

## Five doors of perceptions: 3. Sight

by mazaher

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**Note:** I was stuck for quite a while, trying to find something to work on for the sense of sight. Then I happened on this prompt (which was later filled admirably by kyther):

### Sherlock's strange eating habits....

(Anonymous)

2010-09-27 11:10 am UTC

I've wondered about Sherlock's propensity to state that eating while on a case takes away from his thinking process. So he forgoes food during cases.

It's drawn from ACD canon references... and back then the metabolic knowledge about blood glucose and such was just in its infancy. But even so... By now we know that brainwork requires carbs. The less Sherlock ate to sustain himself, the less clear his thoughts would naturally be. And the effects would be cumulative until he either ate and rested, or dropped like a stone.

(at <http://sherlockbbc-fic.livejournal.com/2727.html?thread=6256807>)

It linked with a couple of idiosyncrasies of mine, and it gave me a starting point. However, this is not in any way meant to be a fill for the prompt.

The whole part about John is free improvisation. The image is mine.

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**sight**, noun: 1. *the power or faculty of seeing; perception of objects by use of the eyes; vision*; 2. *an act, fact, or instance of seeing*; 3. *one's range of vision on some specific occasion*; 4. *a view; glimpse*; 5. *mental perception or regard; judgment*.

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## John

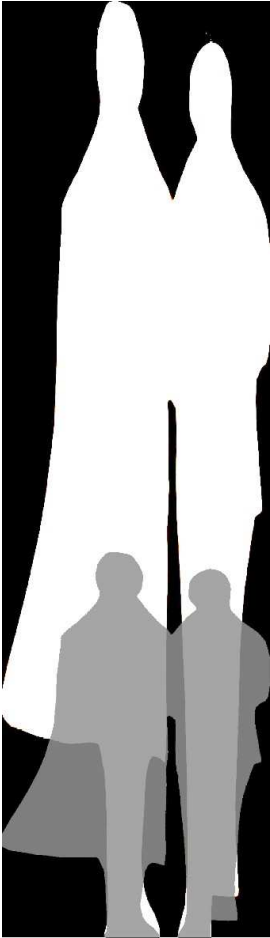
Sherlock never tires of Johnwatching.

For one thing, wherever he may go, John always looks like he belongs there. It would be less than precise to say that he's never ill-at-ease; rather, he knows how to keep his unease to himself, contained within the boundaries of his own skin, never allowed to spill all over the place in spurts and spatters of jerky movements and annoyed glances, as it is most often the case when people are upset or uncomfortable. (Especially in front of Sherlock.)

For another, there is the way he moves. John is quite athletic, but not long-limbed or particularly agile; in all likeness, he never was, no matter his wound. Sherlock pictures him as more of a determined tackler than a brilliant sprinter on a rugby field. Yet John walks, runs, jumps, stops and sits down with a purposeful, understated exactness of movement which, Sherlock thinks, fits to perfection with the way John shoots.

It's paradoxical, Sherlock is ready to acknowledge: the best asset for a crack shot is a talent for immobility. John seems to join motion and its absence into one seamless flow of steadfast grace.

One thing Sherlock especially loves (but will never admit he does, not even to himself) is watching their shadows dancing on the pavement when they're walking side-by-side at night. Shorter as they get nearer the next lamp-post, longer again as they pass. Waving on in a complicated rhythm which falls in perfect synchro --Sherlock has calculated-- every seventeen steps. Changing shape in a silent dialogue of light and darkness, shadow-playing a story of which they know neither plot nor ending. Sometimes, Sherlock is tempted to put his own hand to the tale. Sometimes, he doesn't resist, and then he will move his arm this way or that, or bend his head just so, and for the briefest moment it will look like the two shadows are embracing.



The next step dissolves the illusion.  
Sherlock doesn't think John has caught on the trick.  
Then, there are his eyes.

As soft as Sherlock's are sharp; if Sherlock is a 300mm AI servo autofocus, John is an 18mm manual. At any given moment, John is not only keeping stock of the current point of interest, but also taking in the background and his own surroundings. Combat training alone doesn't explain this knack, Sherlock thinks, especially after he realises that John's way of looking has ulterior, deeper implications: John is slow to judge.

That's not to say he doesn't have solid parameters of evaluation; on the contrary, whenever human interactions are involved, Sherlock is quickly learning to trust John's more than his own. But John doesn't jump to conclusions or chop judgments. Sherlock is so used to being weighed, measured, and found wanting within the first two minutes after he opens his mouth, that he's startled by the difference with John's neutral look.

John will take everything in, and keep his silence. He will knit his brow, look down and to the side, maybe touch his tongue to his lip, mull over the matter at hand, and finally a shape (the shape of Sherlock, his *\*real\** shape) will coalesce in his mind. Then, and only then, will he speak his mind.

John has made Sherlock aware of one thing he didn't know he missed: someone who can look at him and *\*see\** him. No labels, no "psychopath", no "freak", none of those rough-cut approximations Sherlock has come to expect --and indeed anticipate with definitions of his own making.

"That was a bit not good," John will say.  
John is a seer.

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### **Sherlock**

There is a method to Sherlock's madness, John has concluded. When Sherlock is fine-tuning a hypothesis, like a palaeontologist carefully brushing dirt off a still half-buried fossil bone, he either stands or sits up, and looks down or straight in front. At those times his eyes are focused and sharp. But when he hasn't the faintest idea of which clue will bring him the solution to the puzzle, he rolls on his back on the sofa and lays still, staring hazily at the ceiling until he can't stand it anymore, and closes his eyes.

It's a pose of total helplessness. John is reminded of the babies arranged in rows of cots at the orphanage in Kabul, waiting for someone --anyone-- to come and smile at them and pick them up. The same empty staring at an empty ceiling, having finally learned that crying is no use.

John suspects that Sherlock began trying to reason his way out of helplessness at a frighteningly young age.

But perhaps "reason" is not the right word.

Sherlock says "Think! I need to think." The verb has a wider meaning than mere intellectual processes. John wonders whether semantics (visual semantics) may not have a greater relevance in determining Sherlock's behaviour than commonly assumed.

Take his habit of not eating or sleeping during a case, for instance. Babies can only feed when they're picked up from their default horizontal position, and given access to nourishment.



When they're full, they fall asleep. When Sherlock is stuck on an as yet unsolved case, there is a high probability that sooner or later all four elements will concur: fasting, insomnia, a supine position, and an implacable drive for a breakout.

Food and sleep are necessary for the brain to function at its best. But whenever Sherlock finds himself momentarily stumped and adds deprivation to mental overdrive, what John witnesses is not an attempt at honing rational processes, which would ultimately be self-defeating. What John witnesses is a determined effort to dismantle intellect and make room for intuition. (He doubts whether Sherlock is even aware of it.)

Intuition, *Gestalt*, practical magic, the eyes of a shaman watching into the darkness and seeing ghosts: the sudden flash revealing a pattern, and thence a hypothesis to be tested. Fasting and keeping oneself awake beyond normal circadian rhythms are well-known natural (if unhealthy) means to raise the kick-up threshold for rational thought and lower the threshold for intuition, allowing it to flood consciousness instead.

The painstaking collecting of presentable evidence, the linear reasoning, the verbal demonstrations... all these are chores to be done later, or left to the Yarders if too boring. The moment when the case is solved is the moment when Sherlock's face lightens up, all wide-eyed, because he has \*seen\* the pattern.

The rush of endorphins must be amazing. Probably deeper than any orgasm, because it satiates more primal needs. The achieved vision means the defeat of helplessness, free access to food, to rest, and--

And to human company.

The only times when Sherlock is open to casual, friendly conversation and relaxed interaction with other human beings, is when he's still riding the tide of well-being after a case has been solved.

John is not really surprised that, when there are no case to solve and no experiments to run, Sherlock curls on the sofa, facing the back. He tries as hard as he can to avoid confrontation with that empty ceiling. And if that fails, if the ceiling calls too long with its brittle silent voice, then he will arm himself with cocaine, and step up into battle.

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