

A gentleman's priorities on the battlefield

by mazaher

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Another 221B. I couldn't let such a prompt slip by...

Dedicated to E., who has always been much more of a solution than a problem, remembering a sunny day in October, Boccioni's Matera (La Madre) and Yoko Ono's tree of wishes.

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Sherlock Holmes is not used to kindness. Mycroft and he were raised as gentlemen, in the old-fashioned way for male offspring. Kindness wasn't contemplated.

John Watson is an observant man, so he's not been exactly surprised when he's learned how Sherlock extorted Moriarty's name from the dying cabbie by stepping on his bleeding chest until he screamed in pain. He's not surprised now either, in this back alley outside a warehouse, as he's holding Sherlock physically back from the quietly groaning woman on the pavement. She's one of Moriarty's doorguards; the other shot her when John tackled her to the ground, but he missed, hitting her in the leg instead. The wound is not lethal, but the femur is shattered, thigh jutting out at a wrong angle, and no, Sherlock is definitely not allowed to press his foot on that in order to extract information from her.

"Just no, Sherlock! Stop right there and let me see to her."

"She **shot** at you, John! And Moriarty's here, I need to know where!"

"He's gone now. She's wounded. I'm a doctor. An **army** doctor, Sherlock! I do know what the priorities are."

"I'd say you've seen enough in Afghanistan to know better."

"I have, and I tell you this: savour kindness, Sherlock, because cruelty is always possible later. Even on a battlefield."

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The bench in the picture is situated in the outer courtyard of Palazzo Venier dei Leoni in Venice, former residence of the late Peggy Guggenheim and now seat of the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation and Collection.

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