

Hair

by mazaher

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Sherlock's style (or not) of hair is rather uncommon these days. It made me wonder... Also, I recently read in Benedict Cumberbatch: Questions & Answers on «The Guardian» (<http://lornasp.tumblr.com/post/15419827629>) that he has some (unexpected) reserves about the size and shape of his own head.

A bit of unrelated, pre-Fall character study, while trying to catch my breath after Reichenbach. For pennypaperbrain, because I promised I would (and because I threatened Sherlock, who of course doesn't care anyway, but that's another matter).

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Sherlock hates having his hair cut.

Being naturally wavy helps minimising the need for maintenance, but barber day always has him rising on the wrong side of the bed-- provided he's even **gone** to bed.

This morning looks particularly tricky, John notices as he makes tea.

Sherlock, still in his pajamas and dressing-gown, is flopped on the sofa, staring blankly at the ceiling --never a good sign-- while obsessively coiling his overlong curls around his fingers.

"You'll get hopelessly tangled up if you don't quit," John says. "They may have to shave it all off, fingers and all, and then what would your violin do, to say nothing of your phone? They'd get so lonely they'd commit suicide. Tea?"

Sherlock doesn't even turn his eyes.

"No, thanks," he answers.

"*Thanks*? You never say thanks. It's quite bad, isn't it? I should have known. You broke more strands of horsehair in your bow in the last two days than you did in all these months since Mycroft came to visit last Christmas." He pours himself a cup. "I don't think it's really important how long your hair is. Grow it and tie it in a ponytail, or clip it all off and have done with it."

"Can't clip it. My head. Funny shape, bulging at back."

"Well, a big brain like yours must be lodged somewhere... but I don't like watching you push yourself through this five or six times a year. Care to tell me what's the problem?"

Sherlock doesn't answer.

John sighs as he returns to the kitchen and to gooseberry jam on toast.

A couple of minutes pass and John is absorbed in the racing page on «The Guardian», when Sherlock's answer arrives.

"Who handsome wants to appear, some bother he must bear, she said. As though I could ever care a damn"

"Who said that?"

"Mummy," Sherlock answers. "She used to take me with her to the hairdresser's, a horrible dull place stinking of the **foulest** hair products. She would stay there for hours having her hair done, reading magazines and chatting while I just sat there on a stool with my legs dangling. All those **women**, and all of them patting or scratching my head as they passed. I wasn't allowed to bring my experiments, and at the end of it all, when Mummy was finished..." Sherlock shudders.

"What?"

"They did **my** hair. To begin with, I got a crick in my neck while they washed it. You know those contraptions where you have to bend your neck backwards, and you can't see anything

except the damn ceiling, and the complete stranger who holds you there against your will could cut your throat anytime in half a second because you're practically immobilized?" He turns to look at John, his eyes wide with retrospective discomfort.

"Then they allow you to bring your head up again, but it's not over. They take you in front of a large mirror and they're sticking their fingers in your hair all over again and coo and pet and discuss styles with Mummy as though you're not even there, and then they cut it and arrange it all wrong. Do you know what that means, John?"

"No, uhm, not quite. Tell me?"

"Hair, John! The stuff that grows on the outside of the head, like ideas grow on the inside. They put their hands in... they put them on my head and they do what they please with it. They rub things in, John, until I stink for days even if I wash it out as soon as I get home. After they're finished, I try not to look in the mirror, but they always insist that I do, all smiles, and."

Sherlock stops abruptly.

"And...?"

"The face I see is not me anymore. It's their idea of me. I'm back to square one trying to turn into myself once more. And in a few weeks, just as as I'm finally getting my own face back, there we go again. Neverending, John. Neverending."

He sounds so discouraged, and so small, that John bites back whatever flippant comment he may have thought of throwing in, just to downplay the issue a bit. This is serious. He purses his lips in thought.

"As I said, let it grow?" he asks tentatively.

"I have problems enough already with most Yarders, John, without having Donovan's quips about drama queens spreading any further," Sherlock huffs.

"There is that," John concedes. "Well, I see only one other way out. If you feel like giving it a try, of course."

"Hm?"

Sherlock has relapsed into brooding, but now he turns to listen, a hint of hope on his face.

"I can cut your hair myself. ...No product, promise" John hastens to add.

"You?!"

"I learned in Afghanistan. Machine clipping is easier, of course, but what when there is no power at hand? I can use scissors. I can use a razor. I have a flat comb with a blade inset at the foot of the tines, handy for a quick job. Nothing fancy, mind you, but workable. Straight hair is hell, but curls conceal small mistakes. With your ideas I am already acquainted, more or less. Maybe now you can introduce me to your hair."

Sherlock stares at John like he's suddenly grown two heads.

"Would you...? Here...? Now...?"

John nods.

"Ready? Bathroom. Let's go."

Sherlock stands and follows.

He's smiling.

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endnote: Sherlock has all my sympathy on this issue of trespass on personal boundaries, sensory assault and violation of privacy. It must be a family trait, because the comb with the inset blade belonged to my grandfather. Lacking a John, I solve the problem by machine clipping my own hair.