettling to Sherlock, though he'd never confess this aloud.

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John cried more often. Never in front of Sherlock, of course not, but it was not like he couldn't tell. He saw that John's eyes were red from crying, saw the dark shadows underneath. He scarcely slept, as well.

Maybe the lack of sleep was why John joined him most nights, when he was in their cramped living-room, playing the violin til dawn. Strange, he thought, for John had never been one to like his artistic quirks.

"Why do you cry?" he asked one night when there were particularly deep lines etched into John's face.

"I miss you," John simply stated, leaving Sherlock puzzled again.

"But I'm right here."

"I know," John said and even though he smiled, it was neither genuine nor happy, and Sherlock could see tears well up behind his eyes. Then, John excused himself and left the room.

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"I need some air," John said one time as he grabbed his coat and shrugged it on.

"Want me to come with you?"

He hadn't expected John to laugh, but during the last days - no, weeks - John had certainly done a lot of unexpected things. He also hadn't expected the laughter to sound so bitter, harsh and less like laughter and more like crying, really.

"Just ... be there when I come back."

And so Sherlock did.

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John was using his cane again, Sherlock noticed. The limp was back and worse than ever.

He tried to ask, but John only looked at him with this weird not-smile like it was all some little game they were playing. Except nobody had bothered to explain Sherlock the rules.

He didn't try to ask again.

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Some days later, there was a new case going on. Finally, Sherlock thought, for he had been bored out of his mind. Also, he thought, a nice murder might help John to recover from whatever little problem going on in his simple mind.

(Maybe it was a failed relationship. Maybe some woman had left him in a particularly unfair way. Yes. Yes, this sounded likely, since he hadn't seen John date anybody at all for a very long time. Certainly a result of a broken heart.)

When Lestrade all but barged in, he shook John's hand and turned to Sherlock to give both of them a brief summary. "You two will come, won't you?"

"Wait," John said and Sherlock turned to him (to snap at him that there was no time to

wait, to waste, they'd been waiting long enough!). Words died on his lips when he saw the expression on John's face: eyes wide open, unbelieving, pained, not comprehending.

What's there not to understand? Sherlock thought, and then John opened his mouth again, speaking slowly, unsurely.

"You mean ... you can see him, too?"

Sherlock felt the pieces fall into place and opened his mouth to explain, to apologize, to say it should have been obvious and John really needed to think more.

He was effectively silenced by a fist connecting to his face.

Somehow, he was relieved that John finally behaved normally again.

And - however hard this might be to admit - Sherlock knew he deserved this.

(Still, he had been right about the broken heart.)