Here is the first of our two Holmes/Watson stories. Completely coincidentally, both focus on the same pivotal point in the original Conan Doyle stories. Let me stress that neither Jane Mailander nor Emma Scot saw each other’s work; they simply saw the potential for an interesting story and ran with it. We readers are the lucky recipients.

‘The division seems rather unfair,’ I remarked. ‘You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets the credit, pray what remains for you?’

‘For me,’ said Sherlock Holmes, ‘there still remains the cocaine-bottle.’ And he stretched his long, white hand up for it.

WATSON PRINTED “END” in large letters at the bottom of the page and set the last sheet in its place in the bundle of pages. A bit of brown paper and string, a bell rung, a door opened and closed, and Mrs Hudson was on her way to post the parcel to the editor of The Strand. The clock was just chiming three on a dreary afternoon.

The final installment of “The Sign of the Four” was done. A full two days before deadline!

Dr John Watson leaned back at his desk with a sigh of supreme satisfaction, flexing his right hand to remove the last vestiges of cramp before retiring to his chair before the fire for a well-deserved brandy and a cigar. The proceeds from this latest embellishment of one of his friend’s cases should eke out his wound pension very nicely for at least a month. This latest effort was his favourite to date—but then, his favourite story was always the one he’d just finished.

It was almost too easy, the way things had finally worked out between himself and his singular roommate. Sherlock Holmes’ eccentric hobby—who else in all the world could boast the occupation of private consulting detective?—provided grist for the mill of John Watson’s own, more conventional hobby. As luck would have it, mysteries and detective fiction were all the rage these days, and The Strand editor had been pleased with his first few chapters of “A Study in Scarlet”. When his small government stipend or Holmes’ detective work did not quite meet the bills—Holmes working purely for the love of exercising his unique deductive powers, accepting whatever payment his clients could muster—his writing neatly finished off the corners.

In turn, his little fictionalized accounts of his friend’s abilities had spread the name of Sherlock Holmes across the country. Watson took a personal pride in observing the increase in the number of people who sought the aid of the brilliant man, people who had learned of him solely from The Strand stories. Sneer though he would at the romantic form of narrative Watson preferred, Sherlock Holmes would not have a fifth of his clientele—certainly not such a variegated one—and not a hundredth of his fame, had his exploits been set forth in the series of lectures he himself had envisioned as a vehicle for the exposition of his talents. Some of his most difficult cases had been brought to his attention by people who would not be allowed into the hallowed halls of learning solely on the basis of their sex, caste, accent or appearance—people who were not barred from the romantic flights of narrative produced by the popular fiction magazines and the yellow-backed novels.
For all his keen insight, Holmes was amazingly blind on the subject. Watson’s low taste in writing styles was a constant litany of his—and yet he himself often castigated the official police for their lack of imagination, the spark of his own which often produced the correct answer to a convoluted problem when plain cold logic was insufficient, and which quality seemed to be abhorrent to the scholars’ domain.

The theft of the Agra Treasure involving the murder of Major Morstan had been an intriguing puzzle from start to finish, and full of more details than even the most romantic fiction writer could have imagined: fabulous treasure, a secret band, convicts, pygmies...

Complete with a lovely prize for the narrator, Watson thought, smiling beatifically and taking a contemplative sip of his brandy. Romance, true love, and marriage. It had worked out beautifully, giving the murder mystery the added spice of a love story.

And every part of his description of the Major’s daughter who sought to ascertain her father’s fate was true as he had written it. Mary Morstan had been a beguiling creature, warm and gentle and generous. Had matters been just a little different between them, and had they not each had different plans, Watson had no doubt that he would have proposed to her. But he had certainly enlivened his account of the case by turning their friendly association into a full-blown romantic involvement. Careful always to blend fact and fiction very carefully—each nicely enhancing and embellishing the other—he had poured out his heart’s music into those pages dealing with his fictional counterpart’s wooing of Mary Morstan.

And music it was. He shook his head at his own inventiveness, the lightly-treated yet profoundly felt declarations of love within the story. For all that he could turn out such blood-curdling pot-boilers, John Watson was quite capable of startling even himself with his profound romantic turn.

With such thoughts the physician and author sank into a pleasant reverie. Perhaps an hour passed; perhaps two.

As he finished the snifter’s dregs, he heard the stirring and groaning from the other room. Watson sighed, returning the snifter to the board. He knew what that sound meant.

Sherlock Holmes was rising out of his latest torpor. It had now been a fortnight since the termination of the Morstan case, and Holmes’ usual pattern of behaviour after such a case was showing true to form.

Sherlock Holmes’ manic activity during a case was no Watson-embellished fiction. Nor were the bouts of profound lethargy and melancholia afterwards. Indeed, until another unusual case caught and held the interest of Sherlock Holmes, the detective had only one recourse during these droughts...

John Watson gave another sigh, and a shake of the head—this time directed at himself. The small matter of Sherlock Holmes’ addiction often produced that effect in the doctor.

It was a despicable and loathsome habit, all modern medical research agreed, and one which led unfailingly to destruction of the mental faculties, and to an unwholesome and unpleasant death. As a medical man, Watson surely knew better than silently to allow his friend to indulge in such a dangerous and damaging practice.

At his lowest moments, when Sherlock Holmes was at his most cold and distancing, Dr Watson even pondered the unworthy thought that the only reason the man tolerated his companionship at all was for his ability to supply Holmes with the wherewithal of his addiction. Unworthy thought indeed; he chastised himself for even entertaining such a thought every time Holmes let drop a remark or directed a gaze that let Watson see how truly valuable he was to Holmes as colleague and friend. In the very bottom of his heart, Watson knew that it was no addiction he supplied to the singular and solitary man, but steadfast companionship.

Now he listened to the little sounds that friend made as he rose, performed perfunctory ablutions, and made his way into the sitting room. Watson’s chair was so situated that its back was presented to the entrance to Holmes’ sleep chamber. Watson remained where he was, savouring his cigar, listening to Holmes’ approach.

His proximity to such a brilliant master of deductive reasoning had not been without effect on Watson. His own ability to draw clues from his environment had been sharpened considerably, and the ability had the extremely beneficial side effect of making his observations as a physician keener, quicker, and less likely to be swayed by a patient trying to hide something. It had also succeeded in making his fiction more of a facsimile
of life and less the rantings of a pulp artist. He did like to exercise his own small deductive powers whenever he was provided opportunity, such as the one now.

From his seat, Watson was ascertaining his friend’s state as he came into the room. Sherlock Holmes was barefoot; he was wearing his old dressing-gown—there was the small sloughing sound of the torn hem dragging on the floor. His hair was unkempt—Watson had not heard the comb in use—and the long forelock would be falling into his eyes.

And his eyes, oh, his eyes...

Watson put down his cigar, nodding slowly to himself. He knew what the man’s eyes would look like right now.

For his craving was upon Sherlock Holmes, and the light of anticipation would be gleaming in his eyes as he headed toward his succor—

And then the wiry arms surrounded Watson from behind. A lean cheek pressed fiercely against his own, the thick shock of black hair flopping over to touch his own forehead.

Watson’s own hand rose to curve around the sharp outline of the man’s jaw, stroking lightly but surely with just the fingertips.

“John,” the man whispered, his voice hoarse with the need within him, and he tightened his grip around Watson’s neck. “John.”

Dr John Watson rose from his chair, leaving the remains of his cigar to moulder unmourned, and took his friend’s hands in both of his own. Holmes was indeed wearing the old dressing-gown and was unshod. There, indeed, was the wild light in those eyes, normally such a sober grey or keen with the challenge of the chase, but now seeing only the appeasement of need.

Without a word Watson closed the distance between the two of them, and covered Holmes’ mouth with his own, comforting and inviting at one and the same time as the other’s mouth clung to his fiercely, hungrily seeking solace.

He felt frantic need hold itself back in Holmes; it was being fed by the kiss that promised fire, and fire becoming light, reassurance, tenderness and control. Not quenched, not even dampened—but contained, that need. The fierce fire was now held firm in a strong brazier. Strong enough for both of them. Strong enough to give what was needed, and strong enough to take what was so needfully given.

The kiss John gave was thorough, strong and unhurried, a man’s strength meeting a man’s strength, punctuated by the scratch of unshaven upper lip. Watson could only speculate on how the bristle of his own moustache felt to his companion...

John pulled away first, slowly, his tongue slipping free with a reassuring lick to the lower lip. Still in silence, holding both long white hands in his own graceful and steady surgeon’s hands, Watson led the way back to Holmes’ bed-chamber and thence to the bed itself, whose rumpled state gave evidence of the man’s uneasy drowse. As the man began fiercely to pluck at his waistcoat and shirt, Watson took hold of the frantic hands with his own, stillled them, and brought both to his mouth in a kiss; but it was the kind, sure look in his own eyes, the steady look of love, that calmed Holmes more than the physical gesture did.

Holmes lost no time in ridding himself of his dressing gown. He wore nothing beneath it. His whole body was lean and wiry—all, save for the thick heaviness of his penis raised high in erect state and oddly incongruous with the whippet-like leaness of the rest of him.

Watson finished his own stripping, quelling the automatic urge to don a night-shirt. His own body was stockier, more solidly built than was Holmes’; his was the weightier strength of the wolf, not the whippet. And the beginning of desire, the slow sweet surge of pleasure and passion, was filling and lifting his own cock into position. The taller, leaner Holmes and he were at least of a size here, in this respect.

Sherlock Holmes was already in bed again, covers lifted for Watson to join him. When he did so, he was caught up in a fierce embrace; arms, legs, the entire lean body encompassed him like a limpet clinging to a rock. Every muscle in the sinewy form seemed to be vibrating with tension, as if Sherlock Holmes were made of nothing but plucked harp strings. Soft whimpering cries rose from the man, deep in the throes of his addiction.

“Hush,” John murmured, again silencing the frantic man with his mouth, his own hands laying hold of the lean flesh beneath them and stroking more to soothe than to arouse. “Shh. It’s all right. It’s all right, old fellow. It will be seen to.”

“John, I, I need—”

Watson silenced the frantic man again, his hands never ceasing their explorations of now-familiar territory. “I know,” he said fiercely against Holmes’
mile before covering it again. “I know what you need, Sherlock. Only I know what you need. I have it. I will give it to you.”

The combination of the soothing words and the steady, tender ministrations to the flesh began to work their magic. Holmes relaxed, tightened his arms in an encompassing gesture—an invitation rather than a clinging. He gave a great sigh of pleasure and relaxed, loosening his hold.

John bowed his head to succour his friend with his mouth, understanding to the marrow of his bones every sharp gesture, every cry made. Experience he’d had, a knowledge of women that spanned three continents. But there were some things only another man could give a man, only another man could know; things for which no respectable woman could be honourably asked.

When he raised his head, John knew that the time had come—the light in the frantic eyes would not be denied any longer. He nodded.

And without another word Sherlock Holmes turned ‘round in the bed and settled into position, the lean buttocks presented for Watson’s perusal.

Perusal, and...

Watson had been preparing himself from a jar of vaseline on the tabletop nearby. Now he knelt between parted lean thighs.

Only another man, a man could do this, would understand the glory of subjugation, the power of the reversal, the need for fulfillment.

Slowly, so carefully, strongly, John covered Sherlock, held him firm, safe under his aegis. His wet penis divided the lean rump, penetrated; filled his man, securely backed and stayed by the reversal, the need for fulfillment.

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“John, John—”

“Here, Sherlock. I’m here. I’m with you,” John groaned, pushing. “I’m inside you, old man, I have you. You’re mine, your arse is mine,” he hissed, feeling the power of the ownership strengthen him, stiffen him, enlarge his masculinity. But not conquering, not cowing the man under him—making him one with him, being man enough for both of them, becoming twice the man he was. Not stealing his friend’s manhood, but holding it safe inside him, as that lean arse held his cock safe inside it.

Strength, pride, overwhelming tenderness for his man, his Sherlock, gave power to John’s thrusts, gave voice to Sherlock’s cries. It built, rose to inevitable height, reaching the crest—

He bowed his back, opened his mouth, but no sound emerged as climax exploded in him like fireworks. He was vaguely aware of the sharp distressed whimpers and sudden frozen motion as Sherlock gave himself up to the power holding both men in the palm of His hand.

And after death, as it always did, came sleep.

**Watson Awoke** first, as he always did; Sherlock Holmes slept the sleep of the dead when his daemons had been appeased, and would not awaken for another hour at least.

The doctor lay quietly beside his friend and watched him in repose, one hand carefully lifting the heavy hair away from his closed eyes, pulling the coverlet higher around the bare shoulders. The strong profile was turned into the pillow, the keen grey eyes were now closed, and the thin lips held a faint curve that would vanish with wakefulness as a lap disappears when a person stands up. Hawk-nosed, high-cheekboned, with a shock of black hair almost too thick for the pallid gauntness of his face—his dear friend was no beauty, for all his striking features. Watson smiled tenderly, remembering the first time Holmes had icily commented about the Strand illustrator making him too handsome by half, and attributing Paget’s own artistic license for the inordinate number of young ladies who came seeking his help.

His own body, securely backed and stayed by the warm heavy bedclothes, echoed and re-echoed its satiation, even as his heart swelled with the love he felt for this wild, lonely man.

A love neither of them could ever proudly declare to the world with ring and rite, under the blessing of God and the law. A love Watson dared not express at all—save disguised in the safe fiction of his counterpart’s declarations for the fictional Mary Morstan. No wonder his hidden romanticism had tumbled over onto the pages of his latest work.

And Sherlock was so needful...

That need had been the undoing of both of them. How could Watson resist the signs of vulnerability in the man of prodigiously cold calculation and iron will? Here, in this place, at this time, the clear, bright eyes were dimmed by emotion; the firm lips were parted and inviting. And the cold, precise rationalizations of the great brain gave way before the desperate, hidden song of the great heart.

Holmes needed what Watson gave him during his times of lethargy as much as he needed the electric excitement and mental stimulation of a difficult case during his times of energy.
A filthy addiction, all the best modern medical minds warned. A beastly and abominable craving unworthy of the human race.

And John Watson would most assuredly share that very repugnance with his medical colleagues, did he not already share that very addiction with Sherlock Holmes. An addiction each was able to sate in the other, to their mutual benefit. It had only made them fonder of each other, and better and stronger friends than Watson had ever been with any of his old school chums or his army compatriots. What a subtle and profoundly tender thing this friendship was between them, a trust and a knowledge of each other that Watson had never known could occur between two men. It was astonishing, and humbling at the same time.

A weakness the fictional Sherlock Holmes must have, to endear himself all the more to his public and add that un gover nable spark of humanity to the precise thinker. But it must be a safe weakness, an acceptable weakness; a weakness that could be boldly stated in print in a respectable periodical like The Strand.

So. Let his dear, benighted readers believe it was cocaine in which Sherlock Holmes indulged his senses via a thrice-daily injection, an addiction that his friend Dr Watson wholeheartedly despised. It was certainly not the first time Watson had disguised facts to make a pretty fiction, one that would not distress complacent and genteel society.

And as he left his friend’s bed to make his ablutions and ready himself for supper, the corner of Watson’s moustache quirked upward in a sly smile.

What would be the reaction of his faithful readers, if they knew the real cause of the two men seeking lodgings together in the first place; how would they react, to know of the faithful Mrs Hudson’s complicity in the charade?

And indeed, would not all London howl outrage if it only knew the true occurrence at their first meeting—the one which had caused Sherlock Holmes to comment to John Watson, “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive...”